
DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

Title:

**Enhancing the Transition of Rural High School
Students to TVET College**

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of the Free State.

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DECLARATION

I, Puleng Mosa Rasutha, declare that the thesis, **Enhancing the Transition of Rural High School Students to TVET College** submitted for the qualification master's degree in Higher Education Studies at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

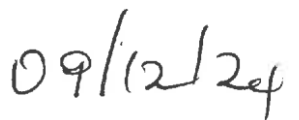
All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged through in-text citations and in the list of references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work to another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

SIGNED



DATE



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Mrs RN Malakoane and DJ Malakoane, and my late husband, Mr MS Rasutha.

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My sincerest thanks and profound gratitude to all the people who have contributed immensely to make my education journey possible.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

PAR	PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH
SIT	STUDENT INTEGRATION THEORY
TVET	TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
DIET	DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
NQF	NATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND FRAMEWORK
CIP	COLLEGE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
SSS	STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
LMS	LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. Literature indicates that rural high school students are given inadequate career guidance at schools, and when they register with TVET College, they experience the same problem of not being well-orientated to TVET College. Some key elements of this transition are common across students, including an adjustment to college-level academic standards, balancing coursework with other commitments and increased attrition. Rural high school students experience challenges when entering a TVET College since they must cope with basic needs and adjustment issues such as finding classes, changing schedules and dealing with feeling overwhelmed. In addressing the above challenges, the study is responding to the main research question of how to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College to achieve the aim. This study employed a qualitative approach with the principles of participatory (PAR) action research as a methodology to generate data. Data was collected using focus group discussion. Purposive sampling of ten participants interested in getting detailed information about the research aim from one TVET college was employed. Findings were presented thematically by means of direct quotations and giving meaning to participants' voices. The main finding of the study revealed that insufficient academic support for first-year rural students impacts their academic performance, and their emotional well-being increases the dropout rate at the TVET. The study recommends continuous support to the TVET first-year students as one of the best strategies to enhance the transition from high school.

Keywords: *Enhancement; Rural High School; Transition; TVET College*

CHAPTER ONE

STUDY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

TVET colleges in South Africa answer to the human resource and economic needs of the country, and as a result, they are regarded as an investment (Rasool & Mhembe, 2014; Tikly, 2013). First-year rural students from rural high schools' transition to TVET College and get opportunities to acquire skills, knowledge and values for lifelong learning (DHET, 2013). Additionally, the NCV qualification, which is offered in TVET colleges, attracts students from Grades 9 and above. Most of these students come from low-income families with average academic records due to poor educational backgrounds (Maimane, 2016). This situation puts the issue of high school students' transition to these institutions at the forefront. **Due to different language groups in one classroom, varying age groups, thus varying student needs, and increased cognitive demand in new programs. These different students take advantage of opportunities provided by the college, and an appropriate student support structure is essential** (Nthako, 2020). One of the most important performance areas of the student support services is career guidance, which directs students to enrol in courses that are proficient and interesting to them. At TVET College, students are required to develop academic abilities, self-directed learning, interpersonal relationships, social and personal skills, active learning and the growth of a feeling of belonging in higher education (McFarlane, 2018). However, a study conducted by Rickard, Bramble, Maxwell, Einboden, Farrington, Say, Beh, Stankiewicz, Campbell & Yeh (2018) highlights a deficiency of institutional policies to facilitate first-year student transition.

Rural high school students enter TVET College with little support in choosing programmes strategically, and they lack guidance to navigate the system (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012). In other words, these students arrive unprepared, without assistance in making strategic course or unit choices, and with significant gaps between their expectations and experience. Compared to non-rural students, rural students typically have lower postsecondary enrolment and persistence rates, as well as few expectations and objectives for their postsecondary education (Molefe, Burke, Collins, Sparks & Hoyer, 2017). This is due to less effective of educational readiness and decreased involvement in intellectually demanding curricula (Morton et al., 2018). They lack knowledge regarding entering higher education packed with new technologies and the increased academic demands in college (Ast, 2014; Mdluli, 2017). Furthermore, when these students enter vocational programmes, basic transitional skills are needed, and they mostly struggle from the

onset (Gafoor & Van der Bijl, 2018). Moreover, first-year students without support and guidance are particularly prone to dropping out early in the semester (Rickard et al., 2018).

Transition is defined as 'knowing-how to navigate change' concerns preparations that permit students to progress from one qualification to another (Gale & Parker, 2014; Naziz, 2018). Pexton & Cavallerio (2022) define transition as a linear process, with students effectively entering higher education after integrating socially and then academically. In this study, transition is understood to be 'identity making' that involves learners creating for themselves a new identity as college students and adjustment to the college environment (Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012). In addition to the learning environment, Tang & Wong (2014) cite differences in personal freedom, college instructors, programme structure, testing and grades as contributory factors to the struggles rural high school students experience during the transitional phase. As a result, they often have difficulty embracing their new identity as college students because they have the feeling that other students are aware of their underprivileged background (Jury, Smeding, Stephans, Nelson, Aeemei & Darnon, 2017).

Moreover, during the transitional period, first-year students are subjected to the changes that occur throughout their lives (Yeh, Stanley, Ramirez & Borrero, 2024). While some experience persistent distress and increased attrition (Delvin & McKay, 2014; Soria, 2012), others struggle to balance social life and academic work. For example, they struggle to develop a tangible study schedule (Mukwevho, 2018). Adding to this, Leibowitz (2017) points to a lack of technical support and technological resources, such as computers at home as well as limited internet access, often contribute to feelings of lacking self-efficacy for their academic abilities in higher education. These challenges have an impact on student mental health that makes students switch their major or leave college altogether.

The literature provides various components of a strategy to enhance students' transition to a TVET college. Intervention strategies such as strict and firm admission, new student orientation, adherence to the college attendance rules and peer tutoring to improve the performance at TVET colleges (Nonyana, Mtshali & Makgato, 2024). However, this is not done correctly because no monitoring by teachers capable of enforcing the set rules is integrated. For example, rules should cover and specify how students interact with each other, and procedures should specify the time and date for peer tutoring and materials.

The Student Support Services (SSS) Framework provides guidelines to TVET Colleges as a support system which colleges must put in place to support their students in achieving academic success (Department of Education, 2008). However, the SSS unit in the college contributes to inadequate support of students; due to the ineffectiveness of the unit, only one personnel were appointed to assist a huge number of students and is obviously unable to assist students. There is no conducive academic success in teaching and learning environments that allow students to access support without hurdles during the transition, which assists students in developing their identity as college students. (Maimane 2016 & Makibinyane, 2020) agree that there is a lack of academic assistance and a scarcity of SSS staff in certain TVET Colleges, particularly qualified personnel and students who do not make use of SSS because they lack information about the SSS unit at the college. Moreover, TVET Colleges lack proper guidance (Bardenhorst & Radile 2018). In addition, a study conducted by Zulu & Mutereko (2020) shows inadequate student induction in the first year at TVET College. This occurs after registration, and since it is done merely for compliance and is not taken seriously, it is ineffective. In addition, Myataza & Mokoena (2019) indicate that NSFAS payment of travelling costs and accommodation is reportedly flawed, and payments are made late.

Mdluli (2017) declares that most of the challenges experienced by students in TVET College could be effectively managed and addressed with the presence of an effective student support system and the provision of a bridging course. In addition, Soria & Stebleton (2012) recommended programs and policy development to better support first-year students, for instance, additional programs, services and structures to reduce hurdles of each step of the TVET College experience.

According to a study by Lombard (2020), a successful transition from high school to college is largely explained by a mix of academic elements, including academic assistance, career counselling intervention, academic skills, academic and personal skills, hard work and perseverance. In another study, Kuriakose & Vermaak (2014) revealed that lecturers' consistent reflection process on their work might reduce dropout rates among first-year students. However, Jean (2010) notes that in order to effectively assist and serve new students making the move from high school to TVET College, college staff must survey all first-year students to gauge how well they feel about their academic and social adjustment. This is in accordance with the study which was conducted by Mishra (2020), which found that social support is crucial during transition to assist with variables such as stress, motivation and study habits.

In addition, some researchers focused on student experiences, such as finances, workload, or family issues (Maila & Ross, 2018). Ajani and Gumede (2020) focused on student transition challenges into universities. The transition of high school students to the University of Technology was the main emphasis of (Soundly, 2016). The transition of students from high school to university has been the subject of numerous studies. Research on enhancing student transition from rural high school to TVET institution is still lacking. Hence, the purpose of this study is to provide a framework for improving the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. This is because it has been realised that students are not given adequate assistance during the transition phase to connect their educational experience with their self-perception and future goals (Peters, 2014).

When applying to, starting and finishing higher education, rural students confront numerous obstacles (Goldman, 2019). These challenges of rural students include low academic preparation, parent education level, lack of access to appropriate resources, geographic isolation and poor socioeconomic conditions (Byun, Irvin & Meece, 2015; Morton, Ramirez, Meece, Demetriou, Pante, 2018). Nonetheless, this pertains to rural high school students who do not have the fundamental content knowledge, abilities or mental habits necessary for success when they enrol in college (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). This results in poor throughput and higher dropout rates, affecting the number of new high school pupils admitted (Makibinyane & Khumalo, 2021).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The exciting moment for rural students who meet the requirements to be accepted to college becomes a reality shock when they see themselves as unprepared or unfit for college education (Bayaga, Lekena, Selepe, du Plessis, Blignaut & Morar, 2022; Moosa & Langsford, 2021). They are more likely to encounter differences in academic knowledge in terms of cognitive abilities, for example, the disparity between high school and college academic environments (Nonglait & Myrthong, 2021). Rural students may feel lack severe lack of academic support in college based on their needs and expectations (Grindley, 2023). Furthermore, a lack of resources, limited exposure to Advancement Placement and dual courses in rural high schools hinder students' readiness for academic demands. Moreover, uncertainty is exacerbated by new surroundings due to the challenging course materials, varied classmates, different living conditions and new learning techniques (Singa et al., 2024).

Moving to college may be an exciting, nerve-racking, confusing and emotionally taxing experience (Bowman, Jang, Jarratt, & Bono, 2019; Sharma, 2012; Longwell-Grice, 2016). Rural high school students are given inadequate career guidance at schools, and when they register with TVET College, they experience the same problem of not being well-orientated to TVET College (Fryer, 2014; Maimane, 2016; Makibinyane, 2020; Bardenhorst & Radile, 2018). Students all experience some of the same important aspects of this shift, such as adjusting to college-level academic expectations, juggling courses with other obligations, and higher attrition (Delvin & McKay, 2014; Soria & Stebeleton, 2012; Mukwevho, 2018). Furthermore, these rural high school students face difficulties when they enroll in a TVET College because they have to deal with necessities and adjustment problems scheduling changes, finding classes, and feeling overburdened (Timmis, Mgqwashu, Naidoo, Muhuro, Trahar, Lucas, Wisker and De Wet, 2019; Bowman, Jang, Jarratt, & Bono, 2019). The study aims to improve rural high school students' transition to TVET College in response to the mentioned problems.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Student Integration Theory (SIT), developed by Tinto (1993), was selected in this study as a theoretical framework. According to Holden (2018), (SIT) establishes that social and academic integration have an impact on the variables that contribute to college dropout. The integration paradigms to examine college tenacity make it ideal to facilitate rural high school students' transition to TVET College. Furthermore, it supports the academic and social integration of first-year rural student transition and students at colleges may obtain both types of integration, social and academic (Chrysikos, Ahmed, & Ward, R., 2017). According to Tinto (1993), a student's decision to leave depends on their personality, the institution, and their changes for social and academic integration. For example, student may likely to drop out of college if they are unable to separate or distance themselves from their family

Academic integration and social integration are major components that indicate a student's unique path, and that is the institutional responsibility to put that in place. Within the context of academic and social integration into college, the notion centres the higher education learning experience on faculty, staff and students (Lakhal, Mukamurera, Bédard, Heilporn, & Chauret, 2020). Other factors that are considered consideration include student intention, the academic capability and levels of commitment of first year students, academic congruence, isolation, transitional adjustment and external factors like financial obligations and financial constraints. Tinto's theory states that a student's likelihood of dropping out decreases with increased social and intellectual

integration (Holden, 2018). The goal of this study is to facilitate first year students from rural high school transitions. Students go from the old to the new during this transitional phase in accordance with the new environment norms, values and conduct (Lemmens, 2010). Students interpret what college is and what it means to be a college student at this time (Kuh & Love, 2000). According to Tinto's approach, the process of forming new social and intellectual communities in college involves the student moving through several phases and distancing themselves from their previous affiliations (Tinto, 1987).

Since rural high school students lack tacit knowledge of learning objectives in the new environment and experience a loss of confidence, a plan to improve their transition to TVET College is required (Rickard et al., 2018). Understanding rural high school students' experiences navigating college admission is another goal of the study. Tinto claims that students are more likely to remain enrolled in an institution if they become connected to the social and academic life of that institution and if they feel they fit in (Briggs et al., 2012). In this regard, they distance themselves from their past environment to take up the role of being a college student and to develop a new identity. During this period, students make meaning of what college entails and what it means to be a college student (Kuh & Love, 2000). This relates to Tinto's theory as it describes the process in which the student moves through different states and is disconnected from their past association to form new social and intellectual communities in college (Tinto, 2012).

The Tinto SIT (1993) is a suitable framework for this study because it satisfies the needs of first-year college students who report feeling more alienated than their peers. The degree of fit between the individual student and the institutional setting is also primarily responsible for this. According to Peters (2014), rural high school students receive inadequate assistance when attempting to reconcile their educational experience with their self-perceptions and aspirations. This study defines transition as identity-making, which is connected to learning, engagement, and a sense of belonging in both the academic and social contexts.

According to Student Integration Theory (SIT), a student's departure from an institution may be explained by a lengthy process of interactions with other members of the academic and social system of the institution, as well as by the individual's pre-existing educational experiences, intentions and commitments, as well as by their specific qualities, abilities and financial resources. Dedication to learning goals, a sense of achievement towards those goals, they want to attend to

attend college, self-assurance, and the willingness to seek academic assistance were all components of the ability to adjust to the college environment (Kumah, 2020)

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary question of this study is how to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.

Secondary questions

- Why is there a need to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?
- What aspects are necessary to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?
- Under which conditions could the transition of rural high school students to TVET College be successfully enhanced?
- What are the possible threats that may hamper the transition of high school students to TVET College?
- What can be done to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main question of this study is to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.

Research objectives

- To justify the need to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.
- To identify aspects that are necessary to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.
- To determine the conditions under which high school students' to TVET College could be successfully enhanced.
- To anticipate possible threats that may hamper the transition of high school students to TVET College.

- To formulate a framework to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.

1.6 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study demonstrates participatory action research (PAR) methodology and design. PAR was chosen because it promotes a sense of shared ownership for the study process (Rickard et al., 2018). Furthermore, this strategy is used because the researcher and participants work freely as equal partners to understand complex situations and make improvements (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2018). The purpose study purpose is to help rural high school students make the transition to TVET College. Thus, the engagement of first year student on campus increases student staff integration, develops teams and encourages collaboration (Rickard et al., 2018). PAR is a transformational paradigm that challenges established TVET Colleges practices (Lopez, 2015). PAR aims to empower and emancipate co-researchers by providing people with research tools that allow them to detect and modify their own situations (Cohen et al., 2018). In this way, information is developed collaboratively, resulting in many realities (Mahlomaholo, 2013 & Ngwenya, 2014).

This methodology is comparable to Tinto's (1993) as a theoretical framework because both seek to bring about change and improvement for the marginalized (Tshelane, 2014 & Cohen et al. (2018). It differs from other techniques in that it reduces inequality through collaborative participation (Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, PAR participants' active participation by cooperatively defining societal problems, addressing them and acting (Livingston & Perkins, 2017). PAR cycle is the process of planning change, implementing it, observing the processes and results and reflecting on them (Cohen et al., 2018).

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Brown and Clarke (2022) employed six theme analysis processes to examine and explain the data. Thematic analysis is suited for this study because it reports the actuality of each participants' experience, and its accessibility as a method complements participatory action research (Brown & Clarke, 2022). The findings are presented thematically using direct quotations and giving meaning to participants voices (Cresswell, 2014). As a result, the data analysis in this study was carried out. As a result, the data analysis in this study was carried out using thematic

method, which consisted of six stages: becoming acquainted with the data, developing preliminary codes, seeking for themes, evaluating potential themes, defining and labelling themes, and writing the report. In addition, interview recordings were listened to and transcripts were reviewed with open mind for any meaning that could emerge (Brown & Clarke, 2022)

1.8 VALUE OF THE STUDY

The findings are expected to benefit TVET colleges, instructors, students and other community stakeholders by identifying effective approaches to improve student transition and promote supportive learning

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participants were informed about the study's objectives and their rights including confidentiality, and the proper authorities were contacted for permission to perform the research. The study title was registered, the researcher sought ethical approval from the University of the Free State' Ethics Department as well as relevant entities, including Maluti TVET College. The Ethical Clearance Approval Number is **UFS-HSD2022/2058/23**

The researcher informed the participants that they might quit from the study whenever they wanted. To guarantee anonymity and protect participants identities, letters were employed. Determining what is proper or suitable, as well as the correct or incorrect course of action, is all part of the ethical quandary in research (Pietilä, Nurmi, Halkoaho & Kyngäs, 2020).

1.10 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis of findings

Chapter 5: summary, conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. The introduction and background of TVET College in enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College were covered in the preceding chapter. By examining the theoretical framework, student integration theory (SIT), that directs research, and pertinent body of current literature, this chapter establishes the foundation for the investigation. The rationale behind selecting SIT as the study's theoretical framework is explained. SIT supports the objectives of comprehending how students go from rural high school to TVET College. Relevant literature that supports the goals of the study is discussed. The theoretical framework, operational concept definitions, literature evaluation, and conclusion are all included.

2.2 OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

This section provides an explanation of the study's concepts.

2.2.1 Enhancing

Refers to a state of further improving on the value or quality of something (Saez, 2015). More likely, a smooth process that aims at equipping student beyond what is usual. According to Kinsella et al, (2022) He further defined enhancing as improving students experience and help them to overcome pre-existing challenges.

2.2.2 Transition

When we migrate from one place to another our identities shift. According to Timmis, Mqquwashu, Naidoo, Muhuro, Trahar, Lucas, Wisker and de Wet, (2019), transformation is the process by which first year students develop a new identity that is critical to their success in college. Transition occurs when rural students are between high school and college. During this period, individuals acquire new information and gain the skills needed to engage with people from other

groups while also figuring out how to fit in with college norms, values and beliefs (Moosa and Langsford, 2021).

2.2.3 Rural High schools

Schools in isolated locations or settlements have significant challenges with regard to infrastructure and support, high rates of unemployment and continued underdevelopment with restricted access to essential services (Timmis et al, 2019; Lefoka, 2021). Rural schools face many unique challenges that affect the quality of education they provide. These challenges include underqualified teachers, teaching multiple grades, a lack of resources, a lack of parental involvement in their children's education and insufficient funding (Du Plessis, and Mestry, 2019). Poverty in rural high schools has a major impact of effective teaching and learning. In addition, some rural schools lack electricity, water, and sanitary facilities and classroom are in poor shape.

2.3.4 College rural students

Individuals aged 18-24 from rural areas enrolled in college to explore and develop their identities while also increasing their independence (Alice, 2024). College rural students are marked by lower population density, limited access to metropolitan infrastructure, and typically a less range of economic and educational opportunities compared to urban locations (Stough-Hunter Lekies, 2023).

2.3 STUDENT INTEGRATION THEORY (SIT) AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study is to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College by using Tinto's (1993) Student Integration Theory (SIT) as a theoretical framework. SIT was selected because of its goal commitment, institutional commitment, social and academic integration that have the greatest effects on student transition and retention (Curbano & Hernandez, 2020). Tinto discovered that students who leave College because they feel unsupported may be retained by creating institutional understanding based on academic and social integration with classmates, faculty, staff and advisers (Samoila & Vrabie, 2023). Additionally, SIT may assist rural students build personal self-efficacy while navigating transitions (Samoila & Vrabie, 2023). Moreover, Tinto's theory suggests that greater interaction between students and instructors could strengthen social and intellectual integration and facilitate rural high school transition to TVET College (Samoila & Vrabie, 2023)

2.3.1 Origin of Tinto (1993) SIT

Tinto's 1973 partnership with Cullen served as the foundation for his student departure hypothesis (Chrysikos, Ahmffed & Ward, 2017). Tinto's idea was founded on Durkheim's theory of suicide, which holds that a person's degree of social integration predicts whether or not will commit a suicide Tinto (1975). Student Integration theory SIT, which was developed in 1993 from Tinto's earlier theory, describes how students leave higher education, a process that may be influenced by both internal and external variables (Pather & Chetty, 2016). It illustrates the dropout process using the ideas of students' social and intellectual integration inside the institution.

2.3.2 Objective of SIT

The first year of college is a crucial time for students and emphasise their experience from a variety of angels, including academic achievement, student engagement and success and attrition (Pather & Chetty, 2016). Thus, improving rural high school student transition to TVET College is the main goal of this project (Chrysikos, Ahmed & Ward, 2017). Thus, the significance of student integration for success is emphasised in both the study and Tinto's theory (1993). However, student transition becomes even more important for raising first year student retention and graduation rates in a college setting becoming more diverse (Pather & Chetty 2016; Chrysikos et al, 2017). Chrysikos et al, (2017) claim that student integration theory is a fundamental idea in comprehending student retention and is applied to gain a deeper understanding first year behavioural patterns.

Tinto (1993) SIT identified three crucial conditions for student persistence through theory of student integration, firstly student centred retention programs. Furthermore, it argues that programs should prioritize students' success by offering academic support, financial aid assistance and personal and social support during transition to college. Secondly, universal retention efforts, but focusing solely on at risk-groups, like low-income or minority students can create stigma. Tinto suggest proactive support to all students, regardless of background, early intervention and tailored approaches. Lastly, integrated social and academic communities, this can be achieved by learning communities, mentorship programs and extracurricular programs.

Tinto's (1993) student integration theory is based on two principles: academic integration, which refers to a student's involvement in their academic studies, and social integration which refers to

a student sense of belonging and connection to the college's social life (Pather & Chetty, 2016; Chrysikos et al, 2017).

As a crucial holistic approach to student success, social integration, academic achievement and dedication are all related (Fincham, Rozemberczki, Kovanovic, Joksimovic, Jovancovic & Gasevic, 2021). This study with SIT is major forces in shaping the understanding student retention and dropout helps students who might be at risk of dropping out (Pather & Chetty, 2016; Curbano, & Hernandez, 2020). However, Smith, Forbes, Robichaux & Guarino, (2020) argue that SIT lack early identification of potential dropout, meaning the theory do not consider student personality trait. Choi, Curran, Morris, Salem, Curry & Flowers, (2019) revealed that by focusing on both academic and social integration, and identifying support early, such as programs can create a more supportive environment that helps students succeed. Tinto (1993) SIT argues that the student dropout is not a sudden decision, but rather a gradual process influenced by a students' experiences throughout their time in college. In this regard, factors that contribute to this process emanate from transitioning, such as background, academic preparation and initial goals influence their early experiences.

Tinto, (2017) emphasize that students' perception of social integration, feeling connected to peers and college community, is a crucial factor in decision to stay enrolled. This activity may create a more enriching learning environment that increases student success and retention. In contrast, Tinto, (1993) SIT highlights the importance of colleges providing appropriate levels of support to ease student transition from high school to the academic demands of college (Samoila & Vrabie, 2023). The connection between the study and Tinto's theory, his emphasis on academic integration aligns with the idea of creating a learning environment that promotes congruence between college and rural high school (Holden, 2018). The use of Tinto, (1993) SIT, will provide a powerful framework of TVET College to create environment that foster smooth transition and student success. Tinto's (1993) SIT further indicate that the study may indicate ways in which college can improve the structural design of the institution through the creation of intentional opportunities into the social and academic system (Burch, 2018).

2.3.4 Ontology of SIT

I and the co-researchers worked together to explore perspectives of rural student transition. In this regard, engaging nature of SIT perspective of participants becomes multiple because they are finding solutions to their problems, meaning people changed to the agents of transformation,

through which institutional leaders facilitate student integration into college academic and social institutions (Phillips & Snodgrass, 2021).

2.3.5 Epistemology of SIT

Tinto's (1993) SIT appeals for shared experiences, knowledge developed from collaboration of ideas and opinion through collective reflective action. Thus, to give college the chance to further investigate the institutional commitments made through institutional action (Martin & Clayton, 2022). The expectation climate for success that student experience in their daily interactions with the institutions, its policies, practices and various members, is set by the institution's commitment to student success (Martin & Clayton, 2022).

Researcher is not only the driver in the process, but instead participants are also at the centre of research process. All stakeholders will be treated equally regardless of the position they hold and given the same opportunity to raise their issues regarding transition (Mahlomaholo, 2012). In the process, participants are learning from others through collaboration and transformation made because of how people change after realizing certain things (Matoetoe, 2017).

2.3.6 Rhetoric

Tinto's (1993) SIT believe on integration that unites, individuals, in this study, language play a major role because it creates interactions among people. Thus, participants in this study interacted regardless of the positions they hold in society (Matoetoe, 2017). Moreover, participants use the language they will be comfortable with, Sesotho or English. It is important to use language that participants are comfortable with because it provides a connection that allows learning new experiences together.

2.3.7 The relationship between the researcher and the participants

According to Tinto (1993), students' objective commitments and institutional commitments are positively correlated with their degree of social and academic integration, and they also have a lower dropout rate. Since student integration presumes emotional experience as the learning environment fosters the development of expertise, Tinto's theory brings together a variety of people from diverse background to share their experiences (Helena, 2018). Shared information is going to transform the participants and constructed by all concerned stakeholders (Omdan,

2020). The relationships between researchers and participants established to understand the culture and to build trust between researchers and participants (Mertens, 2010). For this study will have strong relationship between the researcher and the participants, with open communication, have clear roles and responsibilities, willingness to share information, a willingness to share information and listen to other to each other as well as participate (Tsotetsi, 2013).

2.3.8 The use of Tinto, (1993) SIT

The focus of this sub-section is to justify the choice of SIT for this study over other theoretical frameworks such as positivism. SIT was utilized as a lens to place my position in relation to participants in various elements of the entire study in order to accomplish this study's goal (Tsotetsi, 2013). Thus, allows the researcher and participants to work together and participants become active participant, not subject, unlike in positivism, researcher work for them, instead with of working with them (Martin, 2018). In addition, first year students will be required to establish relationship with the institution and the environment, and establish a common understanding of the issue, to find solutions (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). In positivism, interactive relationship is discouraged between researcher and participants. In (SIT) knowledge constructed between the researcher and participants with the aim towards transformation of people (Omdan, 2020). Unlike in a positivism paradigm where researcher controls the process of research and participants (Taylor & Medina, 2011).

The significant change and adaption for student because this involves shift from the familiar norms, values and behaviors of high school environment to college with different expectations (Lemmens, 2010). This is related to Tinto's (1993) which describes the process as one in which student forms new social and intellectual groups at college by moving through several phases and distancing themselves from their previous associations. In this sense, institutions for first year students typically provide greater autonomy and flexibility where students are expected to assume accountability for their education and practice time management. Corozza, (2021) refers to this as transition stress, that can have both beneficial and harmful effects. Furthermore, (Ajani & Gamede, 2020) found that first year students have trouble forming social bonds and getting access to support services

The investigation is guided by Tinto's (1993) SIT as Fray, (2017) found that the system fails at risk students by failing to provide a supporting and nurturing atmosphere, and that TVET College

fails to identify these students. Commitments to the welfare of students, education of all students and integration of all students into academic and social groups constitute the core tenets of SIT (Kori, Pedaste & Must 2018). In this regard, by implementing these principles college may create a supportive, smooth transition and inclusive environment that benefits all students. Because it helps first year students adjust to college life, Tinto's (1993) is a suitable theoretical frame that guides our investigation (Helena, 2018). According to Chrysikos et al, (2017), a seamless transition will help children understand their goals prior to starting their first year of school. Institutions ought to establish expectations for students that will help them succeed and build both formal and informal social and academic integration skills (Fray, 2017).

The interaction model put forth by Tinto (1993) student integration theory provided the theoretical underpinnings for research on student attrition. Tinto's model core tenet is that a student level of integration into the academic and social structures of the college affects whether they continue their studies or leave (Curbano & Hernandez, 2020). Student arrive at college with a range of background variables, including pre-college education, personality attributes, and family background according to Tinto's (1993). Together, these background traits have an impact on the student original objective and institutional commitments in the college setting. Goal commitment is a measure of a student overall level of commitment or motivation to earn a college degree, while institutional commitments are a measure of the degree in general degree of motivation a student has to graduate from a specific college. Depending on the student degree of integration into the college's academic and social system, these obligations change during course of their time (Curbano & Hernandez, 2020). According to Bayaga et al., (2022), Tinto's SIT theory states that first year students should be properly integrated into the system and that they will be dependent on their ability to adjust to the academic, social and economic experiences of first year students in addition to their academic proficiency

2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

TVET as formal, non-formal and informal learning that equips youth with the information and abilities needed in the workforce (Azeem & Omar, 2019). TVET is foundation of skills, a potent instrument to combat poverty, inequality and unemployment (DHET, 2015). The goal is offering individuals the skills they need to thrive in the workforce that is critical for a strong economy. These skills need to be developed or modify curricula to align with industry for future skill requirements (Olowoyo, Ramaila & Mavuru, 2020). Additionally, the significant issue in South Africa is underfunding of TVET Colleges that includes inadequate equipment or facilities required

for quality teaching, for example, engineering workshops required proper equipment for practical and demonstrative purposes (Matenda, 2019).

TVET gives young people the skills they need to work and help the economy, having skills that in demand may minimise unemployment and poverty. However, SA TVET emerged from decades of marginalisation, that left many TVET Colleges underfunded and unable to deliver high quality instruction, but they are adopting new policies and correcting the legacy of neglect (Papier & McBride, 2018). Many students experience academic, social and emotional hurdles when transition from high schools to TVET College, that create conflict between student current identities and identities they believe are essential for success in college (Gutnick, 2018). In contrast, Malaysian governments policies prioritise the education sector by producing skilled professional and workers who would aid in the growth of other industries (Omar,Rauf,Ismail, Rashid, Puad, & Zakaria, 2020). Hence, they become developed nation it aspires to be and change the country education system, particularly in the TVET sector. However, they also experienced challenges that hinders the expansion of TVET initiatives in partnership with industry and results in low enrolment in training programs (Omar et al., 2020). Even students with lower grades and those from comparatively low socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to view TVET as their second choice after college (Omar et al., 2020).

Tinto's (1993) concept of student integration serves as the foundation for understanding student performance in higher education. It argues that students have different needs come from a range of backgrounds, and have varying financial resource, social skills, academic readiness and personal goals idea of student integration, make the case that students have distinct requirements, come from a variety of backgrounds, and have different financial resources, social skills, academic preparedness and personal objectives. Transition to college associated with significant workload and first year students may feel overburdened and find it difficult to achieve without the appropriate support (Mbatha & Ntuli, 2023).

The next section discusses literature related to the five objectives of this study.

2.4.1 THE NEED TO ENHANCE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TVET COLLEGE.

This component of the study reviews literature on enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. The need for student transition derived from a desire to address the

needs of rural high school students particularly first year that increasingly underprepared for college education.

2.4.1.1 Insufficient academic support

Transition to college may difficult due to the restricted access to high quality education, that impact rural high school who are academically unprepared for college, and not given enough academic help when they first arrived at college. This made transition challenging and frequently left them feeling anxious and angry; Furthermore, insufficient academic support left first year students feeling stranded and under pressure to perform without the resources they needed. The challenges experienced by these students are time management, language barriers, teaching and learning strategies, which hinder their ability to achieve academically and to transition smoothly to college.

Academic accomplishment is associated with excellent management; rural students find it difficult to balance their academics with their everyday lives. The knowledge that efficient time management helps students perform better under even under pressure and time limits, time management entails organizing and planning how to allocate time between different jobs. Student are expected to manage their lives without institutional help and the organizational structure of higher education institution typically causes workload peaks and troughs. According to Wolters & Brady, (2021) students actively control when and how long they spend on the tasks that are considered necessary to accomplishing their academic goals through the critical self-regulation process of time management.

The academic burden is the amount of time a student needs to properly learn a curriculum and complete course assignment, which includes scheduled duties and extracurricular study time such as reading, reflection, preparation and exams. They experience stress as a result of their severe academic workload. Furthermore, rural children from disadvantaged schools and backgrounds find it difficult to communicate in the medium of instruction English, which has a negative impact on their learning, transition, fitting in and getting along with people and especially prevented them to communicate with lecturers and interacting socially with classmates (Kananaga & Mntuyedwa, 2023)

Time student needs successfully learn a curriculum and finish expected coursework, including scheduled duties and extracurricular study time for reading, reflection, preparation and exams is

known as the academic workload that is stress experienced by rural students due to their demanding coursework. Moreover, disadvantaged schools and their students struggle to interconnect with medium of instructions, which has a negative impact on their transition, learning, fitting in and getting along with others it makes it difficult for them to interact socially with classmates and communicate with lecturers (Kananaga & Mntuyedwa, 2023).

College expectations for students' academic literacy may differ from the real difficulties they encounter, resulting in students' inability to reach expectations (Moosa & Langsford, 2021). Nonetheless, the disparity is referred to as a readiness gap, that is brought by lack of academic resources, such as tutoring, test preparation, college counselling, in the year before college (Goldman, 2019, Cavoza, Heddy & Pugh, 2024). This has an impact on academic achievement, which includes procrastination, low self-esteem, and demotivation and raises the dropout rate (Goldman, 2019). The main distinction between high school and college, is different teaching methods, rural students struggle with mind-set of memorisation to a college-level analysis and integration of thoughts (Wang, 2022). They spend much time learning study techniques and catching up academically (Sikes, 2018). This is due to a lack of school counsellor and the fact that students from rural areas typically lack the academic preparation necessary to handle the demands of college, may find it difficult to succeed academically (Masaiti, 2020).

School system urgently needs to be reformed to for graduates to be prepared to enrol in post-secondary educational institutions. In this sense, school system must make sure that first year students are equipped for postsecondary education should not be solely responsible for higher education and students' participation is required in college courses and work through pre-readings before attending tutorials (Masaiti, 2020). This means a lot of students may find the first year quite daunting because of new responsibilities and challenges that are often too much to manage.

Rural students have the potential to transform in college, but they are frequently ignored by college and receive little support from because of urban students from wealthy families (Masaiti, 2020). In higher education, academic materials in English serve as the main medium of instruction. However, rural students from underprivileged educational backgrounds have a difficult time learning English since they are not adequately prepared for the curriculum (Nzembe, 2018). They face challenge of integrating academically due to limited English proficiency (Jeyagowri, Ilankumaran, 2018). Finding study materials, scheduling study time, comprehending course material, staying highly motivated, juggling employment and family obligations and managing academic competence for their studies could all contributing factors (Golman, 2019).

Low-income and minority students are disproportionately affected by lack counselling support and severe differences in access to college-preparatory resources, which puts them at risk of failing classes and dropping out of college (McCulloh, 2022). Cultural mismatches with institutional norms may cause discomfort, stress and comprised academic performance for rural college students (Offidani-Bertrand, Velez, Benz & Keels, 2022). The college does not offer enough academic support that deters students from and prevents them from succeeding in their studies (Makibinyane, 2020). Additionally, Rural high school students that register for NCV programmes are not sufficiently prepared for college curriculum by mainstreams schools, the calibre of students needs a comprehensive support (Ngwato, 2020). That led to a variety of academic and psychological problems for rural high schools throughout their transitional college years.

First year rural students often experience insufficient academic support. Despite recent improvements of SA TVET Colleges. Current situation necessitates a reconsideration of academic support for TVET campuses across the country Maymon, Hall & Harley, (2019) Social support may improve coping, encourage healthier practices, and reduce stress throughout the adjustment to college life. Effective communication is a key aspect in helping students cope and adjust because allows for mutual understanding of many matters, may be verbal or non-verbal is essential for relating to others. In this regard, social interaction requires one to interact with others from different nations, thus communication with others assist us meet our emotional and intellectual demand (Singa et al., 2024).

2.4.1.2 Limited career guidance

In SA context, career guidance is currently included in National Curriculum Policy Statement (CAPS), meaning is taught in high school educational level. High school learner understands the selection of suitable subjects and career paths, even little information available on career choices.to prepare for desired careers. This challenge was exacerbated by the most rural students and parents lacked the necessary skills to help their kids make vocational decisions because of systemic problems which contributed to this challenge, limited in their academic pursuits, this indicates that career guidance in high school is not emphasized (Motsepe, Thulo, & Mochifefe, M.A., 2024). Choosing a career path may be challenging, particularly for marginalized, who have little access to available information on education and training options, career and career pathways and employment opportunities (Dube, Nyambo, Kanjiri, & Ruzungunde, 2022.)

Transitioning from lower to higher levels of schooling has been defined as requiring young people in rural parts of numerous countries to leave their residential area or make the decision to broaden their alternatives rather than remain in a location with limited opportunities (Rosvall, 2020). The limited access to information applications, admissions, and financial aid choices, rural students' close-knit communities and wealth of support networks are unable to help them with the college enrolment process (Whiteside, 2021). Furthermore, a lack of resources and assistance may have made rural residents, and their families feel alone and less informed about college planning, that may have contributed to the transition to college (King, 2023). These challenges contribute to the transition challenges, hence there is a need to enhance the transition of rural students. TVET entrance policy, allow student from different grades to enrol in the same course, the situation creates a gap among students, academically challenge, for example grades 9 and 12 sit in the same class for the NCV program (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018).

Limited career guidance, student support services and disparities in class grades all contribute to the problem of students' transition at TVET colleges. Rural students encounter mismatch when enrolling in colleges because of their socioeconomic background that prevents them from being exposed to college possibilities. Their access to selected programs that might offer better career chances is limited by this under matching. (Korich et al., 2018)

Limited career guidance and insufficient information about postsecondary education emanates from lack of parental support due to their level of education, led to students' unrealistic expectations about college (Lefoka & Tlali, 2021). As a result, they were unable to conduct college research, choose a vocation since they received little high school advice, and receive little college career counselling. Students in rural high schools lack direction on how to prepare for college, what to expect during college, how to pay for college, and how to get support during college because their parents do not have college experience. As a result, they rely on college for support

Another challenges with career guidance in high school, there are no school counsellors advising about postsecondary career available options, for example may have only one counsellor, leading to student to counsellor ratio that limits the amount of individual attention and guidance each student receives for college options (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019). In high school teachers are referred as counsellors in that wear many hats, such as academic advising, crisis intervention and administrative duties. Furthermore, they have many responsibilities other than providing college-related counselling, including course scheduling, personal counselling, testing and

occupations/career counselling (Perna, 2023). Because rural students live too far from their schools to engage in enrichment activities that are intended to make educational opportunities more accessible, this may limit their access to and choice of colleges (Ajani & Gumede, 2020). Compared to their peers, these students were described as having lesser academic objectives and worse self-esteem than peers regarding academic abilities (Tus, 2020). This becomes a challenge to first year rural students when transition to college or learning curve to students when it comes to navigating the norms and processes of higher education (McNamee, 2022). There is a persistent achievement gap in higher education with underrepresented students facing significant challenges of low attendance due to shortage of staff in SSS unit in college that impede transition and increase dropout rates (Duncheon, 2021).

There are no career counselling departments on campuses to assist students with their career goals and persistent loop of constrained and uniformed career decision-making may occur if learners do not receive enough guidance and counselling support, this could affect the quality of job that is appropriate for their career and the opportunities to become self-sufficient, poor career counselling affects more than just subject choice, also influences SA youth unemployment rate (Farao, and du Plessis, 2024). Due to a number of factors, such as a lack of demand for their skills, a mismatch between their knowledge and the demands of their labour market, and a lack of work experience the graduates usually have difficulty finding employment. This illustrates the possible repercussions of insufficient career counselling and guidance on making wise career decisions and navigating labour market (Mseleku, 2022). Even though career counselling is offered in high schools, the student transition from high school to college has not been smooth because of a lack of skills and knowledge gaps. (Otwine, Matagi, Kiweewa, & Ainamaani, 2022)

2.4.1.3 Limited educational resources

Rural students lack access to devices, data, study spaces and the skills they need to interact with technology in order to effectively use learning material and educational technology (DHET, 2020). Additionally, TVET college assessment, require students to visit other business department or conduct interviews with the use of resources like internet, laptop, computer and social skills, the absence of those mentioned resources' left student behind. There are numerous ways that technology may be used in the classroom, including teaching students directly or promoting their comprehension online assignments or games. However, due poor government support, infrastructure provision of maintenance, particularly dependable power supply and costs are main contributing factors to limited of educational resource (Malimabe & Omdan, 2021). Moreover, The

effectiveness and operations of the academic and SSS unit are impacted by the SSS unit lack of financial, human and physical resources (Makibinyane, 2020).

Many of the students come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and lack the skills and resources that would let them use virtual learning platforms. Additionally, the homes of a number of rural students raise queries about basic amenities such as running water, power sanitation and physical spaces that support effective engagement and learning. Students in rural areas may not have access to academic assistance or the tools they need for a good education; therefore, may make use of a variety of easily accessible resources in order to engage and learn effectively. The gap in privilege and inequality with regard to educational resources, support and supervision is exacerbated by re-emergence of the rural-urban divide (Maniram, 2023).

The difficulties of this transition are compound for students who come from under resourced backgrounds (Hardy, 2021). This has impact of rural students because they may have a social identity tied to their communities and its struggles. According to, Morton et al, (2018) many of the students stated that their high school did not have resources, therefore they experienced difficulties when attempting to obtain resources that could begin to prepare them for college, despite their desire to begin the preparation process. The lack of resources in rural high schools can put students at a significant disadvantage when they transition to college, more like to the access to current textbooks, computers and labs might hinder a student ability to develop essential research and technology skills needed for college success (Ajani & Gamede, 2020; Cele, 2018). This led to rural students feeling underprepared academically, decline in confidence, increased stress and a higher risk of dropping out. Furthermore, lack of resources persists to create significant hurdles for students aiming for higher education due to lingering effect of apartheid policies (Mbatha & Ntuli, 2023).

The disparity puts rural students at a disadvantage in preparing for college-level work because students may have outdated computers, software and limited access to high-speed internet. Moreover, such rural areas often have unreliable or slow internet access, which can make it difficult for students to complete online homework, access course materials, or participate in online discussions (Heinisch, 2018). This lack of resources hinders the transition and educational experience for rural high school students and many lack knowledge or experience navigating financial aid applications (Mbatha & Ntuli, 2023; Koricich, Chen & Hughes, 2018; Goldman, 2019; Webb, 2019). In New York, Financial resources are a majority hurdle for families aiming to send their children to college (Hardy, 2021). In this regard, limited financial resources available at rural

high schools can hinder students from exploring different academic interests and discovering potential career paths. Moreover, limited financial resources in rural school districts have ripple affect not just core classes but also availability of extracurricular activities and advanced coursework (Webb, 2019). According to Lombard, (2020) financial security is a building block for a successful transition to college, particularly rural students. Financial stress can be major distraction, hindering academic performance and overall well-being. Furthermore, engaging in the learning process require resources, for example having access to reliable internet for research, purchasing textbooks and participating in field trips (Lombard, 2020).

2.4.1.4. Financial constraints due to late payment of NSFAS allowances

College expanded more students tried to enter the post school economy, the number of students living off campus rose, however they are unable to offer housing on campus and most students rent unsuitable off-campus accommodation (Mtshali, 2020). People in the neighbourhood have converted their houses into private student accommodation because of TVET college inability to provide on campus lodging. Some property owners solely care about their profits and construct dangerous poorly constructed rooms with illegally connected electrical (Sokhela, 2022).

The unlimited and unregulated number of private corporations supplying infrastructure has increased competitiveness in the student housing market, raising concerns about students' safety and wellbeing. One of the most difficult tasks is dealing with housing concerns, accommodations made for various disruptions have a big impact on the transition of rural students. Rural students who live off-campus suffer a range of obstacles such as excessive rent, unhygienic surroundings, and no favourable setting to study, as well as lack of protection both in dorms and tier approach to class, when they risk being attacked by criminals.

Academic performance is impacted by social problems in their areas, noise pollution, easy access to drugs and alcohol and vulnerability to crime (Sokhela, 2022). Majority of TVET College students come from low-income household, which makes difficult for them to locate suitable housing because they are unable to pay the registration and housing costs. NSFAS allowances provide financial aid program typically processes students' payments every four months, these students find it difficult to cover monthly costs like food and rent.

As a results, students worry about paying their rent each month and taking care of their basic needs, families are also strained financially because they must send money for rent and food

(Sokhela, 2022). This causes anxiety in high school students, wish to enrol with college. Financial limitations make first year college students more stressed and make it harder for them to focus on their studies. Furthermore, parents lack employment chances that cause them to be unable to pay college expenses, causes anxiety in them also (Muronda, Tini & Powel, 2024). Financial hardships, stress and anxiety are harmful for students' welfare and negatively impact academic performance and retention.

2.4.1.5 Social and cultural adjustment

Rural students find it difficult because they must deal with more work and tests in every subject. At that time, they are separated from their families, forced to make friends, change the way they behave, learn new things, and use new ways and use new ways of thinking in the classroom. Accordingly, students who adapt to a new setting develop a sense of belonging (Moosa and Langsford, 2021). Although these students aspire freedom, they are frequently constrained by guilt over abandoning their communities and parents (Whiteside, 2021),

College may be vastly different from the more structured environment of high school, which creates challenges (Heinisch, 2018). Rural students experience challenges with transition, their struggle starts with finding a housing or a place to stay, that causes emotional problems when they are unable to connect with others in their social group that makes them to feel as though they do not belong, also lack parental support because parents are unfamiliar with the procedures.

Adjustment is a natural part of life, particularly during times of transition, however, rural high school students often encounter this process between the ages of 18-25, as they transition from being adolescents to emerging adults. The adjustment process helps individuals manage with stress, conflict and tension while fulfilling their needs. This adjustment occurs when pupils believe their needs are addressed and their behaviour aligns with the environment's needs. Students, who are unable to adjust to stressful events and overcome challenges, may lead to mental issues such as stress, anxiety and depression (Sinaga, Karo and Saragih, 2024). Masaiti, (2020) emphasizes the importance of adhering to community standards and values as part of their culture because when culture is dynamic not rigid is better to facilitate progress. Additionally, it is believed to be morally upright and ignoring those in disagreement with their values.

2.4.2 ASPECTS NECESSARY TO ENHANCE THE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TVET COLLEGE

2.4.2.1 Creation of academic support

Many first-year rural students are hesitant to ask for help with their academics from college professionals. In this regard, academic professionals in college need to identify these students at risk of poor performance and college must find ways to improve academic support learning by making sure that support is well-planned, well communicated and reaches deserving students to lessen their frustration (Voisin, Phillips and Afonso, 2023). These programs primarily assist and support first year students by facilitating their transition into the new academic and social environment and incorporating various activities and resources. Peer tutoring is one of the more comprehensive academic supports to first year students, student (Arco-Tirado, Fernandez-Martin, & Hervas-Torres, 2020).

Peer teaching is students instructing one another in a scenario that is prepared and guided by a teacher, entails interdependence as students engage in the activity as both learners and teachers, giving and receiving as they support one another. (Rusli, Degeng, Setyosari, & Sulton, 2021). Another strategy is ePortfolios, writing intensive courses and learning communities on first generation college student transition, enhances students' literacy and study skills. Furthermore, these teaching methods seem to improve students' commitment to the school and their self-evaluation of their overall academic skills (Conefrey, 2021). It is important for first year students to receive tailored support throughout the college transition. However, not all students will have same transition experience; for example, students in rural areas may need extra assistance in remedial classes because of their special circumstances and difficulties (Goldman et al., 2024). Additionally, support services to first year students may not effectively supported when a blanket approach is used, instead institutions must evaluate each students needs and provide a range of resources (Moosa and Langsford, 2021).

Tinto (1993) posits that institutions need to identify students at risk since the challenges of transition from school to college may result in dropping out. Further, state that the challenges identified college need to be recognized and reform support services, cultivating a more inclusive educational atmosphere that will enable colleges to establish a more equitable environment for all students and enhance their transition. Thus, to provide student autonomy in the development of activities such as virtual programmes (Guzman, Barragan and Cala Vitery, 2021). This means

that because of their individual or varied needs, first year course curricula must include a variety of academic reading and writing skills so that students will feel included in college academic programs and their sense of exclusion will at least start to fade (Moosa & Langsford, 2021; Esau & Daniels, 2022). Additionally, Tinto (1993) asserts that higher education has a duty to guarantee that all students receive support regardless of their background and have the opportunity to succeed. Programs have also become crucial tool for a smooth transition from high school to college, helping students to adjust to the demands, workload, and learning styles they might encounter there (Cameron & Rideout, 2022). Coping mechanisms throughout the college transition assist students to adjust their habits to meet the academic demands for college, work continuously hard in their education and ask for help from their teachers and others to deal with the academic difficulties they confront during their transition (Nonglait and Myrthong, 2021)

Supporting college students holistically is crucial for academic success because high failure rates are costly for stakeholders and inhibit the TVET sector from fulfilling its mandate or purpose (Badenhorst and Radile, 2018). McPherson, (2021) proposes that TVET college teachers be educated in skill development workshops and evidence-based teaching methodologies appropriate to student learning obstacles. Furthermore, their training is required to detect and support students who are having difficulty learning. Moreover, newly recruited lecturing staff should be properly informed and introduced to understand the kind of issues that exist in TVET colleges., some issues do not need referrals to SSS unit are not directly related to medical diagnoses, more frustratingly, they are being sent back to the lecturers without support or appropriate training (McPherson, 2021). Peer mentoring is one of the aspects that assist students with college admission, and other tasks that include academic experience, approachability and shared experiences, mentor and mentees build interactions, boost self-esteem (Chandrasekera, Hosseini, Jayadas and Broadway, (2024). Thus, academic support programs include early identification, tutoring, peer mentoring, counselling and emotional support, and learning assistance programs. College expectations by lecturers is for students to work more even outside classroom. Therefore, in order to meet the high school standards, students must take responsibility for their actions and develop resilience while navigating the challenges of emerging adulthood, which calls for maturity and responsibility (Kananaga & Mntuyedwa, 2023)

2.4.1.2 Establishment of Career guidance and counselling

Proper guidance and career counselling are the aspects to address limited career guidance of rural students because college instructors and staff may be aware of rural identities (Carpenter,

2024). Rural high schools and college must provide varied curriculum and educational opportunities that give students the chance to acquire all encompassing skills and competencies to satisfy the demand of the workplace in the twenty first century if they are to guarantee student career awareness and future professional. For instance, program with specialised possibilities for major and career exploration as well as preparation exercises (Kezar et al., 2023).

College to use professionally trained career experts in designated SSS unit to provide students with career-related information, answer personal questions and provide quality answers based on their fields of study (Okolie, et al., 2020). Throughout the year, program personnel and the career counsellor check in with students to assess their progress and major/career development, they occasionally offer more specialised support to those who require it. College career guidance and counselling, to simplify the financial aid application process that will assist to reduce the barriers facing rural students pursuing higher education, by providing more guidance on application itself to make it more access and less time consuming (Masaiti, 2020).

2.4.1.3 Availability and accessibility of educational resources

Rural students grew up in underdeveloped rural locations, frequently lacking access to facilities like public libraries and institutions that may aid them in achieving their educational objectives (Whiteside, 2021). Furthermore, goal and level of study influenced by their access to institutional and educational resources (Whiteside, 2021). Moreover, technology implementation is required for availability and accessibility of educational resources; however, student views towards using technology in education influenced by factors such as educational background, cultural context, personal experience and institutional support.

Open educational resources it is available in both digital and non-digital formats for teachers to utilize. These resources include digital learning materials, multimedia documents, software tools, simulations, animations, electronic textbooks, lesson plans, articles, printed books, journals, entire courses, module instructional designs, streaming videos, assessments and images (Ojo et al., 2020). The availability of resources, facilities, and equipment is crucial for TVET institutions to provide relevant and high quality education (Ongulu and Ibrahim, 2021).

2.4.1.4 Establishment of support regarding delays of NSFAS payment

Despite the challenges they experience, they anticipated value of their education is a key consideration and driven by the prospect of greater financial security in the future (Goldman, et

al., 2024). To address the issue of student payment allowances, need to be released every month and TVET institution need to collaborate with NSFAS and maybe to provide student with an advance loan after confirmed that they are eligible for financing (Sokhela, 2022). NSFAS delayed payments have an impact on student living, transportation and food allowances (Mabuza, 2020). Bongers, (2024) cash flow at the start of the first year is the significant challenge, although back pay is made for the months that have passed, NSFAS initial payments are delayed. Students suffer from delayed funding distribution, particularly those from low-income families where no one is available to help them if they need to pay their fees right away (Mabuza, 2020)

Students no longer have faith in NSFAS with the issue of unreliability of allowances addressed, to improve retention, throughput, and pass rates as well as the general wellbeing of students by bringing much needed regularity and stability (Power et al., 2024). Furthermore, assists students to live while they wait for the results of their applications by revaluating the decision to allowances after attendance verified. These delays of payment caused by inadequate communication between NSFAS, institutions and students. To address challenges mentioned, it is recommended that increased financial support be made available to rural students, particularly those who are low-income, this may involve the development of new or expanded financial aid programs targeted towards rural students

2.4.1.5 Social and cultural adjustment support

Through Tinto's (1993) SIT, rural students from poor families, suffer from social and academic integration issues, may build inclusive learning environments and increase engagement through cultural sensitive approaches to reduce transition challenges (Chrysikos & Catterall, 2020). Peer mentorship is a successful way to boost retention rates and help students adjust to college life and provide support successful academic and social transition to college (Lane, 2020). To address isolation of rural students would need to stay in touch with their school or village peers to help them deal with the loneliness that comes with moving to college or search for friends who are also from rural areas (Nonglait and Myrthong, 2021).

Development of study strategies alleviate their nervousness in a new environment with unfamiliar procedures. This will assist first year students, as they require support to navigate new interpersonal and professional development, foreign campus environments, increasing personal obligations and identity exploration (Moosa and Langsford, 2021).

Parents provide emotional, instrumental, appreciation and informational support to their children, including concern their activities, providing learning materials, creating a safe and comfortable learning environment and explaining unclear information (Singa et al., 2024). Family is crucial in giving rural students the strength and support they needed because parents appreciated the importance of pursuing academic aspirations, even though they had not attended college themselves (Whiteside, 2021). Lastly self-motivation students when facing emotional hurdles like the fear of failing, keep pushing themselves by some internalized characteristics (Whiteside, 2021)

2.4.3 CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESS OF ENHANCING THE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TVET COLLEGE

2.4.3.1 Creation of academic support

The condition to facilitate smooth transition is through peer mentoring is when an upper-class student with greater experience helps an underclass student with their academic, social or emotional needs (Lane, 2020). To facilitate transition by providing academic support, senior students share their personal experiences with new first year students. Conditions or implementation requires cooperation from college management with the power to direct college funds, space and time, that will enable setting schedule for tutoring, recruiting and training. Tutoring is most effective strategy because tutors build strong relationship with students and tailor training to their strengths and needs (White, Groom-Thomas and Loeb, 2023). In contrast, peer mentorship boost self-esteem since mentors offer personalized counsel based on personal experiences, fostering trust and motivation to attain goals, improve time management and organizational skills. Selected mentors understand their backgrounds, experiences, and interests as well as those who have recently gone through the college admissions.

The program focuses on time management and utilization of support services about English language competency, student required to enrol in academic literacy module, to increase by giving students with lower English proficiency (Lan, Sam, Keo & Roeut, 2024).

Students score below 50% classified as at-risk students and maybe asked to fill out a questionnaire that identifies their areas of concern. Therefore, college tutors and student advisors, need to have one on one sessions to address issues, correct mistakes and take control of their own academic performance and career (Loots et al., 2024). Students with high learning

motivation study more rigorously, leading to improved academic accomplishment (Singa et al., 2024). Approachable lecturers, tutors that are available for consultation when we don't understand clearly in class, and formation of study groups and college implement an open-door policy to facilitate open contact, feedback and discussion concerning student wellbeing issues (Masaiti, 2020). Educators ought to concentrate on imparting the requisite cognitive skills for academic mastery. College programs intend to widen access to postsecondary education for rural students, those from economically disadvantaged and marginalized, they provide supportive services such as mentoring, tutoring and career counselling, to encourage access to postsecondary education. Additionally, offer financial literacy resources and assist students in preparing for college entrance exams (King, 2023)

2.4.3.2 Establishment of Career guidance and counselling

Another aspect, marketing and communications campaign that include high schools' visits and prospective students to enlighten students about career options and educational opportunities by interacting with high school students and counsellors (Makola et al., 2023). They may be role models to motivate students positively affect their professional decision, emphasizing accomplished alumni and is a potent strategy to draw students to different kinds of postsecondary education programs. Students should not be the only one served by school counsellors; parents also should be included in workshops to establish sufficient career guidance. Both School and college counsellors it is their responsibility to ensure unique needs for their student population are met.

Career guidance and counselling may be implemented in a conditions of general special career day, career class day and class meetings. Furthermore, enhancing teacher capacity training and providing access to pertinent career guidance resources could potentially enhance the way career counselling and guidance are implementation (Farao & du Plessis, 2024). Thus, educating school administrators about the importance of career counselling and assistance in education is likely to raise awareness of the services availability and use in the fields of education and work (Otwine et al., 2022). At the expense of support that all students need in relation to their educational and professional decisions, career counsellors frequently focus a large portion of their time on the behavioural and learning problems student. Additionally, guidance on such decisions typically emphasises immediate educational choices rather than longer-term and occupational choices for careers. Advisors with expertise in the career paths associated with each topic can offer

customised guidance on classes, internships and employment opportunities, improving students' capacity to make wise decisions (McCarthy, 2023).

Educational institutions increase their efforts in creating appropriate career development plans, strategies or programs that involve students' ins successful career counselling activities such as Career training programs to improve the employability of graduate. Career training mentoring program may improve understanding of students' employability, personal development plans, career interests, career aspirations (Okolie, Nwajiuba, Binuomote, Ehiobuche, Igu, and Ajoke, 2020)

2.4.3.3 Availability and accessibility of educational resources

To address the issue of availability and accessibility of resources the rigorous procurement procedure, the scarcity of funding, the poor maintenance of educational resources and inadequate supply of educational resources, need to be attended. Thus, campus managers employed tactics to lessen difficulties by preparing instructional materials in advance, closely monitoring of available resources, working with other campuses and colleges and keeping all parties informed (Mbatha, 2021)

2.4.3.4 Establishment of support regarding delays of NSFAS payment

The NSFAS should keep publishing and adhering to schedules that specify the precise dates on which TVET students will receive their pay-outs to address the unpredictability of allowances. Additionally, NSFAS should make sure that payments are made on these days (Powell, 2024). TVET colleges require sufficient funding, facilities, technology, and resources, institution need to improve their reputation and appeal to potential students by making sure they have access to these resources (Makola et al., 2023). Finances affects a person's emotional, mental or behavioural health, affect functioning in significant spheres of life and are frequently upsetting (Monroe, 2023).

2.4.3.5 Social and cultural adjustment support

Successful conditions for social and cultural adjustment are where rural students developing a strong sense of who they are as learners motivate them to persevere and offer some resilience when they encounter future academic obstacles (Cameron & Rideout, 2022). Additionally, to

support first year student social and culturally, conditions where students are open to advice and encouragement to enhance their study techniques, peers' mentors also are important providers of intellectual and social support for rural students (Woodgate, Gonzalez, Demczuk, Snow, Barriage, and Kirk, 2020). In this regard, college need to provide regular and continuous opportunities for student to interact with one another in the classroom and throughout other campus events that assist students to adjust to college life (Cameron & Rideout, 2022).

2.4.4 POSSIBLE THREATS THAT MAY HAMPER SUCCESS OF ENHANCING THE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENS TO TVET COLLEGE

2.4.4.1 Poor academic performance

College educators have no direct control over community deprivation and that the wellbeing of rural students linked to neighbourhood effects (Lindorff, 2020). Lack of funds is another threat hinder college and academic professionals to provide first year students with efficient academic support services that includes extra classes, peer tutoring, peer mentoring. As a result, rural students perform poor that led to increased dropout rates.

2.4.4.2 Limited time and resources devoted to career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling remain a challenge to first year rural students that leave them feeling unsupported and overwhelm because they don't likely feel content with their occupations and remain dedicated to them over long run when they make well-informed professional decisions based on assessments of their aptitudes, values, interests and personal environment fit (Rosvall, 2020). The distance between many rural towns and institutions of higher learning, student is less exposed to the process and culture of higher education. Additionally, financial and logistical challenges, because are less exposed to a wider range of job discipline, their knowledge, attitudes, and expectations regarding their prospects may be limited. These students are impacted by a lack of career awareness, since it restricts the comprehension of possible career paths, that may stressful and results in professional anxiety (Gati and Kulcsar, 2021).

Limited time and resources devoted to career guidance and counselling services, inadequate and awareness among students, teachers, parents and policy makers, lack of support school management and administrators and poor policy implementation, has resulted in a relatively low level of career guidance and counselling services provided in schools, which may help to explain

why these services continue to have no impact on student career decisions as they transition between careers (Otwine et al., 2022).

2.4.4.3 Frustration due to lack of educational resources

Lack of educational resources funds and budgetary constraints prevent institutions from meeting the growing demand for mental health services, further putting additional strain on both present staff and students. Students who experience these situations frequently have greater levels of anxiety and despair, feeling alienated and find it difficult to balance their personal and academic obligations.

2.4.4.4 Increase in dropout due the delay of NSFAS allowances payment

The NSFAS funding was created to address the problems of low socioeconomic background student limited access to and achievement in higher education institutions due to financial limits. However, numerous challenges such as insufficient funding, delayed payment of NSFAS, strict NSFAS requirements, poor communication contributes to student dropout. The SA government are concern about the dropout rate of rural students. Additionally, other reasons for early departure could be that rural students were not informed, not contacted about their payments in a timely manner (Mabuza, 2020). The financial structure of NSFAS has an impact of college dropouts' decisions, because for certain study-related costs such as tuition, books and accommodation, some students only receive partial financing from NSFAS, while others receive full funding (Mabuza, 2020). The program unpredictable nature and prolonged processing wait for student payments at the start of the college year, student who were already underprivileged before applying to NSFAS may be even more at risk of debts and forces transactional sexual relationships (Powel, Muronda and Tini, 2024). Thus challenge persist due unemployment significantly affects SA graduates' ability to repay their NSFA loans

2.4.4.5 Stereotypes and biases against rural backgrounds

In college, rural students often report feeling isolated and out of place, that negatively impacts their social integration and intellectual engagement (Stough-Hunter and Lekies, 2023). Stereotypes and prejudices against rural residents exacerbate this disparity and influence their engagement in social and academic activities as well as their sense of self (Névéol, Dupont,

Bezançon, & Fort, 2022). It could be challenging for rural students with a strong feeling of connection to others to settle at college (Ricks & Warren, 2021).

2.4.5 EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS TO ENHANCE THE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TO TVET COLLEGE

2.4.5.1 Academic support programs

Academic support programs, instructors possess the ability to recognize student emotions as a crucial component of learning and build an emotional connection during a one-on-one academic skill development session. Furthermore, through cooperation, students and academic support professionals may build trust-based learning connections. Moreover, students may practice skills and get expert feedback in low stakes, encouraging setting during academic skill development sessions (Voisin et al., 2023). Academic support programs boost academic success of rural students by fostering student wellbeing, as it is important to understand students' unique needs (Lindorff, 2020). Academic support program includes extra classes, peer tutoring and peer mentoring.

2.4.5.2 Awareness of diverse career paths

Awareness of career and technical education programs connects high school students to college and professional opportunities, including work-based learning, job-oriented routes, and early career exploration, which may improve labour market results (Quayson, 2024). Career counselling has recently come to be recognized as a crucial instrument for educating young graduates about new professions, skills and attitudes that are always changing and evolving (Rosvall, 2020). Traditionally, talent-matching techniques like assessing individual capacities and organising career counselling were the foundation.

Counsellors may also use the career path as a guide to help students create a more systematic career planning process. It is crucial that each student receives personality based guidance when planning their career paths, by providing a variety of career routes based on these profiles and personalities, students to have freedom to try different approaches to completing their career planning, as every student has unique learning experiences and career planning needs (Rasul, Nor, & Amat, S., 2021). Career counselling is important and includes activities in the institution's

interdepartmental exhibitions, career seminars, weekly assemblies, orientation weeks, alumni expert talks and industrial visits (Rasul et al., 2021).

2.4.5.3 Availability and accessibility of educational resources

The provision of high quality and pertinent education in TVET institutions depends critically on the availability of resources, facilities and equipment, that brings desire to enroll in a TVET college with the guarantee of success generated by high quality instruction (Ongulu and Ibrahim, 2021).

2.4.5.4 Financial support

The increased financial resources given to NSFAS demonstrates the government's dedication to supporting higher and lowering financial obstacles for students from underprivileged backgrounds. The expansion of NSFAS to include students enrolled in TVET, the improvement is a strategic step in the direction of a more inclusive and thorough method of financial assistance provision (Yende, 2024).

2.5.5.5 Social and cultural adjustment support

College must offer specialised assistance that closes the gap between home and campus contexts to address issues of social and cultural adjustment challenges, with peer mentoring programs encourage cultural inclusivity, facilitate this adjustment, and create a more welcoming college environment (Woodgate et al., 2020).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the operational concepts, theoretical framework, and objectives of SIT as theoretical framework. Ontology of SIT, Epistemology of SIT, Rhetoric and relationship between the researcher and participants, furthermore, the use of SIT theoretical framework in the study as oppose positivism. Finally, the chapter provided the discussion of literature related to TVET College and literature related to objectives. The next chapter, chapter three discuss research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is about enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. The previous chapter discussed the theoretical framework and literature review couching the study to bring the reader close to the study. This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to enhance student transition from rural high school to TVET College. To address the aim of the study, this chapter explains the methodology and design employed in the study. Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the methodology generating data. The principles and objectives of PAR discussed and how it relates to SIT as the theoretical framework within which this study is located. The chapter outlines reasons behind the selection of PAR as a methodology for generating data and outlines how used to form the framework, to identify priorities and come up with the plan of action to generate data. A summary of the chapter provided at the end.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study employs a qualitative research approach to achieve the objectives of research study. According to Ugwu and Eze, (2023), qualitative research is defined as examining the nature of phenomena, including their qualities, different manifestations, context or potential point of view. Additionally, inductive approach to qualitative research improves our comprehension of first year rural student experiences in TVET College. Furthermore, qualitative research understands the world through eyes of people experiences, giving context and specifics about the process people go through in a circumstance (Maher & Dertadian, 2018). Hence the study seeks to understand the human experience they are examining.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology employed in this study is Participatory Action Research (PAR). Research methodology is the road map that leads researchers throughout their investigation, while research design serves as compass that offers an overall framework to direct the study. These assists study to describe how the selected techniques of focus groups are specifically suitable to gather the data (Abuh, Eneche, Ahmed & Idakwoji, 2021). The two are related and used in this study because involves the collection of data and the analysis using tools

and processes that are influenced by a set of assumptions and standards that support PAR paradigm that is appropriate for the study. PAR uses qualitative research methods to delve into the existed practices of participants with the aim to describe and understand the social issue, rather than predict or control it (Spencer, Leonard, Jessiman, Kaluzeviciute-Moreton, Limmer & Kidger 2024 & Lake & Wendland, 2018). Thus, PAR lies within the interpretivist paradigm where the focus is on subjective meaning making to understands the meaning participants give to their experiences (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020)

The paradigm encouraging active participation in participants in the study and exert authority over the goals and results of the research (Dudgeon et al., 2020). Moreover, PAR as paradigm proposes an equal role for those who stand to gain from the study and recognize the importance of their expertise and understanding (Dudgeon et al., 2020). In this regard, this study regard participant as experts because they understand their situation better with the purpose of bringing change to the lives of affected individuals

3.3.2 Definition of PAR (Participatory action research)

PAR combines participation of teamwork allowing people to become involved to address challenges and bring solutions. Individuals are those who experience challenges that participate in a process of planning, acting, implementing and evaluating the outcome of action (Canlas and Karpudewan, 2020). The collaborations led to new theoretical insights and useful instruments for tackling social concerns resulting from the cooperative approach. In this study, collaboration comprises with first year rural students, SSS official, Lecturers, Senior Lecturer and HOD, with the aim of enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.

3.3.3 Origins of PAR

Historical overview of PAR found in the more established field of Kurt Lewin (1944) action research, with cooperation and resolving social problems are highly valued in both approaches (Mertler, 2019). Action research sought to break away from traditional research, where academics had all authority by encouraging active engagement. In contrast, PAR enables, participants to share decision-making and shape the study direction (Ammentorp, 2018). Kurt Lewin (1944), specialised in studying social issues like discrimination and using that information to effect positive change, is widely regarded as a pioneer in action research (Cornish et al., 2023 & De Oliveira, 2023).

Lewin's ideas enabled the collaborative and change-oriented technique that now defines PAR and according to people who are experiencing problems ought to be involved in finding solutions (De Oliveira, 2023). PAR, values collaboration, traditional research sometimes positions researchers as sole authorities on a certain topic (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020; Jacobs, 2018). In this regard, PAR emerged as a result of initiatives of cooperative inquiry that prioritised the needs and opinions of study participants (Rappaport, 2020)

3.3.4 Relationship between researcher and participants

The aim of the study is to enhance the transition of rural high schools to TVET colleges. In this context PAR highlights, the value of collaborating closely with the stakeholders, which includes participants in the study process like first-year rural high school students and TVET College professionals (Johnston & Flynn, 2021). Through collaboration, both researcher and participants are better able to comprehend the difficulties that student encounter, drawing from the real-world experiences of all parties involved. They also provide ideas and innovative methods to overcome these challenges and improve the transition process. To comprehend how social injustices, contribute to the difficulties of transition. The relationship between researcher and participants aim to create settings and connections that support the research process because PAR success is in leveraging its partner's diverse skill sets and competencies through crucial talks (Cornish et al., 2023).

3.3.5 PAR ontology

PAR provides a valuable framework for engaging with the nature of realities in a way that is inclusive, collaborative, and action oriented (De Oliveria, 2023). In other words, it recognizes the legitimacy of diverse knowledge system and emphasizes the importance of knowledge being relevant and useful for improving people's lives.

3.3.6 PAR epistemology

PAR challenges the traditional single view of reality, instead claim the various realities that co-researchers varied historical interests, experiences, and social practices contributed to the study process acknowledged by PAR (Mokoena, 2017). This fosters a more inclusive understanding of knowledge as multiple realities system and context dependant. PAR promoted as a fun and

practical approach for individuals to get involved in deep and pertinent learning, socio-political growth, collective action and knowledge (Dancis, Coleman & Ellison, E.R., 2023).

3.4 APPLICATION OF PAR PRINCIPLES IN THE STUDY

This sub-section will discuss the key principles of PAR and how they have been applied in this study.

3.4.1 Collaboration between researcher and participants

PAR requires collaboration among academics, many of whom frequently interact with students from underrepresented backgrounds (Wright, 2021). This aligns with the study objectives of comprehending how students view their transitional difficulties. PAR has the capacity to solve issues, bring about constructive change and give voice to under-represented students. PAR gives students' opportunities to be heard and take part in conversation about their own experiences, even if they may feel like have no voice but with transitional justice issues, this may be crucial (De Oliveira, 2023).

PAR actively helps vulnerable groups, such as first year rural students. They are empowered by the research process to critically examine their circumstances, evaluate obstacles and work together to create solutions. Tetui et al. (2017) point out that PAR actively engages vulnerable populations like first-year rural students. The research process empowers them to question their situation, analyse challenges, and develop solutions collaboratively. The power of PAR to link theory, methodology, and practical problems, by creating transferable ideas and resource that encourage rural first year students to reflect on their experiences and behaviour in the TVET College setting. PAR seeks to unite researchers and participants to advance knowledge, make sense of real-life circumstances and effect good change through cooperative action (Chevalier and Buckles, 2019).

3.4.2 Democratic approach

This study and PAR aim to integrate all voices, especially marginalised rural first year students in TVET College by encouraging a more democratic approach to knowledge generation (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020). In this sense, power and information are distributed more fairly, question top-down decision-making, that may have a revolutionary effect on participants, instead

encourage promotion of power relations among participants (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). This encourages a more democratic method of conducting research and gives participants ability to push for reform (Martin, 2018). Additionally, encourages equal involvement because when playing field is levelled, all interested participants may participate in the research process (De Oliveria's, 2023)

PAR acknowledges the role that social connections play in helping people adjust to a new situation by providing social support services (Mentler, 2018). Additionally, PAR can accommodate a variety of theoretical orientations and research methods. Knowledge gained through research used to inform practical interventions that improve the social environment of the college and ease the transition for rural students (Martin & Dismuke, 2018).

3.4.3 Value of Lived Experiences

This study and PAR acknowledge student prior experiences, knowledge, and abilities by collaborating with researchers to co-create knowledge. This better meets the priorities and needs of first year rural students because prioritising cooperation and respecting lived experience as legitimate sources of knowledge led to empowerment (Lloyd-Evans, 2023). Thus, acknowledging their distinct viewpoint and the value it adds comprehending the problem, value their lived experiences.

Recognizing that the knowledge generated belong to both participants and researchers, promotes sense of ownership (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020). PAR places a strong emphasis on including people at every stage of the research process, not only start or finish (Budig et al., 2018). Rural first year students may produce information that may contribute to societal change and enhance the transition experience for themselves. This gives students the opportunity to take charge of the research and become active agents due to strong relationship established between students and college staff. (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). In this regard, PAR places a high priority on the importance of lived experiences to uncover and resolve underlying disparities (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020).

3.4.4 Freedom from oppressive unbearable situations

Existing power systems that could support oppressive circumstances may be contested by PAR, in this study participants gain agency and have the potential to alter those structures when they

have a say in the research and solutions that are developed (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020). The study and PAR may analyse issues in a community and uncover the underlying reasons of oppression, by creating awareness of the issues impacting them through involvement and discourse. This makes possible to comprehend the difficulties rural first have when transitioning to TVET College in a more complex way.

PAR has the potential to increase institutions responsiveness, college may learn a great deal about the experiences students and apply that to enhance first year rural students' transition and improve their procedures on support services (Tetui et al. (2017). This cooperative approach may result in broader viewpoints that go beyond, because enables participants to talk, think and gain knowledge from one another (Sendall et al., 2018)

3.4.5 Empowerment and capacitation

PAR focus placed on empowering participants through knowledge production (De Oliveria's, 2023). Empowerment comes from both students and TVET staff taking an active role in bringing about change in the higher education system. As a result, PAR departs from conventional paradigm where academics serve as the only experts, instead acknowledges participants' important knowledge of their own lived experiences and societal problems they encounter and gives participants ability to take charge (Cusack et al., 2018). Therefore, participants are provided with a voice and role in directing the research process

PAR seeks to empower participants through peer research support and support social change (Peltier, 2018; Robins & Wilson, 2015). The shared power dynamic makes it possible to co-create knowledge (Loewenson et al., 2014). Use of PAR to assist rural students make the transition to college by offering a framework for schools and colleges to evaluate and enhance their methods (Sadowska & Laffy, 2015). Thus, using PAR approach give priority to participants' perspectives (Chevalier, 2019).

3.5 WEAKNESSES OF PAR STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE WEAKNESSES ON THE STUDY

The weaknesses are with regard to universities' failure to recognise the extra time and effort needed by PAR researchers and lack of exposure to training and preparation for community-based participation action research (Dudgeon et al., 2020). As a results, novices may find it difficult to comprehend the fundamental values and principles that characterize PAR. Participants

may have different backgrounds and level of competence, as well as different goals, values and viewpoints on the study issue, may be difficult and may result to disagreement over the objectives, procedures, interpretations and conclusions. This may have an impact time spend establish rapport and trust with community members (Lake & Wendland, 2018).

The study will ensure fair distribution of power, so that participants have a big say in how research process should unfold (De Oliveria's 2023). Additionally, the study will offer training sessions to give participants the abilities and information they need to participate successfully to mitigate vulnerabilities. Moreover, the study with shared objective of resolving a societal issue and bringing about constructive change, may assist to heal potential differences in viewpoints and values (Stapleton, 2021)

3.4 SUITABILITY OF PAR FOR THIS STUDY

PAR is suitable because participants gain thoughtful of the world with the aim of improving through change (Mokoena, 2017). To bring meaningful change in the context of social justice, the study guided towards action centred practice by PAR, a type of engaged, human inquiry that emphasises reflection and cooperation with participants (Guy, Feldman, Cain, Leesman & Hood, 2020). Furthermore, PAR shows that people have the right to decide how they transform, it is necessary for them to engage in the process of evaluating their own solutions that they oversee as they are involved in the entire process (Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020). PAR improve the lives of those being studied and is action oriented and context bound.

PAR places a strong emphasis on participants and researchers working collaboratively to comprehend a situation, recognise issues and provide solutions (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020; Mertler, 2019). Weinberg, Trott & Sample McMeeking, (2018) concur about the entire process of PAR that starts from determining the issue to be addressed, formulating research questions, choosing suitable methodologies and results, gathering and evaluating data and turning the research into a plan of action. Additionally, to researching social concerns, the objective is to act and bring constructive change (Lloyd-Evans, 2023; De Oliveria, 2023). A key component of PAR is information and lesson sharing, that benefits not only the research participants but also those dealing with comparable issues.

3.6 PAR PROCESS

PAR becomes powerful tool research that is not just informative, but also transforming and empowering for the persons involved for positive social change with cyclical steps includes phases of reflect, plan, act and implement as interactive process (Malovics, Mereine Berki, & Mihaly, 2021). PAR is a dynamic or interactive journey rather than a strict linear one, and learning and change happen throughout the study cycle, not only at the end (Brydon-Miller, Kral & Ortiz Aragon, 2020). PAR builds a foundation for continued action and a more just and equitable future by uniting people, empowering participation, and cultivating collaborations (Brydon-Miller et al, 2020). Additionally, PAR serve as co-learners and facilitators, enabling communities to take active role in bringing about change in their own environments, more efficient, long lasting and equitable solutions result from the collaborative approach (Brydon-Miller et al, 2020).

Phase 1: Preparation

Participatory Action Research (PAR) to involve participants within the design and implementation of framework to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College (Smith, Danford, Darnell, Larrazabal, & Abdellatif, 2021). Researchers build relationship and building rapport with the first-year students prior to their involvement. The study aimed to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College to address challenges experienced by these students (see 2.4.1.1) literature. Permission to conduct study was granted.

Participants received emails and were approach to join the PAR group, while participants and the researcher form bonds and in self-awareness for a fruitful cooperative and participatory process (Spencer et al, 2024; Schiller, et al 2021; & Carpenter, 2023). In the first meeting with the participants, we all introduced ourselves. I explained the study and the aim of what this study is intended to accomplish. PAR core principles encourage active participation of all participants since they are all equal partners.

At the following meetings, we had fruitful discussions, and the team understood the nature of rural first year students and the transition challenges they experienced. All participants were eager to share their experiences with the aim to develop strategies. To achieve the objectives of the study the team members were at the centre of the research process including myself as temporary facilitator, to work towards the same goal. From the discussions of the title and the aim of the study, participants came to realize the existing social structure that they perceive unjust as they became aware of unfairness of the existing social structure, while identifying the challenges of

first year student transition at TVET College. Participants believe that PAR is suitable methodology and believes that student transition of first year students need to be enhanced.

Phase 2: Plan of action

After the preparation phase, was the planning phase that constitutes with aspects necessary to address the challenges identified in the previous phase. The plan of action is reviewed and the resources, and strategies are devised (Haesebaert et al, 2018). This entails establishing objectives determining intervention tactics, and detailing data collection techniques (Schiller, et al 2021; Carpenter, 2023). This critical time, that is probably the start of research process, emphasizes the value of a solid foundational stage since it is necessary to give students the tools, they need to fully engage to meet the objective of making a meaningful contribution (Schiller, et al 2021). Additionally, during this phase the problems of students' transition discussed and analysed with the idea to generate possible solutions or areas for improvement and a plan for addressing the selected challenges with workable solutions (Rahmelia, Haloho, Pongoh & Purwanto, 2022).

Phase 3: Reflection

At the first meeting while collecting invitation forms, students' participants raise their discomfort of sharing their experiences with TVET staff participants present. The issue was immediately addressed by having mutual agreement with participants that they will form two focus groups of students and TVET staff, one meeting be held when discussing strategies, plan of action and implementation. Thereafter, another agreement was to share roles and responsibilities that would rotate. The rotation applied to all participants including the one-off facilitating in the group, as I was temporarily facilitating. Thus, before the start of the meeting participants decide that who is taking the role of scribe, timekeeper or facilitator.

Phase 4: Implementation

The intended activities are carried out, such as implementing an intervention, changing practice or establishing a new program, researcher and participants selected from the list of strategies to implement motivational sessions for all first-year students as their action plan (Haesebaert et al, 2018). PAR defines action as making decisions, creating plans and executing out actions to achieve goals (Guy, Feldman, Cain, Leesman, & Hood 2020.) The effects of the implemented

actions observed and documented (Haesebaert et al, 2018). This shared observation ensures everyone involved is collecting and analysing data from the same perspective (Snapp et al, 2023). The strength and opportunities of motivating sessions were a significant predictor of learning and accomplishment. Students who are more motivated to study endure longer, put up higher quality effort, learn more deeply and perform better in class. Personnel invited were all present and provided relevant information to students, who were able to ask questions. And it is claimed that it will help students become better college students by providing them with the motivation and determination to achieve. Weaknesses and threats included time, as most students utilize paid cabs and buses to go to and from campus, while some claim to walk considerable distances to their private residences. Because of time constraints, they missed out on critical information. And negative peer influence may distract them from education and finances.

Insights gained from observing the effects of the actions inform the next round of reflection and planning to a continuous process of improvement and knowledge generation. The results of the activities taken, noted and recorded, by all participants for the reflection purposes, this shared observation assists subsequent round of planning and reflection that is informed by insights gathered from observing the results of actions that contribute to an ongoing process of knowledge development and improvement (Snapp et al, 2023). PAR group may choose to improve on their selected solutions, investigate completely different possibilities or rephrase the original problem statement (Brydon-Miller, Kral & Ortiz Aragon, 2020).

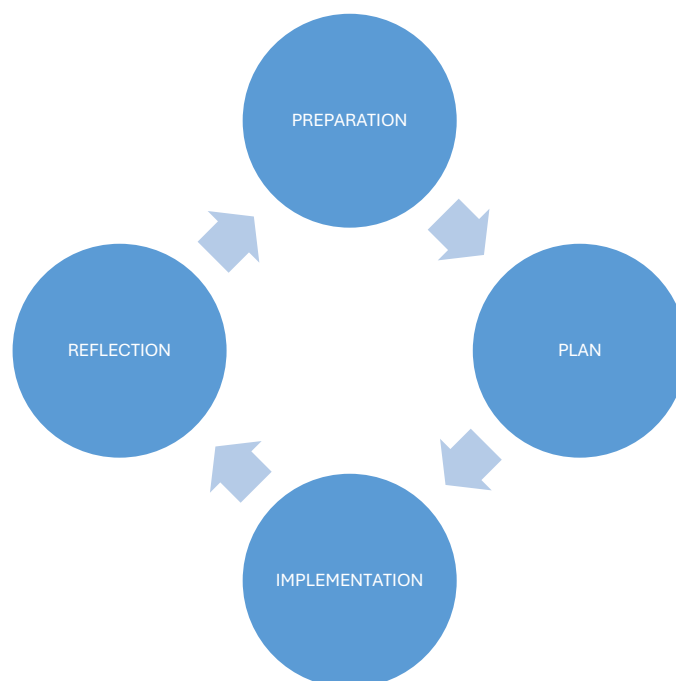


Figure 1: adapted from Tsotetsi (2013)

3.7 DATA GENERATION METHODS

Focus group used in this study as a primary data collection method. Ethical approval is granted by University of Free State **Ref No.: UFS-HSD2022/2058/23**. Additionally, both PAR and thematic analysis as a method of data analysis will be used in this study.

3.7.1 Focus groups

Focus groups used to generate data are organized group discussions intended to gather opinions on a certain topic of interest in a relaxed, non-threatening setting (Nared & Bole, 2020). Focus groups chosen in this study because produce complicated information at a low cost in a short period of time and allow for the many perspectives or reactions required on a particular topic (Gundumogula, 2020). Additionally, for qualitative research, focus groups are invaluable instrument that facilitates in-depth discussion and concept discover (Nared & Bole, 2020). Focus groups innately participatory in nature, which is founded on group activities, regarded as effective instrument for participatory research approaches that provide participants with rich learning opportunities and give researcher insightful information.

In contrast to a discussion, I serve as a facilitator to direct and steer the conversation in accordance with the study objectives and questions, making sure that all topics are covered within the allocated time (Taba & Bagra, 2024). Additionally, I foster a welcoming and safe space where participants freely express their ideas and experiences (Taba & Bagra, 2024). Through PAR, I will collaborate with participants to tackle real world issues. Through PAR collaboration real-world challenges are addressed, because ideas are built and participants exchange perspectives. Participants will share their perspectives, building on each other's ideas and experiences, which can spark new insights (Nared & Bole, 2020). In this study, focus group used as a tool for promoting self-reflection, open-mindedness and exposure to diverse viewpoints.

With the participants' consent, the interview was recorded on audio tape and the researcher took notes so that she could evaluate the responses pose follow-up questions. In order to better understand the phenomenon being studied and to capture the depth of the focus group experience, audio recording was used in this study. The PAR cycle was used to give participants the freedom to participate (Cohen et al, 2018).

3.8 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Braun, and Clarke, 2022 (Thematic analysis phases)

Phase 1

I familiarized myself with data reread each transcript multiple times, listening to interview recording before transcribing, that assisted me to obtain a thorough comprehension of data. This allowed me to focus solely on recalling gestures that might not captures in the notes. I was the principal investigator that made everything possible because I was more familiar with data.

Phase 2

Data is relevant to research questions and was assigned the codes. There was no potential important data overlooked; only irrelevant data may be discarded.

Phase 3

After generating initial codes, the data carefully reviewed to assess how data assess how different codes relate to each other. For example, I searched for shared meaning patterns or concepts that connect similar codes and were merged, into single codes.

Phase 4

In this phase I ensured that each theme represents the coded data discard or merge theme if they are too weak.

Phase 5

Data examined and items grouped, under a theme to identify shared patterns and variations. The chosen extracts should directly support the theme's narrative and highlight insights.

Phase 6

The report clearly demonstrates how the themes address the research question. By starting a theme that sets the tone or provides a foundational understanding of the data. Present themes in naturally progress, allowing each theme to build upon the previous one while remain self-contained.

3.9 RESEARCH SITE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

3.9.1 Research Site

The research site in this study is a TVET college in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. There are four TVET colleges in Free State. The college in this study situated in a rural area of the Eastern Free State. Most students enrolled in this college come from rural high schools around the provinces of Free State and KwaZulu Natal.

3.9.2 SWOT analysis

Strength and opportunities for the research site, TVET officials work in the same campus and student also from same campus. Relationship between participants already exists, and participants understand process and procedure of college, Campus management was included in a team.

Threats and weaknesses, most challenging for participants was time, they could not join discussions after school due to some use arranged transport, and for example bus or paid taxi to their private residents or accommodation, other student participant indicated that they are going to fetch kids at day care centre. Most TVET officials failed regular meetings due to the amount of work they are expected to perform at college that was even impossible to finish all the work at the college

3.9.3 Sampling Technique

Participants in this study are individuals who possess information, experiences or traits related to the topic being studied (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). In this regard, selection enables researchers to collect detailed information from a set of people who possess traits that are essential to the study. Ten participants selected from study using purposive sampling based on their utility, credibility, and time and resource availability. The method of random purposive sampling assists the researcher gather comprehensive data regarding the research issues (Aboagye, Yawson & Appiah, 2020). Participants in this study are one HOD, Senior lecturer, Lecturer, SSS official and four first year students from rural high school. These participants are selected based on their expertise (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Additionally, their expert opinion puts them in contact with the situation and their viewpoints have the potential to influence TVET College conditions (Cohen et al, 2018).

Purposive sampling is a great fit for qualitative research and random strengthen credibility of research and consider transparent about the limitations when generalizing the findings (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood 2015). To ensure trustworthiness people with relevant experiences were included to improve credibility (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shear, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020).

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The development of structured ethical reflections was a tangible implementation and the framework of PAR, with the aim to foresee and reduce harm to address anticipated ethical difficulties before they materialise (Guy et al., 2020). Both researcher and participants define values that guide the current study, with the nature of PAR more thorough ethical considerations from both participants and co-researchers that go beyond decision made are required (Guy et al., 2020). The ethics clearance committee of the Faculty of Education and the University of the Free State granted permission to conduct this research study. A consent letter was sent to students and TVET College staff, requesting their participation in the study. Participants were treated with respect regardless of age, gender, religion, political beliefs or lifestyle and they and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study any time (Mirza, Mirza & Ballalem, 2023).

Researcher will maintain respectful communication, create a comfortable space for participants to share honestly and explain her role and limitations as a researcher to avoid blurring professional lines (Mirza et al, 2023). Additionally, to reduce the risk of biased responses or distorted data due to participant discomfort or researcher influence (Mirza et al, 2023). Thus, actions lead to more credible and impactful PAR research that will benefit both researcher and the communities they collaborate with (Brydon-Miller, Kral & Ortiz Aragon, 2020). Informed consent letter sent every participant stating the objective and assuring participants that there are no incentives/rewards for participating (Mirza et al, 2023). Furthermore, participants assured that their identities protected and their data anonymized when reporting findings (Mirza et al, 2023). Moreover, informed that they will receive a copy of their responses, interviews or transcript, to prevent any misinterpretation of data and falsification of findings (Mirza et al, 2023)

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed PAR as a design and methodology in qualitative research. The origins, ontology, epistemology and suitability of PAR in the study. The principles of PAR, weaknesses of PAR, sampling technique and PAR processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of study is to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. This chapter discusses, analyses of the findings of data generated to attain the goal of the study. PAR used as the approach of gathering data and objectives of the study were followed to present, interpret and discussed. Objective one, to justify that there is need to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. Objective two, to identify aspects that are necessary to enhance the transition of rural high school students. Objective three, to determine the conditions under which enhancing student transition would be successful implemented. Objective four, the potential challenges to the success regarding the implementation of enhancement of student transition. Objective five, what can be done to enhance the transition of rural high school student to TVET College. Most South African TVET Colleges are guided by SSS Framework (2008) on how to provide support to all college students. However, majority of SA TVET Colleges do not comply, they also lack effective policy implementation and coordination.

This study applied thematic analysis to analyze data, and five themes emerged from empirical data. Insufficient academic support, Limited career guidance, limited educational resources, financial constraints due to late payment of NSFAS and limited cultural and social adjustment. At the end of the chapter is chapter summary with the indication of what is expected in the next chapter. I used abbreviations to represent all participants in this chapter to hide their identity. Students are represented as S1, S2, S3, S4; Lecturers as L1, L2, Senior lecturer as SL, and Head of Department as HOD; and student liaison officer as SLO. The next section discusses objective one.

4.2 THE NEED TO ENHANCE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TVET COLLEGE

The first objective of this study identifies challenges to the success to enhance the transition of rural students to TVET College.

4.2.1 Insufficient academic support

The transition from high school to college poses significant challenges for rural students, largely due to inadequate support from the institution particularly student support services (SSS) unit. The circumstances are made worse by limited number of officials working at SSS unit and limited resources at TVET colleges. DHET policy and framework state clearly that college through SSS unit should provide a holistic service to students from pre-entry, on-course and exit

S 1 *“We lack adequate academic support from high school, even in college, we are not coping even to find assistance on our own for example opportunities to develop academic skills necessary for college success”.*

S 3 *“The teaching method used here, it’s complicated, even if something is explained, for some of us it is difficult to understand, I am afraid to indicate to my lecturers in class that I don’t understand because others are not approachable”.*

S 1 *“In rural high schools, we were copying notes from board, and the teacher explain the course content with our mother tongue, and my mother motivates me”.*

S1 continued *“College fails to understand our rural high school background experience; teaching methods used in class are like one size fits all”*

S 4 *“Yah, they expect us to be the same as our peers, whereas we did not have same resources”.*

S 1 *“For example computer subjects here in college, lecturer will be expecting that everyone has at least basics whereas in high school it is only one computer lab, and we were taken to lab once in two months, depending on the availability of electricity, for some of it is like we don’t know how to operate computer because it feels as it is first time, never taught computer skills with technology”.*

S 2 *“Some of our lecturers tend not have a good attitude, when she must assist me consistently, especially when others grab lesson fast, she become irritated”.*

S1 *“Yah, some are not empathetic, do not understand the pressure we are under, we are given too much work with limited time, when they require that work it’s like we are doing their subject only, whereas they are seven”.*

SLO *“I believe that first year students need to possess certain skills before coming to college in order to succeed or reap the greatest rewards after exerting the greatest amount of effort”.*

L 1 *“Developing necessary study skills, time management skills and computer skills for college, seem to be a challenge for first year students”.*

S 3 *“We are taught English by isiZulu, so there is no how you cannot understand content”.*

S 4 *“I had a big challenge in Marketing subjects and English, because English is a big challenge since it is not my mother language. I also had problems during presentations because of my poor English language skills. I could have done better if understood English very well”.*

S2 *“Sometimes information supplied to us by lecturers’ not adequate, not explaining clear and insufficient time to work on assignments, and others seem not to be well trained to use technology, found myself chasing deadlines instead of grasping the content, even the feedback sometimes we don’t know where to improve”.*

These utterances indicate that students receive limited academic support that lead to academic unpreparedness emanates due to lack of proper foundation or basic information on the content or subject, and their struggle with the TVET curriculum. In this regard, challenge of insufficient academic support starts from high school with teacher centered approach and creates mismatch between school and college, particularly because in college they use student centered approach. The English language is one of the contributory factors for academic struggle to rural students. Furthermore, students are supported by literature that insufficient academic preparation create fear to rural students that they are unfit to meet college student expectations (see 2.4.1.1). I discovered that insufficient academic support for first year rural students impact their academic performance, emotional well-being that led to the increase of high dropout rate.

4.2.2 Limited career guidance

Starting point for all prospective college students is to make choice that match their interests, abilities and aptitude. However, rural students lack information about college, they do not know where to ask for help. Students mentioned that they struggle with transition because of limited information about college, career advising and limited support of family and college. The

dissemination of information by college is inadequate, that poses negative perceptions about TVET. Below are the comments of participants:

S 3 *“We are unable to obtain knowledge about postsecondary education from home or community in rural areas, parents are unable to serve as college resources”.*

S 2 *“My mother did not know how to assist instead she referred me to our relatives”.*

S 4 *“Advising at college was insufficient because I was told that most of the programs are full, I felt that I don’t have variety of options, instead take what is left”.*

S 2 *“During registration period career guidance does not give detailed information as the induction, we may say registration process to enroll NCV at TVET College is ineffective”.*

S 1 *“The induction happens one month after the students have registered and does not serve its purpose, because many students drop out as soon as they find detailed information”.*

S 3 *“We are not making use of SSS unit because of lack information about SSS unit at the college”.*

S 4 *“Method of communication is not efficient, because I believe crucial Information College may make use of SRC’s since us student have group chats. I am trying to find out who I am, and which direction headed, as I embark on journey of alternatives roles, in love, career and beliefs”.*

S 1 *“Some learners are placed in the wrong NCV programs in TVET colleges, when we realize that this is not what I wanted, most they become disengaged in their studies they decide to drop out”.*

S 1 *“I only came to college because do not have anywhere else to go”.*

S 3 *“What we known is that TVET college institution, enroll students who fail or rejected by universities and struggling students”.*

S 1 *“We often opt for TVET colleges when we fail in high school or when we do not get good marks.”*

These utterances indicate that parental involvement is strongly absent, because at the college under study, students typically come from single-parent households. In this regard, there is no proper family with support to access higher education, even the guidance and access to career guidance, also parents have low level of education. Furthermore, it is important offering career

guidance and support to rural students may assist to bridge the gap between their current knowledge and the demands of college.

Moreover, method of communication between college and students is inadequate and there is lack of planning and college do not care for their students. Additionally, that students perceive TVET College as second option and this negative perception about TVET College impact on their self-esteem (see 2.4.1.2). I discovered that limited career for first year rural students, lead to inadequate preparation for college that impact academic development due to dissatisfaction, low engagement and high dropout rates.

4.2.3 Financial constraints due to late payments of NSFAS

Students mentioned their struggle to transition, such as late payment, not receiving payments at all, insufficient financial support and limited financial literacy.

S 3 *“We often receive late payment of NSFAS allowances and is frustrating because landlords take advantage of our vulnerability and the rising cost of living cause more financial burden”.*

S 4 *“My friends and I are struggling a lot due to finances, sometimes we miss classes because we don’t have money for transport and to pay landlords. I nearly dropped out because of NSFAS late payment, my mother had to take a loan, so I can buy food and pay landlords, when making enquiries we receive insufficient information and assistance in NSFAS offices at college”.*

S 1 *“Due to financial burden, some become involved in relationship with sugar daddy for the sake of getting money”.*

S 3 *“One of our friends was abused by landlord, due to inability to pay rent, he said to her, what you could offer since you are not able to pay”.*

S 1 *“Accommodation and transport allowance pose more challenges, because we end up sharing with other students with bad behavior due to the fact that we are not affording to pay accommodation”.*

S 3 *“I am supposed to be using public transport because I am staying far from campus; However, I am walking that long distance, during winter season is not safe. Some students*

were robbed, tried to check for safety location, but places surrounding campus is very limited”.

S 2 *“The conditions of private residences not all of them are in good standard and we are not safe and it is difficult to get to campuses, due to few places for renting, don’t have enough options”.*

S 3 *“I wish that college had campus residences, because sometimes we don’t feel safe in other areas, and college do not care for us”.*

S 4 *“Some roommates come with bad social skills from high school, for instance, I have never partied before enrolling at TVET College, but due to behavior of my roommate, I ended up joining the team”.*

SLO *“Students are assisted to apply online for NSFAS before they start the actual registration”.*

L 2 *“Instead they use transport and accommodation allowances to buy clothes, alcohol and partying”.*

SLO *“The immaturity of NCV entry-level students, along with a lack of instruction on responsible use of NSFAS funds, is identified as a significant issue at the college level”.*

HOD *“Indeed, I concur with fellow participants, but I had a case where students indicated that she was abused by landlord due to not paying accommodation money”*

These utterances indicate that without the proper accommodation on campus becomes stressful and others are exposed to crime. Additionally, students spend most of the time travelling to and from college. Rural students are forced to make special accommodation arrangements away from their family home to pursue their studies. The socio-economic background of rural students, lead to limited parents or family financial support. Furthermore, scarce financial resources often inhibit rural students academically and socially, somehow, they decide to quit due to the financial stress. Moreover, delays in payment of student allowances, has become the norm in recent years, has been identified as the single most crucial issue affecting TVET students’ enrolment and college attendance that contributes to high dropout rate (see 2.4.3.1). The financial struggle of rural students due to their backgrounds and may not have sufficient knowledge of collegiate financial options and budgeting strategies (see 2.4.3.1).

4.2.4 Limited educational resources

Rural students struggle with educational resources such as limited school counselors, career advising, no bridging program for college readiness, and limited exposure to technology, limited high speed internet, libraries, and one personnel in SSS unit.

S 3 *“There is one personnel in SSS unit to assist all campus students, of which is impossible that is why we are not using services because it’s like it does not exists”*

L 2 *“I concur, that is too much for one personnel to be able to assist all students on campus and resources are limited in order to provide support, and there is no system for monitoring and reporting on these SSS unit”.*

L 2 *“Yah that is not fair at all, one official cannot be responsible for all pre-entry support, ongoing support, exit support and SRC matters all of these lead to dysfunctional SSS unit, for instance students with disabilities or special needs, need professionals”.*

S 1 *“Computers in Lab are always occupied, because we are sharing with Nated students, their classes are in the afternoon, immediately when ours cease, so there is no dedicated time for us in computer labs for practicing or doing assignments, therefore I bunk certain classes to complete assignments to internet café or to someone who is having a laptop, due to lack of resources”.*

S 3 *“We don’t have resources like library or computer lab, we are struggling to study or do research, instead in the bookstore there is only few computers and we are many and there are no control measures, because even if you want to type assignment you will find some students sitting there watching soapy”.*

S 1 *“Furthermore, an official working in that bookstore knock off early, and we are attending classes, even if you want to go there during break you won’t find space or computer, always full, those who are using computers they are even sharing”.*

S4 *“Sometimes situation at home or in our private accommodation does not allow us to study well, we come without having touched a book, and there is no conducive environment at the college”.*

S1 *“There is Inadequate infrastructure, we are using mobile classes and there is no space for relaxation or to play”.*

S3 *"In rural high school there was a marked shortage of teachers and learning material and other educational resources such as libraries and computer labs, so this poses more challenges to us, we are not able to practice for computer subjects, can only access computer labs during class time".*

S2 *"Wi-fi spot, it is only one area, not even available in classrooms, we are struggling to do assignments".*

S1 *"I'm unable to check marks on student portal, due to limited access to wi-fi".*

L1 *"Our resources are limited. We do not have a library to motivate our students to read to improve their language abilities" Instead, there is no learning culture, no libraries like well-equipped labs like at universities for students to resort during exams".*

Continued *"We are supposed to have 60% practical's and 40% theory, but it is the opposite due to lack of resources"*

These utterances of indicate inadequate educational facilities such as computer labs and libraries, such as computers, textbooks and advanced courses and access to school counselors, instead they rely on outdated technologies for educational purposes (see 2.4.1.4). Limited resources impact on students' readiness for college because rural students often struggle with standardized test preparation due to the inability to access online resources. Rural high schools are less likely to access college preparation programs due to teacher shortages and limited resources. These circumstances leave rural high school students underprepared for the academic rigor of college, leading to lower performance and high dropout rates due to lack exposure to technology in their lives (see 2.4.1.4). Library serves as a learning area for students, where they can access information online, read books, and study with peers, however, this is not the case for first year students in college, because they are struggling even to prepare for their exams. I discovered that limited educational resources affect students from rural who are already disadvantaged due to pre-college preparation gaps, this affect their academic success, mental wellbeing and transition experience.

4.2.5 Social and cultural adjustment

Rural high school students are at emerging adulthood, this period present unique challenges due to the intersection of developmental tasks and specific rural contexts. These are the challenges

of social and cultural adjustment is difficulty in forming friendship, Independence, curriculum mismatch, negative perception about TVET College.

S1 *"When I arrived here at college, it was difficult, did not know who to approach, even to adapt to new teaching and learning methods is a challenge particularly when you are clueless".*

S3 *"Adapting to new environment of campus life, is not easy but this was daunting experience, discovered independency that means I have to take responsibility and give more attention to my studies in order to succeed".*

S4 *"Eish it's hard, since one needs to adapt to new roles and expectations, of becoming independent".*

L1 *"Rural students struggle to form relationships, interact with others, this challenge stem from differences in cultural background, norms, values and behaviors' of a social and cultural new environment"*

S1 *"I have two types of friends, Friends for social interaction only and friends contribute academically, some friends are distractive in my life and most times are negative and not motivated with academic goals".*

S2 *"In most cases, as first year students we are struggling to balance both social and academic life, navigating independence to establish a sense of identity is difficult".*

S3 *"Yoh, in some instances, friends whom we are sharing residence, some use substances and even like partying".*

S4 *"By enrolling to TVET College, our expectations are to gain vocational skills, instead programs too theory-based and lacked the practical component".*

S1 *"What we are told in high school, when struggling academically, is to enroll with TVET Colleges".*

S2 supported S1 *"Even when we are rejected from universities, we are told that we are good for TVET College, it's like a dumping side".*

L2 *"Students think that when they come to TVET, they will do skills work, whereas there is also the theoretical part, they are not interested in the theoretical aspect, they want to do skills.".*

S3 *“Students concern about the non-availability of some critical resources needed for practical work”.*

L1 *“TVET cannot be everything to everyone, one size fits all, not working at all”*

These utterances indicate the challenges rural students face regarding social and cultural adjustment, adjusting to academic expectations, navigating social and cultural diversity, comparing themselves to others, feeling discouraged, and managing relationships remain as challenge. Furthermore, feeling alienated and struggling to create positive habits like prioritizing daily tasks, managing time effectively, maintaining a nutritious diet (see 2.4.1.5). I discovered that due struggle to form social connections in extracurricular activities, rural students are more likely to experience academic difficulties and increase high dropout rates.

4.3 ASPECTS NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESSFUL ENHANCEMENT OF THE TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TVET COLLEGE

This section focuses on the second objective in attempts to address the identified challenges. There are several aspects necessary for the successful enhancement of the transition of rural high school students to TVET College.

4.3.1 Creation of academic support

Academic assistance programs are crucial for first year students, who often struggle with finances, workloads and family obligations. The academic support programs push and encourage students to work hard at school, get used to the new environment and to make change from previous environment to current levels of study (see 2.4.1.1). below participants discuss aspects that are necessary for creation of academic support, extra classes, peer tutoring, student-faculty relationships and academic program or workshops as they are beneficial to rural high school students.

S4 *“College need to create a supportive and healthier environment assisting us to thrive academically with initiatives of programs to bridge the gap of school and college”.*

S3 *“Yah, college need to provide academic support first year students to manage time and workloads, for instance extra classes and peer tutoring for struggling students”.*

L1 *“Colleges need to implement the language policy and explain academic expectations this should be stated clearly from the orientation programs, struggling students need to be identified, college need to design program for such students. Additionally, we are spending most of the times with students, we may assist to identify struggling students”.*

L2 *“A comprehensive academic support programs will motivate student to work hard and ease the transition for first year students, however, should not be exclusively offered to first year students only”.*

SL *“Peer mentoring may assist rural students to navigate academic challenges, build confidence, and connect with campus resources”.*

These utterances indicate the creation of academic support such as extra classes, peer tutoring and mentoring, student lecturer relationship and transitional program as aspects to address the challenges of insufficient academic support. One participant suggested highly qualified lecturers as one the aspect to address insufficient academic support. TVET College need to tighten recruitment policies, attract qualified and skilled lecturers to ensure long-term success (see 2.4.1.1). College need to have a comprehensive robust student support programs that entail collaborative alliances or partnership among various members and organizational units in college, functioning in an integrated, interdependent, and symbolic manner to deliver comprehensive, holistic support for first year students. (see, 2.4.1.1). Furthermore, one participant indicates implementation of language policy. In this regard, this necessitates the promotion of multilingualism in educational programs to advocates creation of resources, including glossaries and dictionaries that assist students for whom English is a second language and foster the intellectualization of indigenous African languages. The purpose of developing these glossaries is to offer academic support to students with English as an Additional Language (see 4.2.1.1).

4.3.2 Establishment of sufficient career guidance

Aspects that are necessary for establishment of sufficient career guidance are college visits in high schools, career mentorship program, open days, sufficient information in college website

S1 *“Guidance from counselors may assist us students in refining their career objectives”.*

S2 *“In high school if we can have college visits to speak to students about their careers and provide guidance”.*

L1 *"If maybe the college could organize mentors for rural students virtually to provide guidance and share their own career experience".*

L2 *"Mentors may guide students in choosing appropriate courses that align with their career goals".*

SL *"Additionally, invite professionals from various fields to share their educational experience"* **Continued:** *"May also provide guidance on financial aid, college applications and campus life".*

L1 *"Open days offer students valuable opportunity to explore different academic program and fields of study".*

SL *"Students gain a better understanding of the subjects that interest them and identify potential career paths".*

S1 *"I need to ensure that I make informed decisions about my academic choices, that will assist since I will be satisfied".*

S3 *"Yah, it is important to have firsthand knowledge of the institution, and the opportunities available".*

L2 *"Partnership between school and college, meaning collaboration between higher education institutions and high schools is crucial for fostering a college-going culture among high school students".* **Continued** *"Parental support or their involvement may assist students in making informed decision about their careers".*

S3 *"Institutional support plays a crucial part in the mission process, because we there will be offering practical advice to us".*

S4 *"A well designed website assists in making informed decisions and overcome challenges and succeed in our academic pursuits".*

L2 *"Detailed college websites may provide overview of career possibilities linked to their academic interests".*

SL *"College websites, need to be updated and have all information that students need to know about college. This website should have features of each and every department that is available".*

L1 *"College counsellors need to be assisting and available during the period enrollment and registration period"*

These utterances of participants indicate the importance of college visits for career guidance by school counsellors and career mentorship program that pair rural students with professional in their field of interest and that will provide personalized guidance such as academic planning, career exploration and socio-emotional development (see 4.2.1.2). Furthermore, the visit, open days and college website will assist in establishing a sufficient career guidance, student participants are happy to receive first-hand information". In this regard, students gain a better understanding of college's atmosphere, the social scene and the opportunities for extracurricular involvement and opportunities to ask questions and seek clarification on any uncertainties they may have together with their parents (see 4.2.1.2). Educated parents are better able to understand the college application process, able to guide their children through it (see 4.2.1.2). Proper guidance needed for rural students to make sense of, complete the necessary steps for success in the transition through postsecondary education and involvement of parents in the process to understand how to support rural students. (see 2.4.1.2). Furthermore, another utterance indicates the importance of college website as a resource in providing comprehensive and informative information for example, providing information on academic programs, career services, financial aid and support matters. (see 4.2.1.2).

4.3.3 Availability and accessibility of educational resources

Aspects that are necessary in establishing of educational resources such as bridging program, technological resources, more personnel in SSS unit.

S 3 *"I believe bridging program is critical to address all of our challenges, such college readiness"* **Continued:** *"I am referring to academic preparation, career advising and counselling, financial literacy, accommodation and transport arrangement"*.

S 4 *"We also need computers/laptops with high-speed internet connectivity and library to study"*.

L 2 *"More personnel in SSS unit to be able to handle SSS unit, for the following reasons"*. **Continued** *"That there is a need for a capacity of SSS officials to be able to provide effective peer tutoring, effective academic advising, provide social and emotional support, organize cultural events and to provide financial strategies"*.

L1 *“This indicate that SSS unit have a huge responsibilities and college management and re not assisting”. Continued “College management need to understand and be made aware of the unique needs of rural students and provide appropriate support and resources”.*

SL *“I concur with participants that after all mentioned being done, regularly assessment of the effectiveness of the transitional resources and make adjustment as needed”.*

L2 *“When resources are not available in schools, educated parent serve as important information channels for rural youth”.*

SL *“I concur; However, I believe peers, immediate and extended family members, and high school emerged as top resources of students’ transition to college”.*

These utterances indicate the importance of having educational resources rural students for smooth transition of rural students, such as access to technology, high speed internet/Wi fi hot spot or laptops, technological literacy that may hinder them accessing resources and completing online applications. However, two participants’ **L 2** and **SL**, state that educated parents, peers and extended family members and high schools maybe resources required for smooth transition, even with technological literacy. Educated parents and family members understand the significance and college selection criteria (see 4.2.1.4). Institutions need to make efforts to students receive support with resources for smooth transition. Necessary aspects for provision of resources are computers, internet and library and comprehensive transition programs that includes technology literacy, financial support, mentoring, shared academic courses with instructors.

4.3.4 Establishment of support regarding delays of NSFAS payment

Aspects that are necessary to establishment of support regarding delays of NSFAS payment such as financial literacy workshop, partnership between college and NSFAS, building of college residences.

L 2 *“I believe first year students need guidance on the process of applying financial aid such as workshops and resources that help rural students and their families understand the financial aid process”.*

SL *“Yah maybe high school may focus on financial literacy programs focused on college costs and aid options, whereas college may offer targeted information sessions and one-on-one financial advising to rural students as part of their first year orientation programs. In the induction program these students need to be told to spend allowances wisely, they need to budget.”*

L 2 *“College may consider offering work-study opportunities that may integrate academic support roles, for example allowing students to earn income while receiving academic help... may also raise funds for emergency to assist struggling students”.*

L 1 *“The funding allowances need to be decentralized like in universities to avoid late payments, also college need arrange residential advisors to provide support and guidance to students living in private residences”.*

These utterances emphasize the importance of financial aid awareness and literacy programs that institutions may offer to assist rural students manage their budgets and plan for both expected and unexpected expenses (see 4.2.1.4). Institutions need to prioritize financial literacy education starting from high schools because may heighten student awareness regarding the various financial aid resources available to them. In high this regard, financial coaching programs that teach students how to budget effectively, minimize debt and make informed decisions (see 2.4.1.4). These utterances also suggest partnership between college and NSFAS may assist with late payments, for example student support services (SSS) and bursary officers at the college play a crucial role in ensuring that students submit their applications with the necessary supporting documentation and are promptly assigned their NSFAS subsidies, because failing to submit cause delays in student application processing and allowance payments. Furthermore, SSS unit to include financial literacy in their workshops and in the induction program also students need to tell that they are going to receive allowances, and they should use it wisely. For late payments participants suggest de-centralisation of funding.

DHET and stakeholders involved need to review student residential policies and procedure to improve the quality of life for students living in private off-campus apartments. College stakeholders need to be aware of student backgrounds so that they are able to assist students efficiently, and to arrange advisors for students residing in private residences.

4.3.5 Social and cultural adjustment support

Aspects that are necessary for establishment of social and cultural adjustment support, is social capital, peer mentoring, student-lecturer relationship and motivational sessions

S2 “College require self-dedicated learners, where we need to teach oneself time management and how to prioritize better, become more disciplined

S4 “*Religious leader from church that I am attending encourages, advice and remind us to keep the faith through challenging times, so I believe we need motivational sessions*”.

S3 “*I think we need guidance not only on academic matters only, but social matters, and to adapt to change we need to be independent, resilient are the coping mechanism, I believe LSCL lecturers may assist in this regard because they partly touch on this during their lesson presentations*”.

SL “*Students with strong social connections are more likely to be motivated, engaged and tend to have good performance, the social networks provide access to various forms of social capital such as receiving information, social support, values and provision of resources... those are student with high self-esteem they buffer external pressure and reduce anxiety to a certain extent*”.

L2 “*A detailed orientation programme may assist us to understand the challenges they are likely to face in this new phase of academic and social development*”.

S4 “*Peer mentoring program may assist in providing guidance, support and insights into college life*”.

S4 continued “*more importantly, if college environment is welcoming and inclusive, most students are comfortable*”.

L 2 “*I believe college may organize cultural awareness workshops to explore different cultural perspectives that encourage understanding and respect to students, also extramural activities such as sports for campus not college, that will assist in networking also*”.

SL Continued “*Also ... I believe lecturers also may serve as mentors and advisors, guiding students not only academically but also in terms of career planning and personal growth*”.

HOD “*Having a supportive lecturer encourage students to engage more actively in their studies*”

These utterances indicate that student with high self-esteem and social capital are able to build connections with peers, faculty, and staff and may assist in understanding and navigating cultural

differences to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion. This social capital may provide a support system that helps students cope with these emotions and build resilience. Social support on campus, a sense of closeness, and a sense of being appreciated and important to the group, feeling connected to a college campus (see 2.4.1.5). Peer tutoring contribute to the social integration of unprepared students, by creating opportunities for students to interact with peers in a supportive and collaborative environment, may also assist student to develop as sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation, lastly to improve their social networks and well-being (see 2.4.1.5). Student with high self-esteem better tolerate themselves in the face of failure and underprepared college students with a belief in one's ability to succeed, develop a sense of confidence in their academic abilities and increase motivation to learn (see 2.4.1.5). Cultural capital for students is required and college need to foster student integration through inclusive support systems, promote diversity and the conducive environment that cater academic and social aspects (see 2.4.1.5).

Participants also stated that colleges need to extend induction programs, such that it includes motivational sessions, stakeholders such as social workers to be invited and share with them their experiences, particularly the challenges of being a first-year student and how to cope with the challenges that will be the consequences. For extra mural activities, college to have a sports day whereby each campus will handle that activity until they will compete with other campus at college level. Additionally, participants suggested a strong student lecturer connections help create trust and provide a support network, which is especially advantageous for rural students, who often encounter higher hurdles in adjusting to college life.

4.4 CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESS OF ENHANCING STUDENT TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL TO TVET COLLEGE

This section of this study discusses the third objective, conditions necessary for the success of enhancing student transition of rural high school to TVET College. Conditions contributes for academic support, establishment of career advising, provision of educational resource and financial, and lastly social and cultural adjustment support.

4.4.1 Creation of academic support

Adequate participants' knowledge about rural students' challenges in TVET College contributed to the support needed. As a results, participants began discussed the conditions of academic support. There are several conditions below.

L2 *“Academic support programs must be easily accessible for rural students both geographically and digital, particularly for students residing in private residential”*

S3 *“College must firstly understand cultural backgrounds and unique of rural students when designing support programs, extend hours for academic support services and detailed timetable or plan should be in place”.*

S4 *“Additionally, effective monitoring throughout the academic year that ensures students remain supported for success of these programs such as extra classes, peer tutoring and mentoring”.*

SL *“Indeed, I concur a holistic support with the approach that ensures support extends beyond just academic is required to be provided by college management and SSS unit”.*

L2 *“We may refer that as institutional commitment that requires collaboration between different departments with effective communication to identify and address students' needs holistically, such as school and college for bridge program”.*

SL *“Lecturers need to be accessible through office hours, open communication channels between student and lecturer”*

These utterances indicate certain conditions that need to be met for effectiveness of academic support strategies, holistic support need to be accessible and designed to address the needs of rural students for example a detailed plan or timetable for extra classes, peer tutoring and transitional bridge program, all need to be monitored regularly. Furthermore, for students commute or live off-campus, college may offer virtually options such as tutoring, mentoring and advising and make it easier for students to engage with these services. Furthermore, they indicate collaboration between departments with effective communication for the benefit of students to receive support that address their needs. This indicates that approachable and informal interactions may enhance students' confidence, particularly those who had limited exposure to academic resources and support. Students perceive lecturers as approachable; they are more likely to engage in academic consultations that positively affects their learning outcomes (see 4.3.1.1). Lecturers need to be flexibility academically and culturally aware as this may assist to incorporate into teaching practices that may make rural students feel more included (see 4.3.1.1).

For example, offering online resources, accommodating different learning styles. Moreover, lecturers need to adopt collaborative learning strategies not only improve academic outcomes but also strengthen student relationships and reduce feelings of isolation for rural students.

4.4.2 Establishment of sufficient career guidance

Conditions contribute to the establishment of sufficient career guidance are open days, college visits in high schools, detailed college websites

L1 *“College maybe may provide opportunities for rural students to connect with other rural students in a form mentorship program, where college official or advisors pair students with professional in different fields to offer guidance and support”.*

L2 *“Additionally, this may take place in a condition of collaboration between college and school to enhance career exploration opportunities and students’ awareness of career paths”.*

SL *“A well-designed institution website that is accessible and mobile friendly to bridge the information gap, since essential information about institution will be available and capacity of SSS personnel to provide effective support and detailed information to our clientele”*

These utterances indicate the conditions may contribute to the establishment of effective career guidance programs in school and college, such as collaboration between school and college and mentorship program with professional in different fields to offer guidance and support. These utterances indicate a crucial role of college website play in providing a career guidance to first year rural students, that institution need to ensure that websites are mobile friendly and accessible on a variety of devices, including those with limited internet bandwidth, this will assist students from remote areas access career guidance resources (Brooking, 2024).

4.4.3 Availability and accessibility of educational resources

Several conditions contribute to the availability and accessibility of resources.

L1 *“College need to source funding to improve infrastructure and resource availability, and to ensure policy is available to ensure that resources are distributed equitably”.*

SL *“College need to ensure access to high-speed internet on campus and provide data for student live in private residences, upgrade college facilities including libraries, computer labs to ensure that students have the necessary resources for learning”.*

S3 *“College to ensure student have access to technology, for example resources in multiple languages to support students who may not speak English as their first language”*

The utterances indicate conditions required or may be recommended for availability of resources for rural students in college. The academic achievement and general well-being of students are greatly impacted by the resources available on campus. Learning results and student engagement are improved by having access to a range of support services, including academic advising, counseling, and library materials (see 2.1.4.3)

4.4.4 Establishment of partnership between college and NSFAS

Conditions created to the establishment of partnership between college and NSFAS allowances include the following:

L2 *“Financial aid information and application processes should be easily accessible to students in rural areas, possibly through online platforms or local outreach programs, furthermore, NSFAS to provide regular updates on the status of payment or anticipated delays”.*

S3 *“NSFAS dedicated helpline or online portal be available and assisting when students seek assistance or make inquiries about their payments, also consider consequences management for officials failing to meet their obligations and contribute to delays in payment*

These utterances indicate that regular updates are required by NSFAS to updates students on the status of payments and anticipated delays, also availability of dedicated officials and application of consequence management for those officials fail to meet their obligations that contributes to delays in payment. These utterances indicate the support that may provide to struggling students. This will enable poor financial backgrounds to pursue higher education, acquire skills and to reduce burden (see 2.1.4.4).

4.4.4 Social and cultural adjustment

Conditions contributed to the creation of social and cultural adjustment is extracurricular activities, peer mentoring, motivational sessions, student high self-esteem, independence and resilience and supportive orientation programs

S 4 *“Having role models and effective SSS unit that will prioritize student well-being and supportive environment”.*

L1 *“College to encourage supportive peer networks by encouraging them to participate in organization that provide opportunities for social interaction and networking.*

S3 *“Community involvement such as volunteering, should not only be done for assessment only but be ongoing, I feel good contributing to the community”.*

S1 *“Having celebration of cultural events and sports activities for college*

These utterances indicate that students need to be socially integrated in the college. In this regard students must feel belonging within the college community, by offering support and creating spaces for students to connect with others from rural areas, and facilitating participation in extracurricular activities may enhance social integration (see 2.4.1.5)

4.5 POSSIBLE THREATS THAT MAY HAMPER ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENT TRANSITION OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TVET COLLEGE

This section of this study discusses the fourth objective of the study, the possible threats that may hamper enhancement of student transition of rural high school students to TVET college involves the following:

4.5.1 Lack of tailored academic support

Lack of tailored academic support was found to be the first threat of enhancing transition of rural high school students to TVET colleges.

S3 *“Lack of proper consultation of the struggling or at-risk students involved and lecturers”.*

S4 *“Absence of well-coordinated plan from SSS unit in college that consider time constraints*

L1 *“Threat could be lack of tailored academic support because SSS unit have only one official that led to its ineffectiveness, and both management and the unit, are not working together, also seem not have a detailed plan in place and this have impact on academic performance”.*

L2 *“Another threat is funding for tailored academic program”.*

These utterances indicate lack of tailored academic support, due to ineffectiveness of SSS unit and lack of teamwork between college and the unit. Tailored academic program will assist reduce cognitive load for students, rather than having students visit dozens of offices trying to piece together the support they need (see 2.4.1.1).

4.5.2. Lack awareness of diverse career paths

Lack of awareness of diverse career paths threat have negative impact on rural students, and include the following:

S4 *“Lack of awareness make us to make wrong course selection, of not aligning their educational goals with their interests and strengths”*

S1 *“Lack of awareness lead to poor academic performance and increased dropout rates, due to lack of awareness”.*

S2 *“we have limited exposure to a variety of career opportunities due to geographical isolation, in some instances is paired with the financial and difficulties of rural living”.*

The utterances indicate lack of awareness of diverse career paths may lead to significant threat to first year rural students as they transition to college. The mismatch of caused by lack of exposure lead to poor academic performance and increased dropout rates, as the students may feel unprepared for the academic demands of the college (see 2.4.1.5).

4.5.3 Mental health challenge due to lack of educational resources

Lack of educational resources impact students' mental health.

S3 *“Lack of resources make us feel less prepared than our peers, and that lead to low self-confidence, self-doubt and some may decide to quit because some information are shared online discussions or someone to be engage in virtual study groups”.*

L1 *“Yah, we come to realize that during class discussion or class participation, sometimes they submit assignment late, in most cases they potentially isolate themselves from class activities.*

S4 *“Inadequate infrastructure or study space like library limit our ability to engage with campus resources and support systems that make us fail because even to access technological resources it’s a challenge that brings stress.*

These utterances indicate decreased confidence and self-efficacy of rural students. Additionally, lack of educational resources increases stress and anxiety from the constant struggle of unable to access resources to keep up with their studies. Lack of digital competency and internet access may hinder student ability to fully participate in recent, technologically advanced learning environments which has long-term effect on college and job prospects (see 2.4.1.5). Without exposure to resources and training in computer labs, resource rural students may lack digital literacy. Lack of resources disadvantage rural students who rely on campus resources (see 2.4.1.5). And may leave rural students less prepared for the technological demand (see 2.4.1.5).

4.5.4 Financial instability

Financial instability impact students not to be actively engaged in campus activities.

S4 *“We are unable to participate in extracurricular activities, due to financial instability for essential expenses such as transportation and other essential items*

S3 *“Landlord may require upfront payments or deposits that many of us cannot afford without NSFAS funds. Continued, even food and transport shortages that affects our concentration and academic performance”.*

S1 *“Additionally, most of us cannot pay landlords on time, placing them at risk of eviction, housing insecurity or harassed.*

SL *“Financial worries impact academic focus; some are forced to drop out”.*

These utterances indicate negative impact of financial instability that lead to decreased class attendance, impacting overall progress, poses serious mental health risks, including stress, anxiety and depression. Furthermore, missing classes because of financial restrictions may result in academic failures, affecting their overall progress and achievement. Moreover, (see 2.4.1.5) demonstrated that financial stressor lower student engagement and make it harder to focus to their essential academic success.

5.4.5: Lack of social and cultural adjustment support systems

S3 *“Rural schools’ environment is different from impersonal and demanding environment of college that presents challenges that affect well-being and academic success”.*

L1 *“Cultural differences make rural students hesitant to seek help or they may perceive resources not relevant to them and start to feel isolated, with an increased threat of withdrawal”.*

S1 *“Additionally, without support systems, have feeling of overwhelming by academic demands that lead to poor performance, social isolation that lead to disengagement from campus activities and stress increase and may be decision to withdraw”.*

These utterances indicate a struggle of rural students with navigating social norms and adapting to the pace of academic and social demands in college settings that differ from their high school experiences. These students are independent oriented culture of many college campuses, that may strain by the demands and expectations of college life, leaving them with limited emotional and social support (see 2.4.1.5).

4.6 Evidence of success to enhance student transition from rural high school to TVET College

4.6.1 Creation of tailored academic support

Lack of tailored academic support among first year college students may be address through the following aspects and conditions:

S1 *“Creation of specialized, accessible and well communicated academic support programs may assist us to receive curriculum support, such as tutoring, mentoring and extra classes”.*

SL *“College need to have dedicated staff such as academic advisors and counselors that are essential to provide support and strong administrative support, that allocates resources, coordinating and ensuring the sustainability of the program”.*

L1 *“Assists students to develop reasonable and attainable goals for their academic and professional activities, assist them break down their long-term goals into smaller, more manageable actions.*

These utterances indicate conditions for successful creation of tailored academic program. These programs cater for particular needs of students through training and employing more SSS personnel in SSS unit. To address students’ needs by offering academic support such as extra classes, mentoring, tutoring and workshops”. Making support services widely accessible to all students. Academic assistance programs need to be culturally aware and provide services that honor and consider the experiences of rural students (see 2.4.1.5). This may increase a sense of understanding and belonging, to improve their experience and boost their academic achievement. Additionally, offering mentorship opportunities, tutoring and workshops programs with the aim of improving retention and academic achievement by assisting rural students in navigating the cultural transition to college as well as academic challenges (see 2.4.1.5).

4.6.2 Career guidance and Counselling support

Lack of awareness of diverse career paths among first year college students may be address through the following aspects and conditions:

SL *“Providing exposure to diverse career paths through career fairs and guest speakers to broaden student understanding of potential profession”.*

S1 *“Conduct one-on-one session to discuss student skills, interest and aspirations with suitable academic and career pathways. **Continued**, provide information on numerous of study, also encourage students to analyse their decisions”.*

S2 *“Making sure that student from underrepresented groups get in touch with instructors and counselors for help with their coursework and career planning”.*

L1 *“Collaboration between schools and college, those selected schools will be feeder for college, to conduct workshops, open days, career visits, create mentorship programs for career exploration”.*

HOD *“Conduct seminar, workshops and mentorship programs, open days to high school and first year students, to assist them align their personal interest with potential career fields”.*

These utterances indicate that college may develop structured career exploration for first year students that allow students to explore career paths relevant to their majors, such as seminars, workshops, mentorship programs, open days and career visit to high schools. Embedding career exploration into first year curriculum may allow students to relate their studies to real-world opportunities (see 2.4.1.2). College to develop a clear understanding of the options available that students may use to make informed career and academic decisions. Students’ awareness of many career routes and employment opportunities is limited in rural areas because of the lack of institutional support structures that offer career advice, for rural students to make informed decisions may be challenging (see 2.4.1.2).

4.6.3 Educational Resources

Lack of educational resources among first year college students may be address through the following aspects and conditions:

S3 *“Provision of laptops, tables and internet connectivity access for students in need like those who are from disadvantage backgrounds, so they may access online learning materials and platforms”.*

S1 *“To reduce stress during student transition, college need to programs introducing student to institutional resources like LMS, tutoring services and libraries”.*

L1 *“College to establish mobile computer labs to provide students with the necessary technology to complete assignments and develop digital skills. Continued “that will assist since infrastructure is one the threat”.*

HOD *“Providing technical assistance for software and digital tools to enable students to take full advantage of the educational innovations that are available. **Continued**, Training in digital literacy computer skills, internet usage and online research, may empower students to effectively utilize technology for learning”.*

SL *“Collaborating with local libraries, community centers and business may provide students with access to computers, internet and quite study spaces”.*

L2 *“Encouraging students to form study groups facilitate peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing and mutual support. **Continued**, innovative teaching strategies that cater to diverse learners to cater for limited resources”.*

These utterances indicate significance of investing in digital infrastructure to ensure that students have access to online resources, such as expanding broadband access, establishing mobile computer labs and innovations by lecturers to use both technology and pedagogical innovations. Mobile computer labs may provide PC, tablets and other technology in places where setting up physical labs is difficult, guaranteeing that every students has access (see 2.4.1.3). This strategy may be helpful in isolated areas where building long-term infrastructure is logistically or financially difficulty (see 2.4.1.3).

Collaborations with local libraries, community centers and business to provide access to resources. Combining technological advancements and innovative teaching strategies may address limited educational resources and create inclusive and effective learning environments for all students. Implementing these conditions requires acknowledging the unique geographic and socioeconomic challenges these areas face, must be strategically located (see 2.4.1.3).

4.6.4 Financial Support

S1 *“College to provide affordable, on-campus housing for first year students to address housing insecurity by late financial aid payments. **Continued**, or collaborate with landlords to defer payment deadlines until NSFAS payments are disbursed”.*

L1 *“Designated staff to liaise with NSFAS and provide students with real-time updates on payment status. Continued, or creating task teams specialized NSFAS support offices within educational institutions to assist students deal with issues relating to late payments”.*

SL *“Collaborating with local organizations to provide assistance to assist alleviate food insecurity. College to address root causes of delayed NSFAS and implement effective support strategies as to enhance communication to track payment and come up with alternative arrangements”.*

L1 *“College to offer accessible counseling therapy services to assist students to cope with stress, anxiety and depression. **Continued**, also establish emergency financial aid and food assistance programs for students to cover essentials like rent, food and transport”.*

SL *“Decentralization of funds, and college to adopt flexible academic policies that may extend registration periods, alternative assessment methods, to accommodate students facing financial challenges”.*

These utterances indicate institution, financial and emotional support to address financial instability of rural students such on-campus housing, food assistance, emergency financial aid and therapy services to address financial instability threat. For many rural students, keeping up academic performance and participation requires having access to safe and affordable priced housing (see 2.4.1.4). Food insecurity for students struggling financial is addressed by food assistance programs like meal coupons or on-campus food banks (see 2.4.1.4). Students may gain financial transparency and control by integration payment tracking systems.

College to create conducive conditions within educational institutions and communities that ensures first year rural students affected by NSFAS payment delays have the resources, guidance and support needed to overcome financial constraints and students remain focused on their studies. Students may plan and reduce worries about possible delays with the support of regular information sessions, emails and smartphone notification on payment timeframes (see 2.4.1.4).

4.6.5 Social and cultural adjustment support

S3 *“Encouraging participation and establishing areas where students from different backgrounds exchange experiences and gain knowledge from one another”.*

L1 *“Campus to initiate activities that promote inclusion, may assist rural students to feel valued within the academic and social environment”.*

L2 *“Yah, also the workshops or training sessions that enhance understanding of cultural diversity by equipping students with the skills or tools to properly handle cross cultural encounters with other cultures”.*

HOD *“Networks that promote group learning and peer mentoring to offer intellectual and emotional support while lowering feelings of loneliness”.*

S1 *“Orientation program that offer organized instruction on social opportunities, cultural norms and academic standards”.*

SL *“Rural students to have access to essential tools that address social and cultural issues, such as academic advising, counseling and language assistance”.*

These utterances indicate Tinto’s idea of building an inclusive learning environment and increasing engagement through cultural sensitive approaches that reduce transition challenges of social and cultural adjustment (2.4.1.5).

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The data presented on first section of this chapter clearly indicates the challenges to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College, as results first year rural students encountered many challenges when transition and adjusting to the new college environment. In response to the challenges, the second section discussed the aspects that are necessary or to be put in place to enhance the transition challenges identified. Creation of conducive conditions for the enhancement of student transition were also discussed. The discussion of participants reported challenges related to socio-economic background and unfairness of preparation in rural high schools. The data has also indicated non-compliance of college through SSS unit to provide a holistic support of students. They arrive at college with challenges from high school, and if they are not addressed, they become frustrated and vulnerable. The data has indicated that students are less likely to develop the required social, emotional, and academic connection are more likely to drop out and give up on their education without good and efficient services. The next chapter concludes the study and presents conclusions I have arrived at based on the findings presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Previous chapter presented and analyzed the data from participants to get to the findings of the study. This chapter presents the conclusion of the study based on the data and offer recommendations derived from the conclusions. Following the conclusion, several proposals for further research are presented along with the limitations and implications of the findings.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study has discovered the experiences of first year rural students during transition period from high school to college and also understand how these transition experiences impact their learning in college. The study was conducted in one college campus in a rural district in the province of Free State, eastern Free State. The study comprised with 10 participants 5 TVET officials and 5 students, however one student withdrawn. The first chapter provides an overview of the study's rationale, research questions and methods. The second chapter focused on a review of related literature, which included a description of the theoretical framework. The third chapter included a full overview of the strategy and methodology used to generate data that would assist to respond to research questions. The fourth chapter reviewed the data presentation and analysis. The final chapter summarizes the study, presents the conclusions and provides recommendations.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESTATED

The following are five research questions that guided the study to achieve its objectives:

Why there is a need to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

5.3.1 What aspects are necessary to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

5.3.2 Under which conditions could the transition of rural high school students to TVET College be successfully enhanced?

5.3.4 What are the possible threats that may hamper the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

5.3.5 What can be done to enhance the transition of rural high school to TVET College?

Below are the themes emerged from each of the five research questions about transition from rural high school to TVET colleges?

5.3.1 Why there is a need to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

Theme 1: Academic support

Majority of rural high school students have limited access to quality education, that lead to them being academically unprepared for college. Furthermore, on their arrival to college received inadequate academic support during transition to college, that often left them feeling frustrated, anxiety and become challenging process of adjusting to a new academic environment. Students became lost without academic advising, tutoring and mentoring programs, with the pressure to perform without having access to necessary resources. The insufficient academic support lead academic stress that negatively influence on their mental health and academic performance (see 2.4.1.1). The challenges mentioned by participants includes difficulties with study skills, time management, language barrier and teaching and learning methods. These challenges make transition difficult and harder for them to succeed academically, due to insufficient academic support (see 2.4.1.1)

Theme 2: Career guidance

Rural students had limited career guidance and fewer opportunities to explore about different careers in post-secondary institution. They became unaware of the entire range of academic programs or professional options accessible to them, resulting in poor course selections that do not match their skills or interests. This is due to limited exposure to college campuses, unfamiliar with application process, academic expectations or campus life. Inadequate support systems were not able to assist them navigating the college, more likely, academic advising, counseling and mentoring. The challenges of first year rural students include lack of exposure to counsellors, career pathways and career advising, this made struggle to them for smooth transition. The guidance and accessible career decision support technologies may advance the goal of assisting students in making better and more adaptable career decisions (see 2.4.1.2)

Theme 3: Educational resources

Limited educational resources that include lack of access to internet, exposure to technology, insufficient computer labs, no libraries or conducive environment to study due to inadequate infrastructure and one personnel in SSS unit. This cause disparity rural students entering college do not have the same level of technological literacy as their peers. Furthermore, is resulting to gaps in students' knowledge and skills. This makes it difficult for rural students to adjust to the demands of college courses due to lack of familiarity with technology and academic support services. Educational resource constraints impact rural students' ability to complete coursework and restrict their engagement with broader academic and social life of the campus (see 2.4.1.3).

Theme 4: Financial support and awareness

Financial constraints due to late payment of NSFAS allowances, lead to emotional and financial stress for students, particularly rural students from underprivileged backgrounds that are heavily rely on these funds for basic living expenses and accommodation. These delays of payment make students not concentrate on their studies, worry about being evicted from their residences, some may need to borrow money that creates discomforts and strain relationships and also add social stigma because they are unable to participate fully in campus life. The financial stress is a major challenge to rural students that result and negatively impact academic performance, demotivation and increases the risk of dropping out (see 2.4.1.4).

Delays in allowance payments limit students' capacity to cover critical costs, affecting, affecting their sense of security and stability especially those from under-resourced or rural backgrounds, more likely students' inability to cover essential costs impacting their sense of security and stability. In addition, financial uncertainty causes stress and worry, making it difficult for students to focus and adapt successfully into college life. In addition, without funding for textbooks, laptops, or study equipment, students may struggle to complete school, especially if resources are expected or required.

Theme 5: Social and cultural adjustment

The challenge of social and cultural adjustment for first year rural students' transition to college lead to negative impact to students' academic, emotional and wellbeing. The challenges include difficulty in navigating campus resources, balance of academic and social life and difficulty in

forming relationships that contributed to difficulty in social and academic performance. Furthermore, social and cultural adjustment lead rural students to experience culture shock and feelings of isolation due to the unwelcoming college environment that leads rural students feel isolated, struggle to find a sense of belonging and. Moreover, they struggle to focus on academics and contribute to lower academic performance (see 2.4.1.5).

5.3.2 What aspects are necessary to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

Theme 1: Academic support

To address challenge of Insufficient academic support to first year college students, participants suggested a need of comprehensive college support program is one of the aspects that focus on developing study skills, time management strategies, academic advising and English language proficiency. Additionally, to prepare rural students for college by high school may teach them fundamental academic skills and study techniques, participants suggested extra classes, peer tutoring and mentoring. The objective of student academic support programs is to enhance students' recognition of college as a viable future option by cultivating skills for optimal academic performance, strengthening self-efficacy in mastering academic tasks, improving educational engagement, expanding knowledge of the college planning process and elevating educational aspirations (see 2.4.2). The study recognized the need of summer bridge programs as a proactive strategy to assisting students, particularly those who may be underprepared for college-level work, by bridging the gap between high school to college, these programs provide a structured curriculum centered on key skills like as reading, writing, and math that are critical for academic achievement (2.4.2)

By taking basic courses in these disciplines throughout the summer programs, students may approach their freshman year with better capabilities, confidence and a firmer foundation for college-level work (see 2.4.2). Summer bridge program often include supplementary instruction resources to enhance both academic preparation and social integration, more likely extra classes, peer tutoring, peer mentoring counseling are common aspects that provide students with the social support needed to navigate college life. In this regard, mentors play a critical role in helping new students acclimatize to the campus environment, while colleges mentors may guide students through academic expectations and encourage resilience in facing challenges (see 2.4.2).

Theme 2: Career guidance

Students often report negative experiences with receiving career advising, such as receiving instead they inaccurate information that results to time loss, credit loss, a lack of personalization in advising and advisors do not understand rural students' education goals and plans. However, educational emphasis, role models from family and community who have attended inspire younger generations to follow their footsteps. Additionally, motivation and determination by individual students are important to turn those aspirations into reality (see 2.4.2). Community and family values play an important influence in encouraging individuals to pursue and complete higher education. When a student environment supports education students perceive as a realistic and worthwhile goal. Family support may enhance motivation and resilience, particularly rural students with limited resources (see 2.4.2).

To address the challenge of limited career guidance, College need to establish a detailed college website and career advising centers tailored to rural students that give ongoing help throughout their academic experience, with a focus on integrating career goals with academic courses. SSS unit to organize career fairs, open days and work shadowing opportunities for rural students, allowing them to explore various career pathways and make educated judgements (see 2.4.2). College recruiters to visit high schools to enhance career guidance for rural students, as they will have knowledge of the job market, industry needs and in-demand skills. This will enhance career development of students and assist them in making informed decisions about their future (see 2.4.2).

Theme 3: Educational resources

First-year college rural students, access to educational resources is a significant challenge that impact academic success and overall transition to college life. These resources include not only computer labs, Wi-Fi and technology but also learning support services such as tutoring, advising and academic workshops. To address the challenge of educational resources, college need to employ more personnel in SSS unit and to establish a well-equipped resource center that will assist students to access support services such as writing centers, offer academic workshops and career services and counseling. Improving campus resources such as provision of more computers, access to free Wi-Fi in all areas of campus, conducive environment to study such as library and awareness, ensure that all students have access to computers, internet and academic

software such as technology (see 2.4.2). Training or awareness of staff to make them understand the unique challenges of rural students.

Theme 4: Financial support and awareness

To address the challenge of late payment of NSFAS allowances, team advocate for a review of the NSFAS payment process to identify and alleviate delays, proposal could include defining payment deadlines ahead of time and offering emergency funding for students who experience hardship as a result of delays. Establishing a clear and continuous line of communication between the NSFAS, colleges, and students may help to reduce worry, the text messages or portal updates may keep students informed about their payment progress and provide reassurance during delays

College to create emergency fund exclusively for rural students experiencing delays in NSFAS payments to cover vital needs such as food, accommodation and study materials. Offer part-time jobs on campus, particularly ones related to students' career goals, to enable them earn money while acquiring useful experience. Furthermore, institution and NSFAS need to improve communication and transparency about payment schedules and offer temporary financial support for students experiencing stress due to late payments

Theme 5: Social and cultural adjustment

Some students may feel alone if they can't afford to join in social and academic activities that cost money. Cultures may hold a strong pull-on students, prioritizing family commitments over individual educational goals. Furthermore, parental attitudes and the expectation that students contribute to family well-being may interfere with their capacity to focus on their academic and career goals. Cultural knowledge and representation are essential in student support services and pastoral care, as well as personalized support for first year college rural students. Students also believed that academic staff did not represent their origins fairly, contributing to a sense of alienation among rural students (see 2.4.2).

To address the challenge of social and cultural adjustment participants found that college need create induction and peer support programs that are sensitive to the unique obstacles rural students encounter, allowing them to integrate into college life while keeping their cultural identity. These programs will assist to build connections with their peers, develop coping strategies and to gain access to campus resources. College to create sports teams and encourage students'

involvement in social events, extracurricular activities, and leadership opportunities that connect students from various background (see 2.4.2).

5.3.3 Under which conditions could the transition of rural high school students to TVET College be successfully enhanced?

Theme 1: Academic support

Conditions of academic support, lecturers to implement early warning systems to monitor students' academic performance, attendance and overall well-being. Provide personalized interventions to students at risk of dropping out and refer students to SSS unit, when students need more attention. College to ensure SSS unit officials are capacitated and the unit is able to provide support to students such as extra classes, tutoring and mentoring, by monitoring regularly.

The creation of conducive academic environment, student-lecturer need both student and lecturer play important roles in preparing students for procedural and declarative knowledge acquisition in their respective disciplines (2.4.3). Family support is considered as critical through academic success (2.4.3). Additionally, equally crucial is for students to be aware of the support services available while attending college, such as academic writing centers, library services and tutoring programs they provide support networks and use of these services should be encouraged. Provide training SSS officials and staff to help them understand the specific issues that rural students face, thereby promoting a supportive academic atmosphere.

Theme 2: Establishment of Career guidance

Conditions for establishment of career guidance that should start at high school, that will assist in preparing students adequately for college. However, firstly teachers and counselors must receive ongoing development to effectively support students in career planning, school to integrate curriculum with career exploration. College to establish advisory committees to address the special needs of rural students, include officials from academic, financial assistance and student affairs offices to give comprehensive support. Create opportunities for rural students to connect with professionals in their fields of interest such as alumni networks or career fairs and college to establish partnership with schools and local industries (2.4.3).

Theme 3: Educational resources

Colleges need to ensure that rural students fully participate in their college education by providing access to computers, the internet and academic software, as technology limitations may impede their capacity to complete coursework. Furthermore, college to organize training for first year rural students in digital literacy to enable students to utilize online resources effectively, engage in virtual learning environments and to develop technical skills. College to provide aid with students' private accommodation, transportation and other logistical issues, particularly for rural students who may struggle with the transition to a new place (2.4.3).

Theme 4: Financial support and awareness

Participants found that a clear communication may reduce anxiety of financial burden because will give students a better understanding of the situation. In this regard, Institution need to establish partnership with NSFAS in order to improve communication and transparency regarding payment schedules, for example regular updates via email, SMS or dedicated online portals about delays. Furthermore, institutions to create emergency funds, particularly for students affected by delayed NSFAS payment and also NSFAS with partnership established be informed to provide temporary funds to provide assistance for essential needs like food, accommodation and transport. Moreover, college and SSS unit to organize workshop for first year students to equip them with skills to manage funds more efficiently such as budgeting skills, also organize mental health support by inviting health professionals in college to assist students to cope with emotional strain. This will assist institution also to ensure that students remain focused on their academic success despite financial challenges (see 2.4.3).

Theme 5: Social and cultural adjustment

Conditions for effective peer support programs for rural first year students, by pairing rural first year with peer mentor who have similar backgrounds and who are culturally and have understanding of both rural and urban cultures, and who have successfully navigated the transition to college may foster relatability and trust; then set clear roles and expectations for both mentors and mentees (2.4.3). College to train mentors in cultural competency, particularly on the unique challenges rural student face, such as adjusting. College to schedule regular meetings, provide informal platforms like group chats and monitor programs curriculum whether provide

academic guidance, emotional support and share their personal experiences that rural students may face.

Sense of belonging and improving their academic and emotional wellbeing of rural students (2.4.3). College to have an ongoing induction to inform students about activities planned and support available for struggling students and encourage involvement in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, engage parents and rural communities in the students' college journey by providing outreach initiatives that keep them informed and interested in the students' progress.

5.3.4 What are the possible threats that may hamper the transition of rural high school students to TVET College?

Theme 1: Lack of tailored academic support

Many rural schools encounter staffing deficiencies' diminishing access to college preparatory resources, including AP courses, SAT/ACT preparation, and dual enrollment opportunities. This may leave students inadequately prepared for the demands of college-level curriculum, potentially leading to academic difficulties, diminished self-efficacy, and an increased chance of early dropout (see 2.4.4). Furthermore, geographical isolation limit rural students access to mentorship, academic advising, and social support services that are crucial during the transition to college. Moreover, some students may be demotivated due to challenges with college mindset and perceptions (2.4.4).

Theme 2: establishment career guidance

Threat in establishing effective career guidance for rural students is lack of infrastructure, limited career navigation resources and socioeconomic barriers. The lack of structured guidance might discourage students from continuing higher education and prevent them from comprehending the career implications of their decisions, contributing to lower postsecondary enrolment and persistence rates. To mitigate the threat, tailored accessible career advising is critical to connect the transition from college to meaningful work for rural students, but entails addressing infrastructure, economic needs and community-based approaches (see 2.4.4).

Theme 3: Lack of educational resources

Without educational resources such as computer labs, libraries, reliable internet and adequate infrastructure hinder student academic engagement, collaboration and even homework. Furthermore, students who lack high speed internet or rely on cell phone data have severe digital skill gaps, which affects their standardized test performance and preparation for higher education demands. Moreover, funding and structural support is required to establish robust computer labs or maintain extensive library resources (see 2.4.4)

Theme 4: Financial instability

Emotional stress and reduced academic performance due financial vulnerabilities, and disruptions to mitigate the threat NSFAS emphasized the importance of timely institutional submissions of registration data to avoid payment delays and college may establish alternatively financial support (see 2.4.4)

Theme 5: Lack of social and cultural adjustment

Rural students transitioning to college often face unique social and cultural adjustments challenges that pose significant threats to their academic and personal success. One major threat is a feeling of isolation of rural students since to find sense of belonging in college environment is another threat because affect their confidence. Furthermore, this transition may lead to heightened stress and affect their capacity to engage effectively with peers from different backgrounds, further complicating their adjustment to college (see 2.4.4). This threats impact on their engagements in campus activities and hinder their ability to build supportive social networks, that is essential for academic persistence and well-being (see 2.4.4).

5.3.5 What can be done to enhance the transition of rural high school to TVET College?

Theme 1: Tailored academic support

The team recommended creation of tailored academic programs to address rural first year challenges. This recommendation aims to consider the specific needs of rural first year students, to enhance academic performance and reduce dropout rate. The academic support programs include one-on-one academic advising, pairing students with experienced mentors, extra classes and peer tutoring with struggling students to assist in understanding complex concepts and improve study skills. This may assist to bridge gap of lack of preparatory and resources and

mentoring before college. Academic support programs may boost first year student retention and academic performance, when college provide tailored guidance that addresses both academic and socio-emotional needs (see 2.4.5).

Theme 2: Career Guidance

The team recommended collaboration of college and schools as crucial in providing effective career guidance to rural students, parents and community members. The purpose of partnership will assist to bridge the gap between high school and college education, by ensuring students are well prepared for college and career pathways. The partnership involves hosting career fairs, workshops and informational sessions that may expose rural students to different professions and educational pathways (see 2.4.5). Furthermore, college recommended to prioritize the effectiveness of SSS unit, integrate technology while providing comprehensive career guidance to rural providing comprehensive career guidance to rural students. Moreover, connecting career guidance with the economic needs of rural communities, both schools and college may foster local development (see 2.4.5).

Theme 3: Educational Resources

The team recommended college to provide essential resources such as reliable internet access, computer labs, libraries and supportive infrastructure as crucial to bridge gap that impact students' academic success. College to prioritize internet infrastructure, accessible technology and physical learning space, may greatly improve rural students' ability to succeed academically and adjust to the demands of college education (see 2.4.5).

Theme 4: Financial support

Team recommends improvement of financial support, such as providing timely payment of NSFAS, college to have emergency funds, may address these challenges of rural first year students and support academic and enhance their ability to focus on educational success. Financial delays lead to interruptions in learning, heightened stress and increase dropouts (see 2.4.5).

Theme 5: Social and cultural adjustment

Inclusive learning environments and increase in engagement through cultural sensitive approaches may reduce transition challenges (2.4.5). Connecting rural students with peer mentors who have effectively managed analogous adjustments may greatly facilitate social adaption. Mentors offer pragmatic guidance, establish connections with campus life, and provide emotional support which is essential for students acclimating to new social contexts (see 2.4.5). college to host orientation programs with the aim to reduce feeling of disconnection by familiarizing students with campus norms and providing early social connections that ease the transition (2.4.5).

The team recommended support systems programs because strong social networks that provide both emotional and practical support assist students to overcome cultural adjustments, positively influencing their social integration and overall well-being. The aim of the program will emphasize cultural identity and build relational skills, enhance resilience actively acknowledges rural cultural values that assist students maintain a strong sense of identity, that is linked to better academic outcomes and personal satisfaction (see 2.4.5).

5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

I found that insufficient academic support for first year rural students impact their academic performance, emotional well-being that lead to the increase of high dropout rate. I found that limited career for first year rural students, lead to inadequate preparation for college that impact academic development due to dissatisfaction, low engagement and high dropout rates. I found that poor funding or late payment of NSFAS constitutes the demotivation of students, which results to poor performance, many come from disadvantaged, single-parent homes that poor students often do not have the necessary skills and support to manage their studies, also low levels of financial support. I found that limited educational resources affect students from rural who are already disadvantaged due to pre-college preparation gaps, this affect their academic success, mental wellbeing and transition experience. I found that due struggle to form social connections in extracurricular activities, rural students are more likely to experience academic difficulties and increase high dropout rates.

This study found insufficient academic assistance, restricted career guidance, late payments of NSFAS, limited educational resources, social and cultural adjustment, affect rural first academic performance, emotional health, and lead to an increased rate of high dropout and negative transitional experience.

5.5 LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

The study focused on a single TVET college in the eastern Free State province. Findings should not be generalized because the situation may vary from one college to the next. However, to equip rural students with the necessary experiences, skills and support for achieving their objectives in adulthood, schools need to establish robust ties with higher institutions, families, agencies, businesses and other community stakeholders, and college to enhance partnerships beyond the outside classroom

5.6 CONCLUSION

Transition is planning a student's future after high school. As a result, the process may be challenging, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds, and there are contributing factors as to why the process becomes difficult. Additionally, variations between rural and urban students may contribute to the rural-urban gap, caused mainly by lower SES and less intensive high school preparation. Low-income students often attend high schools with limited resources for college preparation and rigorous curriculum. Moreover, this indicates more disadvantages for rural students in rural areas due to their home and school circumstances (see Chapter 2). Literature and empirical data show that rural or resident students require assistance in adjusting to their academic and living arrangements, as they lack support from family and friends. In this regard, the college should prioritize providing first-year students with support from staff and peers during the transition period to assist them in adjusting to new challenges

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APPENDIX A: LANGUAGE EDITING

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that I, M.V. Nzama (Dr.) edited **Puleng M. Rasutha's**
Thesis

entitled:

Enhancing the Transition of Rural High School Students to TVET College

M.V. Nzama: M.A (General Linguistics (Unizulu)

D.Ed. Educational Psychology (Unizulu)

Editing for Professionals (Wits University)

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APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

26-Mar-2024

Dear Mrs Puleng Rasutha

Continuation/Report Approved

Research Project Title:

Enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/2058/23

We are pleased to inform you that the application to extend your ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Dr Adri
du
Plessis

Digitally
signed by Dr
Adri du
Plessis
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APPENDIX C: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE COLLEGE



Corporate Office
Cnr High & Broster Street
Private Bag X33
Bethlehem
9700
Tel: 058 303 1732
Fax: 058 303 1748
officeman.corp@malutitvet.co.za



higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MLT-ADM-Letterhead-2014-R02

2017-09-15

Page 1 of 1

KLMAadm

Enquiries: MR Khambule

Date: 15 July 2024

Dear Mrs. Puleng Rasutha

MALUTI TVET COLLEGE GATEKEEPER'S APPROVAL

Research Title:

Enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College

This letter serves as confirmation that your request to collect data from students at Maluti TVET College for your research project has been approved **provided you also get ethical clearance for the research from the ethics committee at your university.**

Please make sure that you produce your ethics clearance letter containing your reference number from the ethics committee before you conduct research. Furthermore, adherence to the declaration as submitted by the applicant is mandatory when conducting research activities. Once the ethical clearance letter is produced, you may proceed to collect your data from any of our campuses, as listed.

- Bethlehem Campus
- Bonamelo Campus
- Harrismith Campus
- Itemoheleng Campus
- Kwetlisong Campus
- Lere-La-Tshepe Campus
- Main Campus
- Sefikeng Campus

Regards,

ME Tsotetsi
ACTING PRINCIPAL

15/07/2024

DATE

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

12 July 2024

Researcher: Ms PM Rasutha (082 770 3868, 2007139872@ufs4life.ac.za)

Supervisor: Dr ME Dlamini (058 718 5483, dlaminime@ufs.ac.za)

Ethics clearance reference number: **UFS-HSD2022/2058/23**

Subject: participant information and informed consent

Dear participant

Thank you for your willingness to participate voluntarily in this research study titled **Enhancing the transition of rural high school students to TVET College**. The purpose of this study is to understand and explore challenges of first year rural students when transition to TVET College. You have been chosen as it is believed that you are rural first year TVET students/TVET staff at TVET College and therefore in a position to provide valuable input in relation to transition mindset. Your role is to participate in a focus group (meetings) in which you will contribute to asked questions. The focus group (meetings) may last approximately less than 2(two) hours. Your participation will remain confidential.

Before you agree to participate in this research, you are strongly encouraged to the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose and procedures of the study, including your right to withdraw from the study at any time. This study has been approved by General/Human Research ethics committee (GHREC).

Explanation of procedures

Upon receiving and responding to the invitation to participate in this study, an appointment set, a face-to-face meeting at a public place convenient to you. The meetings are arranged by the researcher. The meeting may be audio-recorded with participant concern. The focus group (meetings) may last approximately less than 2(two) hours of your time. Questions will prompt for you to share your perceptions, experiences and understandings regarding student transition and how to enhance the transition of rural high school students to TVET College. A set of pre-prepared questions may be available to guide the focus group (meeting) discussions and researcher or participant may ask some additional questions so that you may clarify or elaborate on your answers. Although your participation is entirely voluntary, I encourage you to please answer all of the questions – there is no right or wrong answer. Feedback may be provided to you in the form of a research report that will be compiled from the research findings.



Risks, discomforts and benefits

I do not anticipate that you will experience any physical risks or psychological distress through your participation in this research. Some topics may cause you some discomfort, such as sharing personal experiences of transition, since you were exposed or experienced challenges in any of the situation. In the event that you feel this way, there are debriefing session to assist you with understanding the negative emotions. If need be, a counselling session may be recommended.

No incentives, financial or otherwise, will be given to participants in this research. This is to ensure that any forms of bias in responses are avoided. The research will benefit TVET Colleges, policymakers and students, as it will influence the development of policy/strategies that is supportive to first year students. Participants are not required to complete any form of assessment or psychological inventories/scales/tests.

Confidentiality

Data collected during this study remain confidential. Only the researchers will have access to the data you provide during the focus group (meetings). You will not be asked for any information that may lead to your (or anyone else's) being able to be identified, instead participants will be identified by numbers, for example participant 1, participant 02 etc. This will be achieved through maintain participants' confidentiality and not asking questions that may expose participants' identities.

The confidentiality of the participants will be of great importance throughout the research. Your answers and audio recording may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee.

Withdrawal without prejudiced

Participation in this study is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any question I might ask you.

Further questions and follow-up

You are welcome to ask me (the researcher) any questions that occur to you at any time. Should you have any questions, you are encouraged to contact me or my supervisor, using contact information provided above.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned, _____
(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")
confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the
_____ (the "Study") in
relation to
_____ and which Study is being conducted by

PULENG MOSA RASUTHA

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "**Researcher**").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that–

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.



I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the focus group.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):
PULENG MOSA RASUTHA

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

