Efficacy of technical vocational education and training college internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment: In Ekurhuleni

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandfather, Principal Leepile Ephraim Notsi, who was affectionately known as “Oompie” by the community and his students. Principal Notsi was a dedicated activist who tirelessly endeavoured to educate not only his children but also the youth within our community. His principles of discipline, hard work, and commitment continue to guide and inspire us today. I appreciate his contributions as a father, community builder, and selfless leader. It is a privilege to uphold the legacy of such a distinguished individual.

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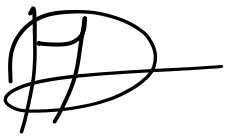
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DECLARATION

I, Palesa Yvonne Notsi, declare that this work is entirely my own. Any text or data from other sources has been properly acknowledged and cited.



Signature

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ABSTRACT

Facilitating the participation of the youth in the labour market is crucial to mainstreaming youth economic participation, especially in South Africa, where limited youth economic participation is a challenge. Structured internships are one way of integrating the youth into the labour market. Understanding the efficacy of internships, therefore, is crucial and a motivation for the study. Using mixed methods, this study investigated the efficacy of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College internship programmes with Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality as a case study.

The objectives of the study, therefore, were to lay a theoretical understanding of internships, explore the contributions of partners, identify key elements of an efficacious internship, and propose an effective model for implementing TVET internships effectively. To pursue the objectives of the study, a survey sample of 200 was drawn (193 participated) using stratified random sampling, and seven key informants (7) using purposive sampling. The study found that well-structured institutional arrangements, quality mentorship, deliberate integration of theory and practice, and partnerships that are informed by a unity of purpose between TVET colleges, service partners, and industry are essential components for the efficacy of internships. Furthermore, a combination of these elements is not only necessary for the smooth running of internships, but it is also necessary to provide meaningful learning for the interns through integrating theory and practice, and through making internships accessible. Based on these findings, the theoretical framework (Theory of Change, Logic Model, and Transactional Partnering Model), and lessons from international experiences, a model for an efficacious internship programme was proposed.

This study contributed to the TVET internship discourse and youth development body of knowledge by proposing a model for an effective TVET internship programme. Furthermore, contribution was made through the use of an innovative theoretical framework and by making academic and practical recommendations for understanding internships better and for improving their efficacy.

Keywords: Youth mainstreaming, TVET Internship, transition to employment, service sector and partnership, Technical Vocational Education and Training, College Ekurhuleni

Table of Contents

DEDICATION ..... **i**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **ii**

DECLARATION ..... **iii**

ABSTRACT ..... **iv**

List of Tables ..... **viii**

List of Figures ..... **ix**

Acronyms ..... **x**

Chapter One **1**

Introduction and Overview of the Study **1**

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Orientation and Background 4

1.3 Problem Statement 14

1.4 Aim of the Study 16

1.5 Research Questions and Objectives 16

1.5.1 Research Questions 16

1.5.2 Research Objectives 17

1.6 Hypotheses 17

1.7 Preliminary Literature Review 18

1.8 Theoretical Framework 20

1.8.1 A Theory of Change 21

1.8.2 The Logic Model 21

1.8.3 The Transactional Partnering Model 22

1.8.4 TVET Framework 23

1.9 Methodology 23

1.9.1 Research Design 23

1.9.2 Research Methods 25

1.9.3 Data collection 26

1.9.4 Data Analysis 27

1.9.5 Sampling and Population 27
1.10 Limitations of the Study 29
1.10.1 Inclusion and Exclusion 30
1.11 Ethical Considerations 31
1.12 Significance of the Study 32
1.13 Provisional Chapters 33
Chapter Two 35
Literature review and theoretical framework 35
2.1 Introduction 35
2.2 Review of concepts 35
2.2.1 Mainstreaming 35
2.2.2. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 37
2.2.3 The Skills Development Discourse 39
2.2.3.1 Human capital theory 40
2.2.3.2 Capabilities approach 42
2.2.3.3 Skills Debate in South Africa 43
2.2.3.4. Implications of Skills Discourse 43
2.2.4 Transition to Employment 44
2.2.5 Unpacking internships 45
2.2.6 Institutional arrangements 46
2.2.7 Internship Information Management Systems 49
2.2.8 Duration of an internship 50
2.2.9 Role of Mentorship 50
2.2.10 Clearly articulated and meaningful tasks 52
2.2.11 Communication 52
2.2.12 Monitoring and Evaluation 53
2.2.13 Employability 58
2.2.14 Internships effectiveness 62
2.3 Take always from the literature 63

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks 65
2.4.1 Kirkpatrick Model 66
2.4.2 Context-Input-Process-Product model 67
2.4.3 The Logic Model 67
2.4.3.1 Components of the Logic Model 68
2.4.4 The Transaction Partnering Model 70
2.4.5 A Theory of Change 71
2.4.5.1 Characteristics of the theory of change 73
2.4.5.2 Theory of Change Key Components 75
2.4.5.4 Reflections of TOC 82
2.5 Chapter Summary 83
Chapter Three 84
Overview of the South African TVET and Internships 84
3.1 Introduction 84
3.2 Political and Socio-Economic Environment 84
3.3 Policy environment 86
3.3.1 Skills Development Policies 88
3.4 Institutional environment 90
3.5 Individual circumstances 92
3.6 International experience 93
3.6.1 Key lessons from international experiences 98
3.7 Chapter Summary 99
Chapter Four 100
Research Methodology and Research Design 100
4.1 Introduction 100
4.2 Research Paradigms 100
4.2.1 Ontology 101
4.2.2 Epistemology 101
4.2.3 Interpretivism 101

4.2.4 Positivism 102
4.2.5 Pragmatism 102
4.3 Research Approach 105
4.4 Research Design 105
4.5 Research Methods 107
4.5.1 Qualitative 107
4.5.2 Quantitative 107
4.5.3 Mixed method 108
4.5.4 Sampling and Population 108
4.5.4.1 Inclusion/Exclusion criteria 110
4.6 Data Collection Techniques 110
4.6.1 Interviews 111
4.6.2 Literature Review 111
4.6.3 Questionnaires 111
4.6.4 Observation 112
4.6.5 Validity and reliability of data collection instruments 112
4.6.5.1 Validity 112
4.6.5.2 Reliability 113
4.7 Data Analysis 113
4.8 Ethical Considerations 114
4.8.1 Informed consent 115
4.8.2 Voluntary participation 115
4.8.3 Privacy and anonymity 115
4.8.4 Avoiding plagiarism 116
4.8.5 Confidentiality 116
4.9 Chapter Summary 116
Chapter Five 117
Presentation and discussion of the research findings 117
5.1 Introduction 117

5.2. Demographic Profile of Respondents 119
5.2.1 Age and Gender Distribution 119
5.2.2 Racial Composition 121
5.2.3 Disability Status 122
5.2.4 Home Language 123
5.2.5 Total Annual Household Income Distribution of Respondents 123
5.2.6 Course Choice and Internship Participation 125
5.3 Analysis of Research Questions 128
5.3.1 What does youth mainstreaming, internship, and transition to employment entail in a TVET College context? 128
5.3.2 To what extent are the service partners involved in supporting TVET graduates for transition to employment? 129
5.3.3 What are the elements of a structured internship program for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges? 130
5.3.4 Which Indicators of Youth Mainstreaming Feature in the TVET Internship Setting? 135
5.3.5 What would be the effective model for implementing TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work? 139
5.4 Statistical Analysis 146
5.4.1 Inferential Statistics Hypothesis Testing (H1, H2, H3) 146
5.4.2 Correlation Analysis 150
5.5 Qualitative Analysis 155
5.5.1 Qualitative Research Demographics 155
5.5.2 Major Theme 1: Understanding Youth Mainstreaming, Internship, and Transition to Employment in a TVET College Context 156
5.5.3 Major Theme 2: Involvement of Service Partners in Supporting TVET Graduates 160
5.5.4 Major Theme 3: Elements of a Structured Internship Programme for Mainstreaming Youth Transition to Employment in TVET Colleges 162
5.5.5 Major Theme 4: Indicators of Youth Mainstreaming Features in the TVET Internship Setting 165

5.5.6 Major Theme 5: Effective Model for Implementing TVET Internships for Mainstreaming Youth Transition into the World of Work 169
5.6 Chapter Summary 172
Chapter Six 174
Framework towards an effective internship model for youth mainstreaming and transition of youth into the workplace model 174
6.1 Introduction 174
6.2 Reflecting on research results and theory 174
6.2.1 Findings and the Literature 174
6.2.2 Theory of Change 175
6.2.3 Logic Model 176
6.2.4 Transactional Partnering Model 177
6.3 Importance of the Framework 178
6.4 Pillars of the Framework 180
6.4.1 Pillar I: Institutional Arrangements 180
6.4.2 Pillar II: Programme Design 181
6.4.3 Pillar III: Programme Preparation 181
6.4.4 Pillar VI: Partnership Development 182
6.4.5 Pillar V: Internship Implementation 183
6.4.6 Pillar VI: Monitoring, Evaluation and Support 184
6.5 Application of the model 185
6.6 Chapter Summary 186
Chapter Seven 187
Summary, Findings, and Recommendations 187
7.1 Introduction 187
7.2 Summary of Chapters 187
7.3 Review of the Study Objectives 188
7.4 Summary of findings 189
7.4.1 Objective 1: Theoretical exposition of the concepts; youth mainstreaming, internship and transition to employment in the context of TVET College. 189

7.4.2 Objective 2: To assess the involvement of service partners in mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment in Ekurhuleni 190

7.4.3 Objective 3: To identify the elements applicable for a structured internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges 191

7.4.4 Objective 4: To analyse indicators relevant to youth mainstreaming in the TVET internship setting 193

7.4.5 Objective 5: To propose a framework that would enhance implementation of TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work 195

7.5 Contributions of the Study 196

7.6 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study 197

7.6.1 Limitations of the study 197

7.6.2 Delimitations of the study 197

7.7 Areas of further research 197

7.8 Recommendations 198

7.9 Conclusion 199

8. REFERENCES 200

Annexure 'A': APPROVAL BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE AFROCENTRIC GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOCUS AREA 224

Annexure 'B': ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY 225

Annexure 'C': PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT EKURHULENI TVET COLLEGE 227

Annexure 'D': RESEARCH INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS 228

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT 228

Annexure 'E': SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE 229

Annexure 'F': INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS, HR OFFICIAL AT TVET COLLEGE 235

Annexure 'G': CERTIFICATE OF EDITING 237

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: …… 30

Table 3.1 Stakeholder Responsibilities: …….. 88

Table 4.1 Comparison of four research philosophies in business and management research: …….. 103-104

Table 4.2 Differences between research design and research methodology: …… 107

Table 4.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: …….. 110

Table 4.4 Distinction between quantitative and qualitative data: ……..…… 113-114

Table 5.1 Rotated Component Matrix: ……..……140

Table 5.2 Quality of Mentor: ……..……. 141

Table 5.3 Working conditions of Interns: ……..…… 142

Table 5.4 Relevance of the Programme: ……..……... 142

Table 5.5 Alignment of practical skills and theoretical knowledge: …….. 142

Table 5.6 Testing results: ……..……. 147

Table 5.7 Statistical Measure of Hypotheses: ……..…. 149

Table 5.8 Table of Collection Results: ……..…. 151

Table 5.9 Overview of Key Informants: ……..……155

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Components of the Logic Model: ……... 69

Figure 2.2 Elements of Theory of Change Model: ……..……..... 74

Figure 2.3 Benefits of Theory of Change Model: ……..... 80

Figure 5.1 Distribution of respondents by gender (Chart A) and age (Chart B) …. 120

Figure 5.2 Racial composition of respondents: ……..…… 121

Figure 5.3 Disability Status of Respondents: 123

Figure 5.4 Distribution of Respondents by Total Annual Household Income……124

Figure 5.5 Distribution of Courses studied at Ekurhuleni TVET College: ……. 125

Figure 5.6 Sources of Workshop/Seminars: ……. 127

Figure 5.7 Awareness and Participation in Internship Programmes at Ekurhuleni TVET College…… 128

Figure 5.8 Internship duration: ……..……..…….. 131

Figure 5.9 Methods of accessing internship: ……..……133

Figure 5.10 Primary aim of internship: ……..…. 133

Figure 5.11 Composite measures of employability: …… 136

Figure 5.12 Composite elements of the mentor quality: ……..……... 143

Figure 5.13 Alignment of theory taught at college to the real world: …… 144

Figure 5.14 Overall, the internship was beneficial: ……..……... 145

Figure 6.1 Proposed Model for Effective Implementation of Internship Programme: ……..……...…179

Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CIPP	Context-Input-Process-Product
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMM	Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEDCOM	Heads of Education Departments Committee
HEQC	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HRDC	Human Resource Development Council of South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMS	Internship Management System
IPAP	Industrial Policy Action Plan
JET	Joint Education Trust
KSA	Knowledge, Skill & Attitude
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NATED	National Accredited Technical Education Diploma

NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	Not in education, employment, or training
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSF	National Skills Fund
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIHD	Occupations in High Demand
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth

Chapter One
Introduction and Overview of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Youth economic participation is an important element of youth development and yet there are many factors curtailing youth participation in the economy. Globally, more than one in five young people are hindered from developing skills or entering the labour market because of a lack of relevant education and training and decent work opportunities (ILO, 2021). To counteract some of these huge problems, like unemployment, governments need to establish more and stronger mechanisms for youth involvement (Baba, 2014). The South African National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) advocates for a diverse set of private and workplace providers to offer targeted work-based training (Sishi, 2022). The hindrances to skills development have created an urgent need for innovative projects that provide skills as well as meaningful employment and self-employment opportunities for young people (World Vision, 2014). Internships, which are regarded as part of facilitating transition to employment, are part of providing workplace skills. Internships are one form of experiential learning, and they are intended to respond to the deficiencies alluded to above by providing exposure to the work environment and by providing practical skills required in a work environment (Fei, Waheeb and Sulaiman, 2020; Goia, Marinaș, and Igret, 2017). In other words, as part of the curriculum, internships help to reinforce and to translate theoretical knowledge into practical actions that contribute to preparing the youth to be employable and to be productive. It is for this reason that internships are often used as a transitional vehicle from educational institutions to the work environment.

Beyond providing skills, internships are also credited with the potential to mitigate barriers to accessing the workplace (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). This assertion is based on the understanding that internships provide opportunities for students who under normal circumstances would find access to certain workplaces difficult. Such improved opportunity for access makes internship an important instrument, not only for access to opportunities and skills development but also for youth economic participation. Given the contributions that internships are intended to make, assessing the efficacy and success

of internships is crucial. The efficacy and success of internships depend on several factors, which include how the internships are conceptualised, the TVET colleges' relationship with industries, the institutional arrangements and the available support mechanisms, mentorship, students' circumstances, students' personal traits, and efforts.

The focus in this study was on internships which are part of the learning programmes offered by the TVET colleges. TVET colleges are part of the South African Higher Education system and are intended to prepare students for the workplace by integrating theory with practice (Oosthuizen, Spencer, and Chigano, 2022). TVET colleges offer academic programmes including in areas like engineering, and business studies under the auspices of the Department of Higher Education and Training, in South Africa. The programme is made up of 18 months of theoretical studies at colleges and 18 months of relevant practical application (internship) in workplaces. The theoretical learning is obtained in the TVET colleges, while job-specific training occurs through prescribed periods of work placement (Vollenhoven, 2016). This means that an internship is mandatory for the completion of TVET qualifications. It also means a shift in approach where both the theoretical and the practical components were previously done in the college and then followed by apprenticeship (Papier, 2017). It is also in line with the international trend of making experiential learning part of the curriculum or what Scott and Willison (2021) call 'embedding employability within curricula' or dual education system.

However, despite the internship component of the TVET programmes being mandatory in South Africa, many students are not able to access an internship opportunity, which means they are not able to complete their TVET qualifications (Sishi, 2022). As a result of this, many students complete the theoretical component (N4 – N6) over 18 months and then leave the system without being afforded an opportunity to gain work experience through internship and by extension not being able to complete their qualifications (Sishi, 2022). This does not only disadvantage students who are not able to find internships, but it also defeats the purpose of integrating the practical component into the curriculum. A well-functioning TVET system can play an essential role in reducing barriers to accessing the world of work and ensuring that skills gained are recognised and certified (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017; Marope, et al., 2015). The success of a practical placement model requires several initiatives to improve the integration of young people

into the labour market (OECD/ILO, 2017). This includes the establishment of quality assurance policies, organisational structures, monitoring, analysing, and improving the quality of the educational process through practice stages (Garcia and Puig, 2011). In addition, it is crucial that these programmes are monitored and evaluated to assess their long-term efficacy (Cho & Honorati, 2014).

As part of responding to the challenge of students not being able to access internships, in February 2022, the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, announced during the State of the Nation Address that the “Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) will place 10 000 TVET college graduates in workplaces from April 2022. This was intended to ensure that the youth will be offered workplace experience to complete their qualifications, thus improving their prospects of employability or starting their own small businesses (Sishi, 2022). However, it is not clear if this intervention will be continuous or if it is a once-off.

Secondly, the DHET sought to increase internship opportunities by encouraging TVET colleges to mainstream internships. This was done through making mainstreaming to be part of performance appraisal processes. For example, as part of encouraging mainstreaming, the DHET Minister (Honourable Blade Nzimande) announced that TVET principals will be assessed on how many partnerships they establish with industries in a given financial year (Sishi, 2022). The DHET Minister also pleaded with the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to “give priority to the work placement of TVET college graduates who require workplace exposure so as to complete their training and to facilitate the transition from learning to working” (Sishi, 2022). Internships may also be coordinated in partnership with employment agencies, industry associations, or educational programmes (Marope, Chakroun and Holmes, 2015). Work experience plays an essential role as it provides students with an understanding of the nature of the workplaces in their chosen field of training (Basson, 2023). It also builds their capacity to apply their college learning in the context of real workplace operations (Basson, 2023).

The foregoing discussion was intended to underscore the importance of understanding the role of TVET Colleges in youth internships and to flag issues that arise when operationalising youth mainstreaming. This study assessed the efficacy of the public TVET Colleges’ internship programmes in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM),

in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The object of the assessment was not only exploratory, but it was also intended to propose an internship model informed by the findings of the study - presented in chapter 5. The assessment was done through the eyes of the students/interns while considering the institutions executing the internships (both colleges and companies).

The researcher investigated a variety of initiatives for supporting youth transition to employment in the Ekurhuleni TVET College, government actors, and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) within Ekurhuleni. Specific examples of employer engagement in youth employment initiatives were also explored. The research sought to understand the experiences of the interns and the institutional arrangements that pertain to youth mainstreaming and youth internships. The researcher explored if TVET providers-maintained relationships with firms and employers that are likely to provide internships for youth graduates completing their college studies (Oosterom, 2018).

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used to carry out the assessment. From a theoretical point of view, the theory of change, the logic model, and the transactional partnering model were used as interpretive frameworks. The assessment was built around youth mainstreaming as an overarching youth development concept to provide a lens to look at the transition into employment through internships as a microelement of youth development. Youth mainstreaming is not only intended to achieve the goal of intergenerational equality (Hess and Stošić, 2021), but it also provides a way of thinking about youth development holistically (Commonwealth, 2017). This study, therefore generated theoretical and empirical insights into how youth mainstreaming and internships serve as part of youth development in South Africa in the context of TVET Colleges. The following sections provide a brief background to the study, the research problem, and the aim of the study. The research objectives and questions are outlined. The research design and methods; limitations to the study and ethical considerations are also presented.

1.2 Orientation and Background

Participation in work experience as supplemental to formal education, has significantly expanded in recent years (McDonald, 2020) to facilitate youth transition into employment.

This is necessitated by the growing challenge of limited absorption of youth into labour markets (World Vision, 2014). The rising youth unemployment is a challenge for both developed and developing countries and an estimated seventy-two million youth worldwide are unemployed (ILO, 2022). Transition to employment services provides comprehensive and individualised services such as employment support, job matching, and unpaid work experience that help individuals quickly attach to the labour market (Baba, 2014). In this study, the focus was on internship as one of the ways of facilitating transition into employment. An internship is one of the common types of work-based learning. The work internship placement (WIP) is mandatory in the South African TVET learning programmes. TVET serves as a supply-side intervention to equip young people with the skills to enter the labour market (Oosterom, 2018). The WIP programme has been found to be an asset in addressing enterprise and student needs in the experiential project (Garcia and Puig, 2011).

The definition of youth differs from country to country, and it is informed by political and socio-economic circumstances (Threadgold, 2020). While the United Nations (UN) defines youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years old (UNESCO, 2015), in South Africa, the noun ‘youth’ refers to those aged between 14 and 35 years in terms of NYDA Act 54 of 2008. The South African definition is informed by the historical exclusion of certain groups in the political and socio-economic arena (Ritcher and Panday, 2007). So, its orientation is inclusive in character and intended to redress. The inclusivity and redress theme in this study is framed through the mainstreaming lens. Mainstreaming as a concept is also transformative as it is predicated upon the need to redress and entrench equality (Commonwealth, 2017).

The process of youth mainstreaming assesses the impact of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes for youth, in all areas and all levels (Zia and Rehman, 2011). A youth mainstreaming approach aims to support young people to fulfil their roles effectively and to take their rightful place in society as partners (Commonwealth, 2017). Youth mainstreaming requires collaboration, alliances, and coordination (Zia and Rehman, 2011). In practical terms, it means that all programme sectors need to take youth into account at all stages from programme planning to reporting, through monitoring and evaluation (Commonwealth, 2017). The process requires a consistent, committed youth-adult cooperation at every level, where young people are recognized as equal and

valuable partners (UNESCO, 2010). The significance of youth development is backed by comprehensive international and national policy and legislative frameworks. In varying degrees, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Agency (UNFPA), and United Nations Women (UN Women) are working with youth issues (Zia and Rehman, 2011). The Commonwealth Youth Programme has been supporting member countries with youth development work for 50 years.

The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth (Hess and Stošić, 2021). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Youth Strategy development is guided by key principles embedded in internationally agreed outcomes, regional frameworks and conventions, and other relevant documents (UNDP, 2014). UNESCO is mandated to provide technical support to promote youth policies (Zia and Rehman, 2011). The ILO is mandated to generate decent and sustainable employment opportunities for the youth across the globe. Being a technical agency, their focus is on standardization (Zia and Rehman, 2011). The ILO guide on making TVET and skills development inclusive for all targets policymakers and representatives of workers' and employers' organizations engaged in skills development systems, TVET centre staff, and development practitioners providing skills policy advice (Lange, et al., 2020).

UNDP leads the programmes and strategies that ensure youth (16-40) are engaged not only as beneficiaries, but also as partners and agents of change for good governance, economic prosperity, climate action, and beyond (UNDP, 2020). The common areas where UNDP can establish its niche for youth mainstreaming and empowerment were identified as follows:

- Enable prospects of income generation for the youth: It aims to increase the employability of the youth through various measures by preparing the labour market for youth and preparing youth for the labour market with a special focus on youth-headed households; and
- Support character building of the youth (Zia and Rehman, 2011).

There is an indication that there is a global youth employment crisis experienced (ILO, 2021). In 2017, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reported that the rising youth unemployment is a challenge for both developed and developing countries (The Commonwealth, 2017). Across the globe, 72 million young people are unemployed, 123 million are in working poverty, while 270 million are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) (ILO, 2022; Okay-Somerville, 2021). Through policy advocacy, technical assistance, and strategic partnerships, various programmes including education toolkits and frameworks, have been developed to eliminate poverty, reduce inequality, and skills development in addressing youth unemployment by 2030 (OECD/ILO, 2017). Such programmes are top-down emanating from international to local spheres of government. The education frameworks and toolkits seek to strengthen the education system and building resilience; maintain early childhood care and education; and technical and vocational education training to tackle youth unemployment (The Commonwealth, 2022). Education, training, and innovation are seen as central to South Africa's long-term development (Sishi, 2022). Skills development is increasingly a key strategy for addressing challenges and reshaping the world in a positive way (ILO, 2021). The supply of sustainable skills is central to economic growth and development in South Africa (Walters, 2018).

TVET and skills development are key to the 2030 Agenda, under sustainable development goals (SDG) 4 and 8. SDG 4 seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (ILO, 2021). TVET has been a priority agenda item for Commonwealth education ministers (The Commonwealth, 2022). TVET and skills development systems strive to fulfil the demands of all people seeking to learn relevant new skills to improve their career prospects, income, or professional status (Lange, Hofmann, and Di Cara, 2020). The right to education is routinely classified as an economic, social, and cultural right (Tomaševski, 2001). The SDG 8 guides on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (ILO, 2021). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been given greater prominence to equip youths and adults with relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). The sections above indicated that much work has been done towards youth mainstreaming. Countries have made encouraging progress in

developing youth policy as a guiding national framework to manage commitments and successful outcomes for youth as detailed in the Lisbon Declaration of 1998 (Camarinhas, 2019). A brief background of such programmes is presented in subsequent paragraphs including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the AU (African Union), the Asia-Pacific Conference on Education and Training, and the European Training Foundation programmes.

The Commonwealth Secretariat developed a TVET Self-Assessment Toolkit to assist member countries in strengthening their TVET systems (Commonwealth, 2022). The TVET toolkit helps countries to assess the strength and effectiveness of their TVET programmes. The TVET toolkit comprises six key features namely: governance, employer engagement, occupational standards, qualifications framework, quality institutions, and delivery and assessment (Commonwealth, 2017). Six key features were identified as being intrinsic to an effective TVET system. The six features and development stages provide an overall profile of the country's TVET system and identify areas where gaps exist (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). The AU (African Union) developed several youth development policies and programmes at the continental level aimed at ensuring the continent benefits from its demographic dividend (African Union Commission, 2023). The AU policies include the African Youth Charter, Youth Decade Plan of Action, and the Malabo Decision on Youth Empowerment, all of which are implemented through various AU Agenda 2063 programmes (African Union Commission, 2023).

Improving the labour market prospects and quality of work for those disadvantaged in the labour market is a key focus of the ILO's research and capacity-building agenda (Lange, Hofmann, and Di Cara, 2020). In 2015, the Asia-Pacific Conference on Education and Training, themed "Making Skills Development Work for the Future" was organised to see how TVET can provide quality skills development to support transitions to employment (UNESCO, 2015). The overarching aim of this conference was to leverage the tremendous potential of TVET policies and practices to better link the skills acquired by learners with those needed in the labour markets (UNESCO, 2015). Trends in the region's labour markets and which skills will be needed for tomorrow's jobs were discussed (UNESCO, 2015). The notion of avenues in which partnerships can be realised to make TVET more relevant was also discussed (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO's Strategy for TVET (2016–2021) (UNESCO 2015) supports the efforts of member states to enhance the

relevance of their TVET systems and to equip all youth and adults with the skills required for employment (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO's Strategy for TVET is through the following three priority areas: namely: fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship; promoting equity and gender equality; and facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017).

In 2015, The European Training Foundation highlighted five features of TVET that are useful in understanding quality provision. According to the European Training Foundation, TVET:

- responds to the labour market, societal and individual needs;
- leads to nationally or even internationally recognized qualifications and credentials;
- provides access to decent jobs and sustainable employment;
- is attractive, inclusive, and accessible, that is, all citizens have access to TVET; and
- fosters capabilities that enable progression to further learning (Alla-Mensah, McGrath and Henderson, 2021).

Global challenges and strong calls for paradigm shifts from the ILO's constituents have created a new policy context on skills and lifelong learning that is reflected in the Centenary Declaration and the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2022–25 (ILO, 2021). The paradigm shifts demonstrate the priority that is placed on the promotion of skills development and lifelong learning (ILO, 2021). The SDG 8 guides on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (ILO, 2021). In the context of South Africa's Human Resource Development Strategy, TVET Colleges are expected to provide "the intermediate-to-high level skills required in a changing global and national economic environment" (Fisher et al., 2003, 327). TVET colleges are also seen as having a role in "expanding access, widening participation and promoting social inclusion in a society characterised by widespread poverty, highly unequal distribution of income and high unemployment" (Fisher et al., 2003, 327). The purpose of the colleges is to train young school leavers and provide them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for self-employment and employment in the labour market (Sishi, 2022).

The relevant policies will be discussed in Chapter 3. The abovementioned programmes have intentions to strengthen the TVET education system, and they have a common thread, namely: work readiness for responding to labour market, and employer engagement (partnerships). Work readiness programmes aim to improve the employment prospects of the local youth of Ekurhuleni (City of Ekurhuleni, 2022). Employer engagement includes small, medium and large enterprises; public and private companies; employer and employee associations; and government and not-for-profit community institutions. Employer engagement concentrates on four key areas, namely: determining skill priorities; curriculum development; workforce training; and support for the TVET sector (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). As governments work together to reboot their economies and job sectors, important considerations will include measures to ensure a well-functioning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will oblige all stakeholders to forge strong partnerships and involve a broad range of actors (UNESCO, 2015). The state has an important role in guaranteeing quality TVET by expanding public provision and supporting quality private provision, which is where policy and resource allocation comes in (Alla-Mensah, McGrath and Henderson, 2021). However, “evaluation of the merits of partnerships with stakeholders must be grounded in a narrow calculation of whether more resources have been made available for the sector. This also requires a clearer look at the contribution of such partnerships to the wider goals of TVET” (Alla-Mensah, McGrath, and Henderson, 2021). This can play an essential role in reducing barriers to work and equipping young people with the skills they need to access employment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017).

South Africa

Since 1994, the government and its stakeholders embarked on several large-scale initiatives aimed at increasing youth participation and addressing existing gaps within its policy frameworks to help mainstream youth development (National Youth Development Agency, 2022). These initiatives were aimed at achieving youth economic empowerment and development by encouraging and guiding all tiers of government, including implementing agencies to mainstream young people in all their core policies, strategies, and programmes (Department of Trade and Industry, 2008). The South African policy framework makes provision for the mainstreaming and integration of young people in all

spheres of government. South Africa continued to use its adopted two-pronged approach to youth development, namely: mainstreaming youth development across various sectors; and providing dedicated and youth-focused specialised programmes and services (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, 2021:28).

What followed was the formation and establishment of different policies, legislative instruments, and agencies. The efforts culminated in the establishment of the National Youth Commission (NYC) in 1996 (formed for mainstreaming and policy development) and Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) in 2001 (formed for direct empowerment of youth through entrepreneurship training and funding) (Koopedi, 2012). Subsequently, the two institutions were merged, and through the National Youth Development Agency Act 54 of 2008, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) was established to co-ordinate youth development. To solidify the mainstreaming and integrated approach, the act requires all state organs to "take national priorities in respect of youth development into account in planning their activities." To facilitate the implementation of mainstreaming youth development, Daly (2005) and Commonwealth (2017) emphasise the significant role of decentralisation.

Daly (2005) further argues that mainstreaming is about spreading and decentralizing responsibility in units and departments. In other words, all state organs should play a role as opposed to just one state organ and this also suggests the recognition of the multi-dimensionality of youth development. Decentralisation of youth programmes is better placed at a local level to mainstream and integrate youth development. At a local level, Youth Offices are charged with the responsibility of direct delivery of services to young people and ensuring that they are prioritised within the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and Local Economic Development [LED] (NYC, 2008).

Hlungwani et al., (2021) argue that mainstreaming is a critical part of pursuing a vision for an egalitarian world as it incorporates young people's aspirations into development planning and ensures equality between youth and adults (also in Commonwealth, 2017). In line with the national frameworks, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality established a youth directorate in the Office of the Executive Mayor (City of Ekurhuleni, 2022). The Directorate is responsible for providing strategic leadership, coordinating, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the mainstreaming of youth development in policies,

programmes, and plans of the City of Ekurhuleni (City of Ekurhuleni, 2022). The youth directorate in Ekurhuleni is also responsible for co-coordinating and overseeing other sectors of society implementing integrated and mainstreamed youth development programmes in the city (Molele, 2018). According to SIDA (2015), youth mainstreaming encapsulates integration, targeting, and dialogue. The directorate will coordinate and plan work around four pillars, which are: mainstreaming youth development; skills development; economic development, and social justice (Molele, 2018).

Despite these initiatives, young people are still marginalised in the mainstream economic activities of South Africa and still face numerous social challenges (NYDA, 2022). As part of ongoing initiatives to mainstream youth development and because of dissatisfaction with the rate at which youth development is occurring, the National Youth Policy was launched in November 2008 – with the latest one being the National Youth Policy 2020-2030. The aim of this policy is to empower and guide the youth to a prosperous future. This represents an important milestone towards an integrated and holistic approach to youth development for the advantage of young people in South Africa. The policy aims at mainstreaming youth development into the economy of the country, with the intention of reducing youth unemployment and other challenges facing the youth. This follows the realisation that, since 1994, policymakers and decision-makers have not given enough attention to the problem of unemployment in relation to its devastating effects, especially among the youth (Gwala, 2007:3).

Internships and work readiness programme

As part of intervention through the youth development pillar of education and second chances, internships were introduced in TVET colleges. Participation in work experience as supplemental to formal education has significantly expanded in recent years. Work experience is a catch-all term that generally refers to a period during which an individual usually a student or graduate attends a workplace and participates, either paid or unpaid, in its day-to-day functions (McDonald, 2020). Internships involve a limited period of work experience with an employer usually lasting between a few weeks to one year (in some rare cases even longer) but which is neither part of a regular employment relationship nor a formal apprenticeship (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). Three distinct types of internships typically frame internship programmes:

a) Internships which are linked to a course of academic study;

b) Work experience undertaken as part of an Active Labour Market Programme;
c) Open market internships – that is, work experience in firms or organizations that do not fall under either of the previous criteria (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018).

A key motif of debates about the link between work experience and professional labour market outcomes has been equity of access (McDonald, 2020). Lain et al., (2013) argue on largely theoretical grounds that 'governed' internships that is, internships that come under categories a. or b. above are more likely to have beneficial outcomes than open-market internships. Work experience undertaken as part of an active labour market programme is usually structured and supported, at least in part, by higher education institutions (Jackson, 2017). Open market internships are attached to high programme fees charged to participants which may constitute a significant barrier to participation for those from less advantaged backgrounds. To counteract the huge problem of unemployment, government needs to establish more and stronger mechanisms for youth involvement (Baba, 2014). The work readiness programme aims to improve the employment prospects of the local youth (City of Ekurhuleni, 2022). Youth ministries and departments must be strengthened as part of this process, to ensure that they can act as lead agencies in research, planning, target setting, monitoring, and evaluation of youth issues (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008). A successful implementation of the UN Youth Strategy will directly depend on effective and efficient collaboration between entities as well as ingenious synergies among the priorities and actions outlined in the Strategy and its Action Plan (United Nations, 2018).

In China, the local governments and TVET institutions offered students work opportunities in factories (Koo, 2016 in Alla-Mensah, McGrath, and Henderson, 2021). A successful implementation of the UN Youth Strategy will directly depend on effective and efficient collaboration between entities as well as ingenious synergies among the priorities and actions outlined in the Strategy and its Action Plan (United Nations, 2018). In the City of Ekurhuleni 105 graduates were hosted in 2021/22, the programmes are implemented in collaboration with external organizations such as, among others, Dynastic Electrical, Pholosong Hospital, Far East Rand Hospital, Glycone Health, Mthonjeni Youth Innovators, Richman Consulting, Vumani Consulting and NYDA (City of Ekurhuleni, 2022). The learners are placed within the following careers, ICT, Office Administration,

Engineering, Artisan related, Health and Social Sciences, Business, and Accountancy (City of Ekurhuleni, 2022).

1.3 Problem Statement

In 2012, the International Labour Conference issued a resolution with a call for action to tackle the unprecedented youth employment crisis through a set of policy measures. The resolution provides guiding principles and a package of interrelated policies for countries wanting to take immediate and targeted action to address the crisis of youth labour markets (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). TVET is known for its close link to employment and self-employment. However, young people encounter various challenges in the labour market and the school-to-work transition (Alla-Mensah, McGrath and Henderson, 2021).

There has been a rise in open-market internships. However, participation in open market internships by higher education students and graduates has negative effects, since some students are unable to participate due to charge fees required by brokers to organise for placing individuals in organisations (McDonald, 2020). Studies indicate that interns may be in areas unrelated to the field of study, harsh conditions, and poor remuneration (Koo, 2016). Lack of good employment opportunities poses a significant threat to the inclusion of youth in societies, with youth unemployment being among the highest in the world (Caribbean Development Bank, 2015). This is characterised by a lack of specific policies and programmes to deal with youth development before 1994 (Everatt, 2018).

A difficult transition into the world of work has long-lasting consequences not only for youth but also for their families and communities (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). This situation has created an unfavourable climate, which obstructs the efforts of youth to enter the labour market; especially those from previously disadvantaged groups (Kampala, 2011). Some hinderances are alluded to:

- inconsistent political support and funding mechanisms, including sustainability of resource mobilisation and inconsistency of budgetary allocations;
- limited capacity and weak institutional frameworks;
- the lack of coordination mechanisms and existing funding constraints often preclude more extensive collaboration between government and civil society groups;

- inadequacy of youth groups and networks, including participation and roles of youth organisations;
- in many instances young people's contribution to youth development processes is minimal; and
- the gender gap in participation and access needs to be addressed (Camarinhas, 2019).

Equity of access is one of the key issues driving the discourse about the link between work experience and professional labour market outcomes (McDonald, 2020). Opportunities to participate in work experience have been identified in a range of studies as being influenced by class, gender, age, and geographic location (McDonald, 2020). Lack of good employment opportunities poses a significant threat to the inclusion of youth in South Africa, with youth unemployment in the sub-region being among the highest in the world (NYDA, 2022).

Poor links between TVET curricula and labour market needs contribute to the low rate of absorption of TVET graduates and point to the relevance of partnerships with employers and up-to-date labour market information systems (Alla-Mensah, McGrath and Henderson, 2021). Buntu and Lehmann (2015) found that there were inconsistencies in the way municipalities implement mainstreaming of youth development in South Africa. This could partly be attributed to the fact that institutions implement mainstreaming of youth without any guidelines. This suggests that there is no coherent approach to affecting the mainstreaming of youth in respective institutions. The lack of clearly formulated guidelines on youth mainstreaming programmes is likely to run the risk of youth development. Ideally, it must be integrated within the service delivery plans of the public and private sectors, and it must be reported annually. It is believed that a clearly defined, long-term policy framework for progressing youth development, that lends support to locally driven sustainable development processes and realises the demographic dividend, is an essential catalyst for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (Camarinhas, 2019). A policy brief by Camarinhas (2019), outlined the seven principles for introducing and implementing a second generation of youth policies that countries can use to elevate the importance of youth and capitalize on their potential for contributing to national sustainable development. The seven principles include:

- High-level political commitment and championship
- Coordination system for youth mainstreaming
- Capacity building for youth development and institutionalisation of youth work
- Participation and active engagement of youth
- Results-oriented policymaking
- New areas of youth development
- Knowledge-based approach (Camarinhas, 2019).

Promoting youth mainstreaming thus require assessing and abiding by relevant legislative or regulatory frameworks (Hess and Stošić, 2021). As much as certain sectors attempt to establish structures to cater to the mainstreaming of youth development, there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of their approach and interpretation of mainstreaming and their actual practices. This study investigated the concept of youth mainstreaming in Ekurhuleni TVET College. The essence of this study, therefore, was to use a case study to understand how TVET Colleges promote and implement a coordination system for youth mainstreaming and improved synergies between different policy areas. The efficacy of TVET internship programmes in Ekurhuleni was used as a primary nucleus to focus the study.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This study was aimed at assessing the effectiveness of TVET internships as an integration mechanism and at assessing existing partnership capacities to support young people's transition into the world of work.

1.5 Research Questions and Objectives

This section was intended to focus the problem statement by posing specific questions and stating the objectives of the study. The Primary research question is as follows:

- How effective is the implementation of TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work?

1.5.1 Research Questions

The study intends to answer the following research secondary questions:

- What does youth mainstreaming, internship, and transition to employment entail in a TVET College context?
- To what extent are the service partners involved in supporting TVET graduates for transition to employment?
- What are the elements of a structured internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges?
- What are the indicators of youth mainstreaming features in the TVET internship setting?
- What would be the effective model for implementing TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work?

1.5.2 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To provide a theoretical exposition of concepts, youth mainstreaming, internship, and transition to employment in the context of TVET College;
- To assess the involvement of service partners for mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment in Ekurhuleni;
- To identify the elements applicable to a structured internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges;
- To analyse indicators relevant to youth mainstreaming in the TVET internship setting;
- To propose a framework that would enhance the implementation of TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work.

1.6 Hypotheses

The primary hypothesis of the study is as follows:

- H1: A well-designed TVET internship programme can benefit young people with relevant skills that could enhance their employability
- H2: TVET internship experience influence graduates' future employment prospects
- H3: The involvement of service partners for mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment is vital to support internship

1.7 Preliminary Literature Review

This section is a recognition of the scholarship that has already been done in this area of social study and an attempt to identify areas that still need the attention of scholars. The key concepts for this study include youth mainstreaming, TVET Internship, and transition to employment.

Amongst the studies done in South Africa that touched directly on mainstreaming of youth development are Ritcher and Panday (2007), National Youth Commission (NYC) (2008), Koopedi (2012), Hlagala (2012), Hlagala and Delport (2014), and Buntu and Lehmann (2015). Ritcher and Panday (2007) dealt with conceptual issues pertaining to the mainstreaming of youth development but at a more general level as opposed to the local level context, which is the focus of this study. They dealt with the contested nature of who are the youth and what it means to mainstream youth development. The NYC (2008) study made a case for South Africa to continue with mainstreaming as opposed to establishing a ministry of youth development, arguing that the ministry approach does not give sufficient recognition to the interconnectedness and cross-sectoral nature of youth development. Koopedi (2012) evaluated the efficacy of institutional arrangements at two metropolitan municipalities in Gauteng, while Hlagala (2012) focussed on supporting youth development through professionalising youth work as a practice. The study by Koopedi (2012) deals with a key aspect of mainstreaming, which looks at the structural aspect of mainstreaming, i.e. institutions, policies, etc. Koopedi (2012) found that in the municipalities that he studied, mainstreaming was to a greater extent expressed theoretically with little practical implementation. A point corroborated by Buntu and Lehmann (2015).

Like Ritcher and Panday (2007), Hlagala and Delport (2014) looked at the various ways that youth development is conceptualised. Buntu and Lehmann (2015) examined the practices of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (COJ), Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality (NMBMM), and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) to assess the extent to which youth development is effectively factored into the local government planning. They found that although at policy level there were positive signs, mainstreaming in the municipalities is often constrained by the lack of implementation of youth development plans and the fact that the plans are not

incorporated into the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and the performance management system. This suggests that accountability mechanisms in these municipalities are weak. Whilst these studies provide a solid base to work from and affirm the importance of holistic youth development, which is presupposed by integration and mainstreaming, these and other studies, except for the Buntu and Lehmann (2015) study fall short of exploring the theoretical and practical implications, and the ramifications of mainstreaming in the context of local government.

Integration and mainstreaming approach to youth development, which is currently the dominant resource-based approach has recently taken centre stage in youth development discourse (Ritcher and Panday, 2007; Commonwealth, 2017). This is evident in the increasing adoption of the approach by many governments and multilateral organisations such as the UN, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the AU (Commonwealth, 2017). The Commonwealth (2017) frames mainstreaming as a “youth-centric” approach to development. Furthermore, the Commonwealth (2017: vi) asserts that to nurture and develop the youth, a cross-sectoral approach that entails “developing robust, stand-alone youth policies and integrating young people into sectoral policies of line ministries” is fundamental. Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi (2013) support this view when they contend that the effects of policies and actions for youth would be more pronounced if they were mainstreamed. Such an approach would propel governments to continuously ask how impactful such policies are on the youth, Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi further argue.

Several strands of research on internships and youth mainstreaming emerged. Faber (2002), Aviva Freedman and Christine Adam (1996), and Tiffany Bourelle (2014), for instance, each focus on how the internship is an opportunity for students to see themselves as “professionals” on the job (Bay, 2021). Anson and Forsberg (1990) described a specific learning process through which interns move from academically oriented writing to workplace-specific discourses and processes. Most of the scholarship that theorizes how interns make these shifts has been based on Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger’s concept of situated learning (Bay, 2021). Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning is situated in a community of practice. O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018)’s study aimed to identify which elements of internship that are most useful for youth programmes undertaken by the European Commission (EC) and the Fair Internship Initiative (FII). The

study by Bay (2021) indicates that policymakers in respective sectors need to develop innovative ways to support students in their internships. Furthermore, coach them to develop the professional skills they need on the job and help them to make explicit connections between learning on the job and their academic coursework (Bay, 2021).

The study by Häkkinen (2006) in Denmark shows that students with work experience benefit from better subsequent employment prospects and higher wages, although the effect tends to disappear some years after graduation. Robert and Saar (2012) conducted a comparative study specifically devoted to analysing the effect of work experience on post-graduation occupational outcomes in six Central and Eastern European countries. Their analysis shows that study-related work experience reduces the duration of job search and improves employment prospects.

This suggests that in addition to understanding the theoretical underpinnings of mainstreaming, examining the institutional arrangements of youth development is vital. Institutional arrangements are the organisation of policies, rules, norms, and values that countries have in place to legislate, plan and manage the execution of development, the rule of law, the measurement of change, and other such functions of the state (Rosso, Dorleans and Feiler, 2014:10). In South Africa, the mainstreaming approach is expressed concretely through amongst others, the National Youth Policy (NYP), the Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS) and the institutional arrangements that include youth focal points amongst others.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework helps to examine the links and relationships between concepts with social theory (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, and Wright, 2010; Cunningham, 2019; Kivunja, 2018). Furthermore, a theoretical framework attempts to link concepts and themes emerging in a study and the broader social theory. The theoretical framework was used to interpret and make scholarly sense of the data generated from the respondents sampled for the study (Kivunja, 2018). Furthermore, Kivunja argues that a theoretical framework holds the dissertation together through determining what data goes into the thesis and how it is interpreted.

For this study Theory of Change was adopted. The researcher also applied the Logic Model, and the Transactional Partnering Model to assess the efficacy of the TVET internship programme and youth mainstreaming. Furthermore, the study incorporated the TVET framework to determine the relations among key stakeholders supporting youth mainstreaming.

1.8.1 A Theory of Change

This study applies a theory of change. The theory of change is increasingly being utilised as a means for developing and managing partnerships and partnership strategies (UN, 2018). A Theory of Change explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions, are expected to lead to a specific development change, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence (Weiss, 1995). The Theory of Change defines all building blocks required to achieve a defined long-term goal (World Vision, 2014). It can foster consensus and motivate stakeholders by involving them early in the planning process and by showing them how their work contributes to long-term impact (UN, 2018). Theory of Change emerged from the field of programme theory and programme evaluation in the mid-1990s as a new way of analysing the theories motivating programmes and initiatives working for social and political change (Weiss, 1995). Theory of Change is focused not just on generating knowledge about whether a programme is effective, but also on explaining what methods it uses to be effective (Coryn, et al., 2011). A thorough theory of change helps to guide the development of sound and evidence-based programme strategies, with assumptions and risks clearly analysed and spelled out (Weiss, 1995). The Theory of Change identifies six additional preconditions that make it possible for ready youth to attain the sustainable livelihood objective (World Vision, 2014).

1.8.2 The Logic Model

Furthermore, the study also adopted a logic model to assess the effectiveness of a programme. A logic model sets out how an intervention is intended to bring about benefits and shows the logic implicit between activities, outcomes, and impacts. This is useful to help identify progress toward achieving longer-term benefits which may not yet be demonstrable. The logic model sets out the rationale for the YEPF and a broad summary of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts expected under each element of the

YEPF (ICF International Firm, 2015). YEPF inputs include any funding re-allocated by local authorities and other partners to activities relating to the implementation of the youth programmes and in-kind contributions of time from strategic and operational partners. The output indicators for the YEPF will be used assess the implementation of the TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition. The output indicators comprise of six main elements, namely: early identification, brokerage, tracking, provision, employability and accountability. These activities are manifested as the outputs including improved systems, more support for young people, more appropriate provision and greater scrutiny.

1.8.3 The Transactional Partnering Model

The DHET emphasised on partnerships for supporting youth mainstreaming in TVET sector for internships. Strategic partnerships are not established overnight and typically develop from single collaboration activities with partners. For this reason, the research applied the Transactional Partnering (TP) model to understand the context of partnership formation. TP was coined in Canada (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, and McLoughlin, 2006). TP was used by Jennings, et al. (2006) as an intervention strategy aimed at youth engagement with local quality of life issues. The TP model reflects the premise that exposing youth to opportunities and challenges within a safe and supportive environment, and the resulting engagement and reflection, can result in learning and empowerment (Cargo et al., 2003). The researcher also looked at the Partnership Stairway model and the Partnership Continuum.

- *The Partnership Stairway model*

The Partnership Stairway model was developed by researchers from the Münster University of Applied Sciences (Baaken, 2008). Many universities and companies utilise a version of stairway model in thinking about their partnerships, including allocating resources and support. This model demonstrates how collaborations can progress from more transactional to more collaborative and finally strategic partnerships.

- *The Partnership Continuum*

The Partnership Continuum is another representation of transactional to strategic partnerships and was developed by a working group of industry, academic and government professionals, convened by UIDP, called the Partnership Continuum model (UIDP, 2008).

1.8.4 TVET Framework

The researcher applied a TVET framework developed by Commonwealth to assess the implementation of TVET internships for mainstreaming youth transition. The TVET framework is developed to allow member countries to review and evaluate the effectiveness of their TVET system. The Framework comprises six key features identified as being intrinsic to an effective TVET system. These are governance, industry/ employer engagement, occupational standards, qualifications framework, quality institutions, and delivery and assessment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). The framework also includes a taxonomy scale of development to guide countries in analysing and assessing the features, level of development, and effective operationalisation of their system (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017).

The abovementioned theory, model, and frameworks helped to discuss, analyse, and justify the expected relationships and how partners catalyse youth agency and create support for youth mainstreaming.

1.9 Methodology

This section sets the philosophical and practical approach to how the study is conceptualised and how it was conducted, including the tools used to collect and analyse data. The purpose of methodology is to provide scientific grounding for any study (Brynard and Hanekom, 2006). In other words, it provides a basis for scientific justification of the research approach, design, and methods of collecting and analysing data. It aligns the research questions, research philosophy, data collection, analysis, and presentation of results, which in turn bolsters ‘methodological coherence’ and consistency (Saunders, et al., 2019). There are different methods available, depending on what kind of study a researcher is undertaking. These methods can be broadly categorised into qualitative, quantitative, and methodological triangulation or mixed methods. The methods that one uses are guided by the kind of study and the resources available.

1.9.1 Research Design

Every research project requires a research strategy to plan and collect data. It is important to clarify the methods that were used and to justify the choice of a research project. This

section serves that purpose, and it outlines the practical steps that were undertaken to pursue the study. Barbie and Mouton (2001) assert that research design addresses the planning of scientific inquiry or designing a strategy for finding out something. Research design outlines procedures and methods for implementing the research strategy (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault, 2016). Barbie and Mouton (2001) also indicate that the research design focuses on the logic of research and what kind of evidence is required to address the research question adequately. Research designs can be undertaken as cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, experimental studies, and case studies.

This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the effects of TVET internships for mainstreaming youth transition into the workforce in Ekurhuleni. According to Saunders et al. (2019) and Miller (1991), descriptive research portrays an accurate profile of persons, events, or situations. This research design allowed the researcher to gather data on the impact of TVET internships and youth mainstreaming in the study area from a wide range of respondents (Sileyew, 2019). The researcher considered both qualitative and quantitative methods to address the key research objectives. This study employed both primary data and secondary data. The qualitative data supports the quantitative data analysis and results (Sileyew, 2019).

Primary and secondary data

A key component of this study is document analysis. The primary data sources for this study comprised the TVET College and service sectors selected in Ekurhuleni. The primary data sources are industries' working environment and industry employees, management and bottom workers, using interviews, questionnaires, and discussions (Sileyew, 2019). Secondary data included amongst others the DHET and municipal policies on youth development, annual reports, and budgets. Secondary data was sourced from desk review to analyse existing documents, DHET Reports on TVET and Human resource reports on internships. Reputable journals, books, different articles, periodicals, proceedings, magazines, newsletters, newspapers, websites, and other sources were considered in the manufacturing industrial sectors (Sileyew, 2019). This assisted in generating data on the extent to which the policy framework and youth mainstreaming programmes are infused in the Ekurhuleni operations. A literature search

for this study was conducted using database sources like Emerald; Taylor and Francis publications; journals; ILO, UNDP and UNESCO websites, and other related materials.

1.9.2 Research Methods

The research methods for the study are outlined in the following sections.

1.9.2.1 Qualitative Approaches

This study adopted the qualitative method, which focused on in-depth interviews with key informants. The qualitative approach generated data in the form of “text, words, phrases, or symbols intended representation of people’s actions, social events,” and opinions (Neuman, 2006: 458). This research approach is not generalisable to larger populations, given its specificity and the uniqueness of people’s experiences. According to Cassim (2015), qualitative approaches involve trying to understand why respondents feel a certain way or hold opinions. The approaches may employ, amongst others, one-on-one interviews, observations, text analysis, symbols/artifacts analysis, and participation (Cresswell, 2008; Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2006). Using this approach, the researcher had an opportunity to ask questions for clarity or probe further into the answers provided. Such probing is likely to tease out the nuances of a phenomenon being studied. In the context of this study, this approach was used to generate data from selected key informants.

1.9.2.2 Quantitative Approaches

Quantitative approaches generate statistical data which can be generalizable to larger populations (Saunders, et al., 2019). The main advantage of this approach is that it provides a bigger picture of the phenomenon being studied (Bell, et.al., 2022). However, it is often limited when the nuances and intricacies of a phenomenon are being studied. In this approach, the researcher focused on using survey questionnaires completed by participants. Quantitative research is associated with analytical research, and its purpose is to arrive at a universal statement (Brynard and Hanekom 2006). The universality and generalisability of this approach are the reasons why they are favored by policymakers.

1.9.3 Data collection

Data collection methods for this study were focused on the following basic techniques.

- *Qualitative data collection*

The qualitative data was sourced through field observation and interviews. The semi-structured interviews, which were used to gather data from key informants, were considered as they allowed the researcher to ask probing questions without losing focus on the topic. It also permitted the researcher to seek new insights, ask questions, and assess phenomena from different perspectives (Sileyew, 2019). In-depth interviews were conducted with the key informants.

- *Quantitative data collection*

Survey questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data in this study (Sileyew, 2019). The main tool for gaining primary information in practical research is survey questionnaires, because the researcher can decide on the sample and the types of questions to be asked (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). Participants were recruited through the database provided by the TVET College from the selected TVET colleges in Ekurhuleni (sampling frame). A survey questionnaire was developed and distributed to the final-year students, aged 19-35 participating in TVET Colleges. Close-ended questions were developed based on a five-item Likert scale. The survey questionnaires were sent electronically to selected participants through emails, WhatsApp, and short message sending. The targeted number of students for the survey was 200, whereby 100 were sourced from Ekurhuleni West and another 100 from Ekurhuleni East.

Workplace site observation data collection

Observational research was also implemented in this study. The researcher did not form part of the participants observed. Observational research findings are considered strongly in validity because the researcher can collect a depth of information about a particular behaviour (Sileyew, 2019). This also allowed the researcher to understand the partnership in TVET internship and service sectors that need to support youth transition to the world of work in Ekurhuleni.

1.9.4 Data Analysis

This is an important aspect of the study in that it answers the questions posed by interpreting and drawing conclusions from the data. The combination of factor analysis and regression analysis was used to analyse data. Regression analysis is used for estimating the relationships between a dependent variable and independent variables (Freedman, 2009). The researcher used Excel, SPSS, and Office Word format, for data analysis. This data analysis focuses on numerical/quantitative data analysis.

For the qualitative component of the research, the researcher read through the data after it is transcribed, to identify themes that emerged from the interviews. The key concepts identified in the study were used as an organizing framework for presenting the data. Where necessary, direct quotes from the respondents were cited, without compromising their anonymity, to illuminate certain themes.

1.9.4.1 Reliability and Validity

Reliability analysis is considered to ensure stability and consistency of data collection. The reliability of measurements specifies the amount to which it is without bias (error-free) and hence ensures consistent measurement across time and the distinct items in the instrument (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). The reliability of this study applies to Cranach's alpha to determine the reliability and validity of the quantitative results.

1.9.5 Sampling and Population

The sampling strategy is about the method used to select respondents or objects from the known population, documents for analysis, and any other data sources (Saunders et al., 2019). This section, therefore, outlines how the respondents were selected and for what purpose. A purposive sampling was used to identify key informants. Purposive sampling is used where the researcher, based on the requirement of the study, uses his/her knowledge, and his/her judgment to generate a sample (Barbie and Mouton, 2001; Bryman, 2013). Like other forms of non-probability samples, purposive sampling does not claim representativity, instead, the purpose of the sample is the key defining factor on who gets selected to participate in the study.

Secondly, for the survey component of the study, a random sample of final-year students aged between 19 years and 35 years was drawn from the selected TVET Colleges in Ekurhuleni (Sample frame). Unlike in non-random sampling, all the units in a simple random sampling procedure have an equal chance of being selected for participation (Saunders, et al., 2019). But in this case, instead of using a simple non-probability sample, the target population was the sample using a multi-stage procedure, which is a “sampling design that occurs in two or more successive stages” (Saunders, et al., 2019: 325). In the first stage, two TVET colleges were sampled from Ekurhuleni. Furthermore. In the second stage, the units (students) were stratified according to gender to ensure gender representativeness by drawing an equal number of males and females from the strata. The required sample was drawn from two strata of males and females from each sampled college. An online probability sample calculator was used to calculate the sample size; however, a minimum of two hundred participants were sampled to ensure that statistical analysis could be performed on the data.

1.9.5.1 Area of Study

In this study, a case study design with TVET colleges in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality as our cases were used. John Gerring (2006) defines the case study approach as an "intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)”. A case study also involves an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a particular case or cases, within a real-world context (Bromley, 1986). For this study, 2006) research was preferred when looking at a single municipal setting is observed. Face-to-face interviews with key informants, a survey of a sample of final year students in Ekurhuleni TVET colleges. The dominant component of the study will be a quantitative approach.

In South Africa, TVET colleges were formally constituted in 2002 (but were then called Further Education and Training (FET) colleges) (Fisher et al., 2003, 327). Prior to 2002, there were 152 existing technical colleges that were merged with colleges of education and skills centres (Fisher et al., 2003, 327). Currently, there are 50 registered and accredited public TVET Colleges in South Africa which operate on approximately 364 campuses spread across the rural and urban areas of the country (Fisher et al., 2003, 327). TVET Colleges are established across all nine provinces to ensure that colleges

are easily accessible to young people, which lowers the cost of transport and accommodation for students. Public TVET colleges are funded from public money through the DHET. DHET seeks to provide guidance in creating a conducive teaching and learning environment that is responsive to individual student needs in respective TVET Colleges (Sishi, 2022).

The scope of the study is situated in the City of Ekurhuleni. The City of Ekurhuleni comprises nine towns which includes: Alberton, Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan, Edenvale, Germiston, Kempton Park, Nigel and Springs. The City has private and public TVET Colleges. The public TVET Colleges includes the Ekurhuleni East TVET College and Ekurhuleni West TVET College. Ekurhuleni East TVET College (EEC) is spread across five towns including, namely: Springs, Kwa-Thema, Daveyton, Benoni and Brakpan. While the Ekurhuleni West TVET College (EWC) operates within a broad band and diverse communities and comprises of the following six (6) campuses: Alberton, Boksburg, Germiston, Kathorus, (in Katlehong/Vosloorus/Thokoza), Kempton (in Kempton Park) and Tembisa.

1.9.5.2 Sample

In the case of this study, the key informants were chosen on the basis that they belong to organisations that are actively involved in lobby and advocacy for mainstreaming youth development in their respective institutions. They had insight into the key issues the study is attempting to understand. The sample for this study included:

- Two hundred final-year students at Ekurhuleni TVET College
- Ekurhuleni TVET College (Internship Coordinator in the Human Resource Department)
- The Youth Directorate Manager in the City of Ekurhuleni
- Selected SETAs in Ekurhuleni

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study assesses the effectiveness of TVET internship as an integration mechanism and existing capacities to support young people’s transition into the world of work.

Therefore, the participation of institutions was limited to public TVET colleges in Ekurhuleni. The participation of young people was limited to those enrolled in public TVET colleges or who have completed their studies with TVET College and the service centers. This decision was made because the available resources would not have been sufficient to include private colleges. While the key informant's sample generated data that provided an insightful perspective of young people on mainstreaming, they cannot be generalisable as they are not based on a randomly drawn representative sample. It is a convenient sample drawn from service partners.

Secondly, the key informants from youth organisations represent a particular constituency on youth development in Ekurhuleni, which has its views on what should happen to engender youth development. This could introduce an element of unconscious bias.

1.10.1 Inclusion and Exclusion

The following outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study:

Inclusion	**Exclusion**
Youth in TVET (19 and 35 years)	Adults, other youth and employees in study area
Youth mainstreaming manager/ coordinator	Cooperate departments
TVET active registered final year students	University students and graduates
Municipality and DHET (TVET), selected SETAs	All other government institutions

Table 1.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Source: Researcher's Own

The sample excludes youth who are not in TVET Colleges as they have not participated in the learning programmes.

1.11 Ethical Considerations

The notion of research ethics is centered around protecting the research participants and guiding the actions of the researcher in terms of what is acceptable and what is not (Akaranga and Makau, 2016, Bryman, 2012). In addition, research ethics provide credibility to any study because conducting a study ethically contributes to its integrity (Bryman, 2012). To protect the participants and to achieve integrity for this study the following guidelines were applied to conform to ethical considerations. Firstly, institutional permission to conduct research was obtained from the TVET College, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, and the SETAs. To this extent, letters supported and endorsed by the North-West University were sent to the relevant offices in those institutions to request permission.

Secondly, informed consent was sought from each individual participant by explaining what the study entailed and that their participation was voluntary. In other words, it was made clear to potential participants that they did not have any obligation whatsoever to be part of the study and that they were not obliged to answer any question they were uncomfortable with (Bryman, 2012). Explaining the objectives and the nature of the study to participants minimized the possibility of the researcher using deception to solicit information from the participants. Furthermore, participants were made aware that they could decide to opt out of the study at any point (Bryman, 2012). Respondents were asked to sign a consent form, which stated the nature of the research, and in addition, their confidentiality was guaranteed through a written undertaking by the researcher. Parental consent was not necessary for this study as respondents chosen for the study were 18 years and above.

Thirdly, the identity of the participants was protected by keeping the responses of the participants anonymous. To do this, no direct quotes were attributed to individual respondents, and their names were not mentioned in the study. Careful consideration was made when using variables to ensure that certain variables cannot be linked to individual participants. In other words, the researcher ensured what Vardigan and Granda (2010) call direct and indirect identifiers were eliminated. Fourthly, the diverse needs of the sampled youth were taken into consideration. Given that the sample included many youths living in poverty, the researcher ensured that the participants did not find

themselves in a position where they had to use their financial resources to be part of the study. Lastly, the proposed research design was submitted to the North-West University ethics committee for ethical guidance and to seek permission to conduct the study.

1.12 Significance of the Study

The present study attempted to address multiple gaps and in doing so makes important contributions. Firstly, the study extends the limited research on the understanding of service partners and its impact on mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment. The study intentions came after the call made by the South African Minister of Higher Education to 21 service sectors to prioritise the work placement of TVET college graduates who require workplace exposure for completing their training and to facilitate the transition from learning to working (Sishi, 2022).

Secondly, the study contributed to the body of knowledge on the role of internships as it highlights the integration approach to youth mainstreaming. It also contributed towards building a body of knowledge on mainstreaming and integration of youth development at local level that could be used for policy consideration. The country may benefit from the findings of this study, which provide a better understanding of the dynamics and challenges that arise when integrating and mainstreaming youth development at local level, which information is currently extremely limited. The study will add to the literature by further explaining the mechanism through which TVET internship and transition into the world of work impact the life of the youth. The researcher also suggests ways to enhance knowledge of the longer-term effectiveness of internships as a bridge to stable employment (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018).

Thirdly, existing research on youth mainstreaming has primarily focused on community aspects and less on targeted development outcomes such as internships, especially for the TVET sector. A deep stick investigation could provide insights into the practices, challenges, and opportunities that Ekurhuleni faces as a local sphere of government. In turn, other municipalities could learn from the findings of the study. If a uniform approach to youth development is to be promoted, as provided for by the NYDA Act no 54 of 2008, there is a need to understand what approaches are used in all spheres of government. A study of this nature begins to open a window into the operations of the municipality

regarding youth development. The intention of this study was to identify and analyse successful work placement practices for youth and to develop an understanding of the various elements that contribute to TVET College learners successfully transitioning from TVET Colleges to workplaces (Walters, 2018). The theoretical lens for the study is on the theory of change and logic model. Based on theory of change, the study intended to ascertain the guiding principles on youth mainstreaming for enhancing positive outcomes for youth to benefit better social, economic and political outcomes. Theory of Change which outlines TVET Internship and why mainstreaming youth transition to the world of work can impact on enhancing positive outcomes for vulnerable young people who could not complete their studies due to lack of access to the service industry. Findings from this study provided practical and scholarly recommendations.

1.13 Provisional Chapters

The research project consists of seven chapters. The sections below provide an outline of the chapters for this study.

Chapter One: Introduction and Overview of the Study

This chapter provides an overview of the context that informed the study. Chapter one orientates and focuses the study by outlining the problem statement, the objectives, and the research questions. It also covers the significance of the study and how the study would contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework on youth development

This chapter presents the literature and findings on the theoretical perspectives on youth mainstreaming. The author engaged with the theories and approaches to youth development. Concepts of mainstreaming of youth were also explored. Reviewing literature also provided a basis to give a theoretical exposition of key concepts used in the study. Based on literature review, a theoretical framework used to analyse and interpret the data was developed.

Chapter Three: Overview of the South African Internship System and TVET College

This chapter focuses on policies that inform mainstreaming of youth development. The chapter describes the international and South African perspectives on youth internship

programmes. The chapter also looks at social inclusion in youth programmes. It also analyses employer-driven initiatives for youth internships.

Chapter Four: Research methodology and research design

This chapter discusses the research method adopted for the study and the rationale for the choice. It further investigated the practical steps that were followed to pursue the study. A case study design with Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality as our case was used. The sampling strategy, the research tools, and how the data was analysed are discussed in this section.

Chapter Five: Presentation and discussion of the research findings

In this chapter, the study findings are presented, interpreted using the theoretical framework, and discussed. In other words, this chapter is focused on data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter Six: Framework/Model for Effective Implementation of Internship Programme

This chapter outlines the model for the effective implementation of an internship programme aimed at mainstreaming youth transition to the world of work. The model was developed based on the findings of the study.

Chapter Seven: Summary, findings, and recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of findings and recommendations. It gives the final analysis of what the research found and identifies important areas that could be explored further in the future. Furthermore, it recommends solutions to the challenges identified by the study.

Chapter Two
Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The review of literature is regarded as a building block for academic research as it connects a study to the existing body of knowledge and acknowledges scholarship done by other scholars (Snyder, 2019). The literature review is not only a credit to scholars who have done work in the area of investigation, but it is also a way of deepening a researcher's understanding of the concepts and debates in an area of study (Hart, 2018; Alsalami, 2022) while also providing an opportunity to assess existing evidence (Snyder, 2019). For Kunisch et al. (2023), a literature review is a source of data from previous studies that could be used as a foundation for contributing to the body of knowledge. Moreover, Snyder (2019) argues that 'collecting and synthesizing previous research' could also contribute to answering research questions through findings made by previous studies.

Undertaking a literature review, therefore, equipped the researcher to identify gaps in the internship literature and to locate the study in the existing body of knowledge. Identifying gaps in the internship body of knowledge also provided justification for conducting this study while helping the researcher frame the research questions and objectives. This section is intended to locate the study within the broader scholarship by discussing the key concepts and research findings relevant to the study. After discussing the various key conceptions and findings of previous studies, the chapter draws and summarises the key themes that are relevant for this study.

2.2 Review of concepts

2.2.1 Mainstreaming

Youth mainstreaming as a concept can be traced to the feminist and women empowerment literature – the intention was to include women's issues in all sectors of society and all planning at the state level (Staudt, 2017). While gender mainstreaming focuses on gender inequalities, youth mainstreaming focuses on inter-generational

justice and equality (Hess and Stošić, 2021). Youth mainstreaming is about creating institutions, policies, and processes that are 'youth-centric' (Commonwealth, 2017). It is also about recognising the youth's unique developmental needs. As a holistic approach, it is intended to shift youth development from merely engaging in youth programmes to factoring it into policy development, planning, and implementation. The Commonwealth (2017: 3) defines youth mainstreaming as:

> "*Strategies for intergenerational equity and justice that enables young people's capabilities, participation, and human rights to be an integral dimension of the analysis, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in inter-sectoral planning across social, political, and economic sphere*"

This definition, which is adopted for this study, highlights the importance of cross-cutting policies and programmes in dealing with youth development issues. Secondly, it highlights the inter-generational redress and the fact that youth are in most cases disproportionately affected by socio-economic challenges. Thirdly, that youth development should not just be an add-on, but it must be integral in policy development, planning, and implementation. Fourthly, it emphasises that youth development is a human right. Lastly, it highlights the importance of putting monitoring and evaluation processes in place to measure the impact of interventions, not only to assess progress but also to seek ways of improving. The process of mainstreaming is applied through different lenses, including the governments to the society at large. As a strategic approach, youth mainstreaming for governments focuses on:

- introducing a youth empowerment perspective to the work of all relevant sectors/ departments;
- setting up appropriate mechanisms for youth participation in policymaking;
- systematically monitoring and reporting progress made in youth development;
- allocating a proportion of all relevant departmental budgets to youth development; and
- building the body of knowledge on youth affairs (Hess and Stošić, 2021).

Education and second chances are some of the fundamental instruments for mainstreaming youth development (NYDA, 2022a, b). Technical and vocational education and training (TVET), which is the focus of this study, is one of the educational platforms intended to mainstream youth into economic participation. At a macro level mainstreaming entails putting in place relevant youth policies and the necessary resources, while at a micro level mainstreaming means creating a conducive learning environment, which includes providing platforms to prepare students for work. An element of preparing students for transitioning to work that this study focussed on is internships as part of the curriculum in TVET colleges.

2.2.2. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has historically focused on three areas, namely, skills development, technical education, and/or a combination of theory and practice (Schröder, 2019). TVET is also seen as an instrument to engender social inclusion and social justice (Nilsson, 2019). The notion of TVET is essentially underpinned using a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills to prepare the students for transitioning to work (Schröder, 2019). Badawi and Drăgoicea (2023: 1) define TVET as "a component of education that involves, in addition to traditional general education, acquiring practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge by actors in various sectors of economic and social life". The definition suggests that, unlike traditional general education, TVET is skills-oriented and by extension work-oriented. So, TVET colleges are central to preparing youth to transition to employment. A well-oiled TVET system that is supportive of the colleges is therefore fundamental.

How well a TVET system functions depends to a large extent on its design, which in turn is influenced by contextual factors such as "traditions and cultural preference; the structure of the economy, labour markets, and labour institutions; the design of the broad education and training system within which TVET operates; and financial and human resources" (World Bank, UNESCO & ILO, 2023: 85; Rose, 2020). How these contextual factors are incorporated into the design of TVET system should be the subject of discussion and consensus amongst the stakeholders, particularly, policymakers, industries, students, and colleges. The World Bank, et al. (2023) report, cited above, argues that these contextual differences notwithstanding, well-functioning TVET tends to

have three elements in common, namely, they support employment, and productivity, and are sustainable. The first element (support employment), which the literature suggests is one of the key outcomes of TVET, will be discussed in full in the section on employability below. Productivity, which is closely related to employability, relates to the ability of TVET to prepare individuals to contribute optimally to the industry. Sustainability does not only relate to funding of TVET, but it also speaks to general sustainability in the global context.

Some scholars (e.g. Afeti, 2018) point to the importance of linking TVET policy objectives and strategies to what is happening in the labour market. At a micro level, Afeti argues that there is a disjuncture between labour market intelligence and TVET, which may result in TVET not producing relevant skills (Afeti, 2018). However, he equally advances the importance of balancing the market needs with the needs of society and the well-being of individuals. Linked to the needs of the labour market, Afeti also argues that TVET could be more effective if students were properly counselled and guided so that they choose courses that are appropriate to their abilities, their educational backgrounds, and their passions. For the purpose of this study, this point is important in that it suggests that a proper foundation for students is an important factor in determining how well students are prepared to transition to the world of work. In other words, if a proper foundation was not laid from the beginning, the internship would not fix such a situation characterised by ill-equipped students *post facto*.

TVET framework

The Commonwealth Secretariat developed a TVET framework to guide member countries to review and evaluate the effectiveness of their TVET system. The Framework comprises of six key features identified as being intrinsic to an effective TVET system. These are: governance, industry/ employer engagement, occupational standards, qualifications framework, quality institutions, and delivery and assessment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). The framework also includes a taxonomy scale of development to guide countries in analysing and assessing the features, level of development and effective operationalisation of their system (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017). The researcher is, therefore, guided by the TVET framework to assess the implementation of TVET internships for mainstreaming youth transition.

A broad overview of TVET in the context of South Africa will be provided in Chapter 3.

2.2.3 The Skills Development Discourse

The discourse of skills development is an important element of this study in that internships arise to address the skills requirements. There is a consensus globally that skills are central to the 21st-century economies and that education systems should contribute to skills development (Jiboku and Akpan, 2019; Alawamleh and Mahadin, 2022; Mabeba, 2019; The World Bank, UNESCO, and ILO, 2023; McGrath, 2009). This view has also found resonance and support in influential multilateral organisations like World Bank, International Labour Organisation (ILO), and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in turn has influenced the TVET policies of many countries (Ngcwangu, 2015). In line with this view, learning, in this case experiential learning through internships is identified as a key mechanism to enhance organizational productivity and by extension to economic development implied in the assertion that skills development is important for development (Inanc, Zhou, Gallie, Felstead and Green, 2015). However, what these skills are, and how they are developed is subject to contestations (Jiboku and Akpan, 2019). It is these contestations about what constitutes skills and how skills are acquired that this section discusses and put into perspective.

Reinforcing the point about the contestations, Ngcwangu (2023: 104) argues that “skill is not a mere technical issue of application of acquired knowledge to types of work—it is informed of the dominant economic forces at a given time.” In other words, what becomes the dominant view of what skills are and consequently how they should be taught, is a function of power, interests and context. In the current world of work, the dominant economic force globally seems to be the drive to maximise profit with its attended mantras of cost cutting measures, efficiency in production and distribution, and competitiveness (Ngcwangu, 2023). One of the implications of this assertion is that skills, as conceptualised in the neoliberal world may not necessarily be serving society but serving the interests of the dominant economic classes in society. Jiboku and Akpan (2019) concur as they argue that narrow profit-maximising driven skills agenda tends to exclude the interests of the society in which the companies are located and do business.

Furthermore, Ngcwangu argues that if not managed properly and pursued for profit maximization may in fact result in the deskilling of employees. Deskilling of employees could result in unemployment or underemployment, which the skills development through

TVET and internships intends to address. One of the dangers of skills serving sectional interests is that the framing of skills may be short-term in outlook, which has implications for sustainability. In this regard, Jiboku and Akpan (2019) argue that skills development should go beyond the narrow operations of a single entity but instead should recognize skills as also necessary for democracy and business relations. To this extent, they argue that skills therefore should extend to civic and social behaviour. This seems to tie up with the capabilities approach to skills, which argues for the holistic development of human capabilities for freedom (see full discussion of the capabilities approach below). Ngcwangu (2023: 103) signals his agreement with the holistic approach when he puts forward three elements of skills, which also go beyond the narrow technical to include societal influence. He asserts that skills:

a) Includes internalized capacities resident in the individual worker;
b) includes job design, divisions of labour, technology, and control; and
c) is socially constructed.

The socially constructed nature of skills implies that it is subject to debate and interrogation through important questions like whether skills development as currently constructed skills development is the best way to deal with socio-economic challenges facing society. For this study, the question becomes: is work-integrated learning through internships the most effective way of developing the skills required by 21st-century economies? At the heart of this study is how TVET colleges support skills development through internships. Before assessing the support provided for skills development, it is important to put the notion of skills development in context. As a contested terrain, the area of skills development and employability is characterised by a range of theories that seek to provide a scientific understanding of the area. The key theories include the human capital theory and the capabilities approach.

2.2.3.1 Human capital theory

Human capital theory is historically traced to the work of Adam Smith, detailed in his 1776 book titled “The Wealth of Nations”, where he postulated that education is important in society because it supports economic development and helps to sustain it (Sweetland, 1996; Smith, 1937). Brown, Lauder, and Cheung (2020) point out that human capital theory gained currency after the economic depression that followed the Second World

War. The works of Gary Becker (1962, 1975) and Theodore Schultz (1961, 1971) solidified human capital theory in academia and education policies of many countries in the 60s (Klees, 2017). However, human capital theory has since evolved and become more complex and sophisticated.

The basic idea underpinning human capital theory is that human beings are seen as one of the productive capitals and therefore investing in them will result in positive returns, which in turn will contribute to economic development. The theory postulated that investing in humans like other forms of capital will result in economic growth (Ngcwangu, 2021; Klees, 2017). According to Powell (2021), human capital theory frames human beings at an ontological level as 'homo economicus', which means that humans are merely seen as inherently economic beings. This framing is problematic as it discounts the intersection between the political, the cultural, the social, and the economic – each of these elements does not exist in isolation and they impact each other, so attempting to treat each in isolation might be conceptually and theoretically flawed.

Literature shows that globally the skills development discourse is dominated by the human capital theory (McGrath, et al., 2020: Klees, 2017; Ngcwangu, 2021; Powell, 2014; Cook, 2022; Vally and Motala, 2014). This domination does not only have implications on TVET policies and funding, but it has implications on how internships are conceptualised and implemented. Klees (2017) argues that human capital theory's dominance has resulted in it permeating the education policies, planning, and evaluation environment in many countries. This domination, which others have argued is couched in neoliberal thinking (e.g. Ngcwangu, 2021; Vally and Motala), has imposed a straitjacket on the sociological and policy thinking about skills development (McGrath, 2009, Powell, 2014, Cook, 2022). This straitjacketing depraves the discourse of skills development from exploring the new creative understanding of skills development.

The straitjacketing argument seems to tie up with Ngcwangu (2021)'s assertion that human capital theory tends to reduce the complexities of the socioeconomic context and the labour market. For example, Seekings and Nattrass (2015) argue that the focus on skills development alone may not be sufficient to tackle socio-economic challenges. They emphasise the importance of addressing structural factors, including racial and economic inequalities. The straitjacketed framing of skills discourse is driven by the narrow interests

and views of employers, and research has shown that these narrow interests and understandings are in fact part of the problem because these interests inhibit broad and long-term skills development conceptualization (McGrath, 2009). Ngcwangu (2021) goes further to show that this conception is not only narrow, but it is instrumentalist in orientation and anything that is instrumentalist tends to be rigid. The fact that the human capital theory encourages a market-driven approach to education, particularly TVET may close room for framing TVET differently (Ngcwangu, 2015). Instead, TVET conception is dominated by capital, which is more powerful than other stakeholders in society by virtue of the resources it commands.

2.2.3.2 Capabilities approach

Thinking about education and by extension skills development from the capabilities lens is informed by the work of Amartya Sen as postulated in his book titled 'Development as Freedom" (Sen, 2001). Capabilities approach presents a different approach to the human capital theory in the skills discourse. It attempts provide a holistic view that include the views of the students in the skills discourse as opposed to the skills purely for employment and economic growth approach imposed by policy makers through the influence of capital (Cook, 2022; McGrath et al., 2022). Emphasising this point, McGrath et al. (2022) argue that the voice of students is missing in the discourse of skills development as the discourse is dominated by the policymakers and capital. The challenge with this exclusion of students is that an important voice that could enrich the skills development discourse is lost and as a result policy is crafted based on assumptions about students and the broader context made by policymakers and capital. This tends to undermine students' experiences and their aspirations (Cook, 2022; Powell, 2014). In the current study, the inclusion of the students' voice in framing of the internship will come under scrutiny in terms of its implications on the efficacy of internships.

Without dwarfing the importance of education in the economy and development, McGrath et al. (2022) assert that education should be seen as one ingredient in the recipe for broader human development rather than as the only ingredient. This assertion aligns with the capability approach to skills development.

2.2.3.3 Skills Debate in South Africa

According to Balwanz and Ngcwangu (2016), the skills debate in South Africa can be traced to the eighties. They argue that initially the debate was dominated by the need to desegregate the nature of skills development and distribution, and the need to transform the racialised, gendered, and hierarchised skills development system (Maringe and Osman, 2016).

2.2.3.4. Implications of Skills Discourse

The literature review has shown the importance of the political economy in the crafting of TVET systems and by extension internships. So, any analysis of the efficacy of internships cannot do justice if it is not underpinned by an understanding of the global and national political economies. Human capital theory has influenced the concept of employability (discussed below) and the idea of work integrated learning, which in this study is encapsulated in the idea of internships.

McGrath (2009) traces the concept of employability to the work of William Beveridge (1909). Using the work of Gazier (1998), McGrath discusses how the concept of employability evolved historically showing seven conceptions over time:

- *Dichotomic Employability*: Originating in early 20th-century Britain and America, this approach categorizes people as employable or unemployable. It mirrors the Anglo-Saxon idea of the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, suggesting that the deserving should receive charity while the latter need reform.
- *Socio-medical Employability*: Emerged around World War II, focusing on the physical, mental, or social deficits that make individuals unfit for work. It was prominent in the USA, Britain, and Germany.
- *Manpower Policy Employability*: Originated in the 1960s in the USA and extended the deficit model to societal groups. It concentrates on the gaps in knowledge, skills, and attitudes compared to what the labour market demands.
- *Flow Employability*: A French model from the 1960s, this approach shifted focus to the demand side, considering the likelihood of a person finding a job in the local and national economies.

- Labour Market Performance Employability: Became prominent towards the end of the 1970s internationally. This approach uses measurable outcomes like employment periods, hours worked, and wage rates to evaluate the success of policy interventions.
- *Initiative Employability*: This idea surfaced in North America and Europe in the late 1980s. It emphasized individual initiative and skills development as essential for career advancement, especially in a world moving away from lifelong employment at a single organization.
- *Interactive Employability*: This approach emerged soon after the 'Initiative Employability' and combined individual agency with structural factors like local and national demand and labour market regulations.

Although McGrath's discussion suggests that these approaches are not necessarily evolutionary but coexist and that each contributes to ongoing debates about employability in policy and practice, we can take away from the discussion the fact that employability is influenced by political and socio-economic factors.

2.2.4 Transition to Employment

Transition to employment or school-to-work transition (SWT) is "an umbrella term for a number of processes all related to the capacity of educational systems to provide individuals with knowledge and capabilities that render them prone to a more successful work-life" (Nilsson, 2019: 746). This definition suggests the importance of the education system in preparing the youth for transitioning to work and it also suggests that factors that enable transitioning are multiple and dynamic in nature. In other words, it is not sufficient to provide the youth with education, it must be backed by concrete plans to facilitate transition to work. In this case, internships are one such concrete strategy to foster transition into employment. Furthermore, the definition of transition to work suggests that school-work transition does not happen automatically, instead it needs interventions. On the other hand, Akkermans, et al. (2024) suggest that work transitions should not be limited to school to work. A similar assertion by Kruss and Wildschut (2015) argues that the transition to the labour market is not linear, but complex and unpredictable. This implies that appropriate strategies should be adopted to decode the complexities and to ensure flexibility of interventions it should be lifelong encompassing

transitions such as unemployment to work. Many young people face obstacles that make transitioning to work difficult, and this often manifests in many young people not being in education, employment, or training (NEET) (Hutchinson & Kettlewell, 2015; Das, 2023), which has many negative ramifications for youth development and by extension to society. This costs society and the economy significantly, which is why it is important to empower the youth to circumvent the obstacles in their path to employment. These challenges are more pronounced in developing countries and are exacerbated by youth bulges in many of these countries, which in general are not able to harness the benefits of youth bulges like demographic dividend (Nilsson, 2019). Impediments to smooth transition to work are attributed to the social, economic, and personal circumstances of the youth and tend to be compounded by limited opportunities (Hutchinson & Kettlewell, 2015). The circumstances could include characteristics such as geographic location, gender, ethnicity, and poverty (Nilsson, 2019). An important element of preparing youth for transition to employment, which this study focuses on is internship (which has a positive correlation with employability). Both internships and employability, which are the concepts in transitioning to work, are discussed in detail below.

2.2.5 Unpacking internships

Historically, there have been criticisms of the public education and training systems, both in South Africa and globally, for their lack of relevance in terms of skills development, disconnection from industrial realities, and high costs. In response to these challenges, initiatives like internships have been launched to improve colleges' responsiveness to industry needs, foster better relationships between colleges and employers, and shift towards a new approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes core skills, attitudes, job-seeking skills, and vocational knowledge (Powell, 2014).

Although there is no single definition of internship, there is a general agreement that the purpose of internships is to provide interns with an opportunity for experiential learning and to acquire practical skills that they could use in the workplace (Alias, 2019; Hora, Parrott and Her, 2020; Powell, 2014; Igret, et al., 2022). So, at the heart of internships are the notions of work experience and employability. In other words, the assumption underpinning internships, which is to some extent supported by research (e.g. Mabeba, 2019; Hora, et.al. (2019; Kapareliotis, Voutsina and Patsiotis, 2019; Mabiza, Mahlalela

and Mbohwa, 2017), is that in many cases theoretical training of students does not adequately prepare them for employment and as such they need practical training within a work environment. As Mabeba (2019: 2) puts it, “skills are an offspring of a combination of knowledge gained from a classroom and the little experience an intern has been exposed to, in a professional work setting”. This view is also supported by experiential learning theory, which asserts that learning should incorporate both theory and practice and that anything short of this is, is likely to be inadequate (Kapareliotis, Voutsina & Patsiotis, 2019). The ‘Internships economy’ as Wolfgram and Ahrens (2022) refer to it, is also driven by the fact that more and more employers want to employ someone with some evidence that they are able and can do the work, which evidence could be adduced from amongst others having participated in an internship.

Using the work of McMahon and Quinn (1995), and Bukaliya (2012) internship is defined by Mabiza, Mahlalela, and Mbohwa (2017:4) as “a managed work practice where graduates participate in work-related programmes, during which period they get to be managed by experienced employees”. The definition highlights important elements of an internship, which could be summarised as institutional arrangements, the duration of the internship, and quality mentorship. Reinforcing the importance of some of these elements O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018)’s study found that a more structured and formalised approach to internships that includes, in addition to the payment of a stipend, the presence of a mentor, access to health insurance, similar working conditions to those of regular employees and sufficient internship duration to allow significant work-related competencies to be acquired contribute to the success of internships. The following section will discuss the elements in the definition and additional ones extracted from the literature, which the researcher deems important for internship discourse.

2.2.6 Institutional arrangements

Lin and Nugent (1995: 2307), define institutional arrangement as “a set of behavioural rules that govern behaviour in a designated area while on the other hand, institutional structure embraces the totality of institutional arrangements in an economy, including its organisations, law, customs and ideology”. This definition suggests that institutional arrangements are more than just structures and that they are also defined by the rules and procedures embedded in them. Institutional arrangements that impact internships are

at macro level (national) and micro level (college and employers). One of the areas that the Commonwealth framework deals with is the institutional arrangements and the governances in TVET, which is an indication of the importance of institutional arrangements. In addition to governance, institutional arrangements also cover the nature and format of internships. Whilst the structure and format of internships have a big influence on the outcomes of internships, Silva, et al. (2018) argue that researchers tend to neglect this area, which is a gap that this research intends to contribute to filling.

National level

The policy framework put in place nationally has a bearing on the policies set by colleges and employers on internships. For instance, the policies that require TVET students to complete an internship before they could graduate are set by the Department of Higher Education and Training. So, how these policies are supported nationally has implications on the efficacy of the internships. However, there is currently no national policy that governs TVET internships. So, this means that internship programmes are varied and do not have an overarching point of reference to provide norms and standards. Whilst this is not necessarily a problem, the danger is that the interns may be exposed to internships of varying quality, which may have implications for their employability.

College and employer level

The definition of internship proffered earlier, highlights the importance of managing the internships professionally as opposed to implementing them in an arbitrary manner, which could be dependent on personalities rather than structures and systems. This suggests that an internship programme should be clearly defined with clear processes, outcomes, and evaluation mechanisms. So, its implementation should be guided by policies and procedures. In short, it should be structured and governed appropriately, or as Apriyani, et al. (2022: 47) put it, internships should be “supervised and planned”. Structuring an internship programme involves balancing the advancement of the objectives of the organisation taking in an intern, and accommodating the intern’s expectations (Rangan and Natarajarathinam, 2014). In the case of internships that this study focuses on, the colleges’ expectations should also be accommodated. Emphasising, the importance of the relationship between students, colleges, and industries as major stakeholders, Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) assert that they are ‘inter-dependent tripartite

stakeholders', whose participation is crucial for the success of internships. In other words, for internships to function optimally and to increase the likelihood of producing positive outcomes, participation, and cooperation of this tripartite alliance is crucial.

Fleming, McLachlan, and Pretti (2018) highlight the importance of sustainable relationships and partnerships between learning institutions and the industry for the success of work-integrated learning. They postulate that such relationships and partnerships should be built on 'communication, commitment and compatibility' (Fleming, et al., 2018: 321). In support of this view, the HRDC (2014) report emphasises that partnerships should be clearly defined with a clear purpose driving them, which is also supported by the Transactional Partnership Model –which asserts that value proposition should be core in the formulation of partnerships. In other words, partnerships should not just be partnerships for the sake of partnership, they should have a value-generating goal(s). Furthermore, Fei, Waheeb, and Sulaiman (2020) argue that such relationships could contribute to improving internship placements, which they have identified as one of the difficult areas in internships – this was also highlighted as a challenge in South Africa. Scott and Willison (2021) suggest that partnerships can provide a platform where employers can advise on long-term skills requirements. In addition, the HRDC (2014) recommends capacity building for individuals who are responsible for partnerships. The reasoning behind this recommendation is that the more capacitated about the intricacies of partnerships individuals are, the more likely the partnerships will succeed.

Once structures and procedures are in place, "commitment by the management" to the programme becomes a crucial factor for the success of the internship (Pop, Swanepoel and Barkhuizen, 2013). In other words, it is not enough to have the relevant structures and procedures, the management of both the organisation providing an internship opportunity and the college must be committed to the programme. This will ensure that they do not only provide financial resources, but they will also provide moral support.

The other important issue regarding policies and procedures for internships is the protection of interns from exploitation by permanent employees, though not enough research has been reported on the issue (e.g. Mabeba, 2019). If all employees and the interns are aware of what is expected from an intern, the least the interns will be subjected to doing tasks outside what is expected from them. It is, therefore, important that interns

have a contract with the host company that states the terms and conditions of their internship. In addition, interns should have platforms where they can raise any issues that make their environment not conducive to learning. In fact, one may argue that the colleges should be insistent that as a prerequisite, internship policies and procedures should be in place in organisations where they send their students.

Another important point made by Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) in relation to the role of institutions in the efficacy of internships is that institutions have different capacities, which means that how well each institution prepares their students academically differs. So, this has a bearing on the efficacy of internships in that good and quality theoretical preparation for students is highly likely to result in a better understanding of the practical work component provided through internships. Whilst evaluating the quality of the Ekurhuleni TVET colleges may be out of the scope of this study, this point about the differing levels of institutional capacities is important to make as it is part of the broader context that impacts internship efficacy.

2.2.7 Internship Information Management Systems

Linked to institutional arrangements is information management. At a practical level, Fei, Waheeb, and Sulaiman (2020) point to how the internship management system could enhance the management of internships. Even more useful will be the integration of the internship information system with the academic information system. This could improve information sharing between academic institutions and industries as Hasti, Lesari, and Gustiana (2019) argue. In addition to improving information management, Hasti, et.al. argue that integrated internship management systems will also contribute to the minimization of potential errors in the internship data that happen frequently in manual information processing is used. Yannuar et al. (2018) note that while there is a high uptake in the use of information management technologies in other areas of operations in many institutions, there is, however, a low uptake of these technologies when it comes to the management of internships. Based on the assertion and findings above, one may conclude that improving information systems with the help of ICT would immensely contribute to the efficacy of internships. The question to explore for this study is whether Ekurhuleni TVET colleges are taking advantage of the available information systems to enhance the management of internships and by extension their efficacy.

2.2.8 Duration of an internship

The time for the intern to be familiarised with the work environment is important, therefore, a reasonable amount of time should be allocated to the programme. Many internships range from six to twelve months (Hora, et al., 2019; Mchunu and Mutereko, 2020). Hora, et al. (2019) found that there were different views between students, colleges, and employers as to what constitutes sufficient duration of an internship. Furthermore, Hora, et al. (2019) also point out that the academic programme and discipline also influence what is considered sufficient duration. In other words, the intensity of an area of the study influences the amount of practical learning required. A study by Mchunu and Mutereko (2020) found that interns who did at least twelve (12) months of internship had a greater chance of finding employment after the internship. In fact, the participants in the study recommended that an internship should run for a period of 24 months instead of 12 months for interns get sufficient exposure to the work environment. The studies above suggest that the longer the duration the more likely the internship will be beneficial. Whether the duration allocated to an internship is sufficient should be determined through the evaluation of each internship programme as there are nuances and peculiarities in each programme.

2.2.9 Role of Mentorship

The definition by Mabiza, Mahlalela, and Mbohwa (2017) above highlights the importance of mentorship when it refers to experienced employees supervising interns. A very useful definition of mentoring by Pop, Swanepoel, and Barkhuizen (2013: 88) states that it “is a process where a more experienced member of the organisation [mentor] takes responsibility for and actively participates in the systematic development of the skills and leadership abilities of a less experienced member of the organisation [mentee].” Implicit in this definition is the notion of skills transfer, from the experienced mentor to the intern, which is core to internship. Studies (for example, Johari and Bradshaw, 2008; McHugh, 2017), have established a positive correlation between mentorship and the success of an internship. The study by McHugh points out that a quality mentor is important for making learning personal and cooperative. Furthermore, mentors should try to understand the intern’s “personal and cognitive styles and be sensitive to the learner’s ideas” (Johari and Bradshaw, 2008: 344). The importance of this is that such an environment will be more

likely to make it easier for the intern to learn and it also means that the mentor is also part of the student social support network. Moreover, this could assist the mentor and the interns in determining together the areas that need to be prioritised for the skills transfer.

Connected to the previous point is the mentor's understanding of the cultural context within which the internship takes place (Rose, 2020). This is even more relevant in the context of South Africa given the diversity of the population and the historical divisions. For example, students from different backgrounds who have never been exposed to corporate culture are more likely to experience cultural shock when they join corporates, this is where the understanding of diversity by the mentor becomes important. It is therefore important that amongst the issues included in the training of mentors, diversity, and inclusion are factored in.

The presence of a competent mentor allocated to an intern also serves to ensure that an intern is also exposed to meaningful tasks and opportunities to learn. This is opposed to other staff members engaging the intern in what can at best be called personal favours or at worst, pure exploitation of interns (Mabeba, 2019). In other words, interns as non-permanent members of staff have an outsider status that makes them vulnerable to discrimination, which the presence of a mentor could protect them from such (Alawamleh and Mahadin, 2022). Such discrimination is not only unfair to the interns, but it also demotivates them and by extension affects the effectiveness of the internship. To avoid exploitation of the interns and engaging them in meaningless activities, internship contracts intended to protect interns become necessary and crucial to protect the interns.

Pop, Swanepoel, and Barkhuizen (2013)'s study found that quality mentors also contribute to keeping interns in the internship programme. In other words, a bad mentor in an internship programme does not only work against the learning of interns but is also more likely to contribute to the high attrition of interns. In addition, Pop et al. (2013) study shows a positive relationship between a good mentor and the employability of the interns. Put simply, interns who participated in a programme with a quality mentor are more likely to be employable than those whose mentor was of a lesser quality because of the high likelihood of learning valuable skills from their mentor. In fact, Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) found that supervisor support and supervisor mentoring are key predictors of whether an internship is successful or not – his point is also corroborated by McHugh

(2017)'s study. In recognition of the value of quality mentorship Hora, Chen, Parrott and Her (2019) argue for screening of employers who host internships to ensure that they have the necessary capacity, and that quality mentorship is in place. This point ties in with the need for strong coordination between colleges and internship host institutions.

In the context of South Africa, Mabeba (2019) found that despite the importance of allocating a mentor for the internship to succeed, in some internship programmes, the interns were not even aware of who their mentor was because either one was not allocated or there were 'multiple mentors' that the interns interacted with. This suggests that the important task of mentorship was left to chance or is not taken seriously. It also suggests unstructured internships and by extension bad institutional arrangements.

2.2.10 Clearly articulated and meaningful tasks

Linked closely with the issue of a competent mentor is providing the interns with meaningful tasks that were clearly articulated in the internship contract. When expectations were clearly articulated to the intern, the likelihood of the intern learning and being satisfied with the internship was likely to increase (Hora, et al., 2019). The study also found that the autonomy afforded to an intern in the design and performance of tasks increases the likelihood of high motivation and job satisfaction. One can also argue that autonomy increases the ability to solve problems, which according to research is one of the skills that employers are looking for in potential employees (Scott and Willison, 2021). On the other hand, McHugh (2017) argues that autonomy, or the freedom to complete assigned tasks, has mixed effects on interns. It can be beneficial by increasing problem-solving efforts and workplace learning, but too much autonomy may lead to dissatisfaction and neglect of developmental opportunities. It is therefore important to strike a balance between autonomy and guidance. Interns benefit from a clear understanding of their role in terms of tasks and goals. Lack of clarity can lead to uncertainty, stress, and negative impacts on task performance and attitudes (McHugh, 2017).

2.2.11 Communication

The fourth element that is not explicit in the definition, but is very important, is communication between all the stakeholders involved in an internship - Fleming, et al. (2018) underscore the value of communication in an internship arrangement. For

instance, the college and the employers need to be in constant communication to be able to iron out any difficulties and to monitor progress. The mentor and the mentee must communicate effectively to smooth any ambiguities that might result in the internship not yielding positive results. Communication also means that platforms should be created where interns are able to express themselves freely.

Furthermore, it's important not to assume that employers always know best, as their interests and understandings at times can be narrow. Communication becomes vital to create a common understanding the employers, colleges, and students. Effective communication and collaboration between training providers, learners, and employers are essential for ensuring that training aligns with the needs of all parties (McGrath, 2009).

2.2.12 Monitoring and Evaluation

The fifth element, also not in the definition, is that the internship must have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms built into the programme. Citing Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Public Service Commission (PSC) (2008: 3) defines monitoring as “A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds”. And evaluation as “the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme. An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, ongoing, or completed development intervention.” Monitoring and evaluation are not only intended to ensure that the programme is implemented appropriately but also to learn from data and ideas generated from monitoring and evaluation reports so that the programme can be constantly improved. Constant learning fits into the idea of a learning organisation, which Samuel and Moagi (2022) argue is very important to provide a supportive environment and for knowledge transfer. While Hora, et al. (2019) argue that limited information hampers the continuous improvement of internship programmes.

Based on the foregoing discussion, what does the collected data from the colleges, employers, and interns say about the following questions posed in the context of this study:

- Are the internship programmes that support TVET college students in Ekurhuleni structured and governed properly?
- Are the internships allocated enough duration for interns to learn?
- Are mentors with the right skills and experience allocated to the interns?
- Is communication between the employer, mentor, college and intern effective, regular, and coordinated?
- Do internships for TVET students in Ekurhuleni have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms?

O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018: 3) categorise internships into three categories, namely:

- Internships which are linked to a course of academic study;
- Work experience undertaken as part of an Active Labour Market Programme;
- Open market internships – that is, work experience in firms or organisations which do not fall under either of the previous criteria.

O'Higgins and Pinedo's categorisation of internships is useful because it does not only illuminate the point that internships are not the same in terms of their short-term objectives but also conceptually. In other words, how an internship that is part of an academic programme is conceptualised and structured is different from a non-compulsory post-qualification internship. Ideally, an internship that is part of an academic programme should be structured to be part of the curriculum, while a post-school internship does not necessarily constitute part of the curriculum. While the underpinning long-term objective of internships is to enhance skills and to provide an opportunity for an intern to learn practical skills, they do not necessarily follow the same path. The focus of this study is the internship which constitutes part of an academic programme at TVET colleges.

Beyond definitional issues, how internships are implemented in practice differs from context to context (Rose, 2020; Afeti, 2018) – for example, culture may play an important role, or they may differ because there are paid and unpaid internships. These nuances in internship implementation also have a bearing on the outcomes of internships. Paid internships have been shown to have better outcomes as compared to unpaid ones (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). Internships may also be influenced by the socio-economic background of students. Students from affluent backgrounds may not be influenced by payment whereas students from poor backgrounds are more likely to be attracted to paid

internships. In South Africa, the value of the stipend interns receive is very important in light of high levels of poverty and unemployment (Mabeba, 2019). By contrast, internships in other contexts like South Korea, and the United States of America, for example, are seen as learning platforms rather than income-generating platforms (Rose, 2020).

Literature makes the point that internship is voluntary and by its nature is intended to benefit both the interns and the employers (Binder, et al., 2015; Mabiza, Mahlalela and Mbohwa, 2017; Mabeba, 2019). It is assumed that interns will gain work experience, while the employer benefit through interns' contribution to the company's productivity – cost-effective for the company. In addition, interns receive a stipend, and companies get an opportunity to assess potential employees from amongst the interns (Chan, Yeap, Taahir, and Remie, 2020) and interns also use the opportunity to screen potential employers (Klein and Weiss, 2011; Rangan and Natarajarathinam, 2014). An internship opportunity may also assist a student to reflect on their career path as they get exposed to a plethora of opportunities in a work environment or gain what McHugh (2017) refers to as 'student vocational self-concept', which theoretical knowledge may not necessarily expose them to (McHugh, 2017; Kapareliotis, Voutsina, and Patsiotis, 2019). This according to McHugh (2017) provides an opportunity for students to interrogate their own assumptions and beliefs about a particular career.

A study by Pietersen and Malatjie (2022) suggests that internships also tend to increase the self-confidence of those who have participated in them. Self-confidence is a soft skill that is associated with employability. In addition, interns get exposure to various networks of experienced individuals in their field – a point also made by studies like Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022), McHugh (2017), and Da Silva and Teixeira (2013). And some studies (Mabiza, et al., 2017) suggest that students who participated in an internship are more likely to earn more than students who did not. The study by Häkkinen (2006) in Denmark shows that students with work experience benefit from better subsequent employment prospects and higher wages, although the effect tends to disappear some years after graduation. Robert and Saar (2012) conducted a comparative study specifically devoted to analysing the effect of work experience on post-graduation occupational outcomes in six Central and Eastern European countries. Their analysis shows that study-related work experience reduces the duration of job search and improves employment prospects. Other studies point to the deepening of understanding of the theory component of a study

programme as a possible outcome of internship (Karapeliotis, et al., 2019). Whether the intended benefits of the internship alluded to above are realised is subject to the assessment of each individual internship programme.

A study by Zehr (2016) found that the outcomes of an internship are influenced by a plethora of factors such as class, gender, and geographic location. These factors also influence who gets internship opportunities and who does not - for example, some studies cited in Hora, et al. (2019) point out that white students have a higher chance of finding internships than black students. Put differently, Tomlinson, McCafferty, Fuge, and Wood (2017) argue that the intern's capital plays a significant role in securing them an internship opportunity – the concept of capital they use incorporates what they call human capital, social capital, cultural capital, identity capital, and psychological capital. The extent to which one acquires these capitals is a product of one's socio-economic background, the quality of the learning institutions they attended, and the nature of the institution where they did their internship. Moodie, Wheelahan and Lavigne (2019) make the same point when they argue that productive capabilities are influenced by the socio-economic context, culture, and physical resources.

Binder, et al. (2015) argue that internships do not only impact employers and interns, but they also impact the academy, for example, internships could impact the curriculum. They make a point that internships have the potential to bring robustness to the curriculum through demonstrating the gaps in the curriculum as students go through practical work. The value of such robustness is that the student, the staff, and the employers are likely to benefit positively in the long run. In this regard, Hodges (2011), cited in Fleming, McLachlan and Pretti (2018), argues that engagement between the learning institutions could potentially improve the understanding of teaching staff the skills that are relevant to industries and help them revise the assessment methods they use. Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022: 498)'s study led them to make the conclusion about internships that 'pedagogically they increasingly integrate formal education and work experience in a better way'. Corroborating this is a longitudinal study on engineering internship programmes conducted by Ohland et al. (2004), which found higher retention of the subject matter amongst those who participated as compared to those who did not participate. Furthermore, according to a study by Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022), students themselves believed that internship enhances their learning and their

employability. Framed in the language of experiential learning, the acquisition and advancement of knowledge happens through practice and reflection (Kapareliotis, Voutsina, and Patsiotis, 2019). With reference to students Parker et al. (2016), cited in Wolfgram and Ahrens (2022), argue that internships have also been linked to improved academic performance. The finding of improved academic understanding and improvement because of participation in an internship programme (Hora, et al., 2019). Overall, the literature suggests that experiential learning helps students apply academic knowledge in practical settings but also presents challenges in integrating those experiences back into the classroom. Constructivist theories and reflective practices are seen as potential ways to enhance learning outcomes, but the effectiveness of these approaches may vary based on several factors including the quality of mentoring and the nature of the tasks involved (Zehr, 2016). Whether the findings discussed above hold true in the context of the TVET colleges' internship in Ekurhuleni will unfold in the analysis section of this study.

However, other studies (e.g. Zehr, 2016) point out that there is also a concern from educational institutions about what students learn during internships. This concern is amplified by the fact that learning institutions do not necessarily have control over what is learned and the learning process even though these institutions are expected to credit the students for the internship (Zehr, 2016). One may argue that this could be an indication of a lack of coordination and communication between colleges and internship hosts. Such lack of coordination and communication could potentially cause tensions between the academy and the employers if not handled properly. In fact, Rose (2020) makes this point when he argues that the integration of internship programmes between employers and colleges is very limited. Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) suggest that in Jordan the internships coordination and communication between the educational institutions and industries/employers is more organised and formalized, which increases the possibility of effectiveness – perhaps there are lessons to be learned from other countries here. So, in this study, lack or ineffective coordination and communication between the colleges and the employers or internship hosts will be explored as factors that could potentially militate against the efficacy of the internship.

O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018) argue that although the value of internships is acknowledged by scholars, there has been limited research on the conditions that are

necessary for a successful internship. Although their contention is not based on South African data, a quick literature search on internships in South Africa seems to corroborate the contention. The literature in South Africa is largely focused on TVET theoretical issues and systems, while not giving enough attention to the effectiveness of internships. Where internship studies focusing on South Africa are available, they are mostly empirical and it seems there are little, if any theoretical internship studies. In addition, where research on internships does exist, it is based on Western studies, which may not always be relevant to other contexts (Rose, 2020). The research deficit could make it difficult to assess internships in South Africa as there will be limited findings to compare with or draw from or one will primarily have to rely on theories that were developed mainly in the Western context.

Despite all the benefits associated with internships discussed above, Vally and Motala (2014), caution against the instrumentalist approach to education implied in the internship component of TVET qualifications. Such an instrumentalist view sees the value of education only in relation to employability. In support of this argument, Ngcwangu (2021) points out that education should also consider the political economy within which it takes place rather than just being a mechanical preparation of students for work. In other words, these scholars are pointing to the limitation of how TVET and the attended internships are conceptualised. On the other hand, other researchers argue that TVET should serve social justice and social inclusion purposes (Powell, 2014; Nilsson, 2019). This view also suggests that TVET is more than just preparation for employment.

Lastly, all the potential benefits of internship notwithstanding and all the contentions about certain aspects of internship notwithstanding, there is an implicit agreement in the literature that internship is an invaluable contributor to employability and by extension to economic growth, albeit there are contentions about what employability means. The following section tackles the notion of employability.

2.2.13 Employability

Related to the idea of internship is the notion of employability. Their relationship assumes that internships are necessarily about employability and that they will necessarily result in enhanced employability – in fact, studies show significant enhancement of employability after internship (Silva, et al., 2016). Amongst the reasons cited to support

this view is that cultural capital (e.g. communications ethos, social networking with potential employers) that could enable students to access employment in certain companies can only be acquired through internships in those companies (Jackson et al., 2005 cited in Klein & Weiss, 2011). Furthermore, this cultural capital is peculiar to certain companies/industries and therefore cannot be acquired in an educational institution or other environments outside those companies/industries (Jackson et al., 2005, cited in Klein and Weiss, 2011). But Klein and Weiss (2011:7) disagree with this thesis arguing that "Parental education, occupation or class should rather shape the distribution of cultural capital" as opposed to participation in internships. However, they concede that internship may help students from lower socio-economic background to improve their chances of accessing cultural capital, but it is not enough.

Employability is a complex notion and Mabiza, Mahlalela and Mbohwa (2017) contest that it might even be difficult to 'verbalise and characterise' in a short sentence. The difficulty of articulating employability manifests in a wide range of theoretical framing of employability from different scholars. For example, when employability is understood from human capital theory point of view is vastly different from when it is understood from capability approach. In fact, McGrath (2009: 11) argues that part of the debate about employability should be an acknowledgment that "There is no single list of employability skills that can unproblematically be grabbed hold of and applied to all learning situations".

Citing Mello et al. (2017), Ndlovu and Van Wyk (2023: 130) define employability as "technical or non-technical competence attributes and one's traits that can increase his or her employment potential and also enable them to successfully perform desirable job requirements". This definition suggests that internships should not only focus on technical skills but should also help individuals to enhance attributes that would make them attractive to potential employers - sometimes referred to as 'soft skills or transferable skills.

Tomlinson, McCafferty, Fuge and Wood (2017) argue that the approach of 'technical skills and personal attributes', which they refer to as 'human capital', is inadequate and instead propose what they call capital approach to employability. Capital approach postulate that it is the capitals such as human capital, social capital, individual and that an individual has that increase their chance of finding employment. For Cook (2022) employability is

about constant learning and development, which should provide students with intellectual tool to understand the complexities of the world we live in and the changing world of work even if this may not necessarily result in employment. Cook's approach views employment as just one of the many possible outcomes of employability. This will allow for nuanced debates that are likely to result in better intervention. However, the definition of employability skills remains a subject of debate. While some argue for a flexible and context-specific approach, others emphasize attributes like literacy, numeracy, enthusiasm, commitment, and timekeeping as highly valued by employers. The debate also extends to the preparation of learners for emotional labour and the role of personal tutors in building employability (McGrath, 2009).

Van Harten, Cuyper, Knies and Forrier (2022: 147) did a systematic review of the literature on employability and identified three strands that characterises this area of research, namely, personal strengths that increase the individual's potential, in terms of self-perceived employment opportunities and job transitions. The notion of personal strengths. Van Harten et al. (2022) argue that rather than seeing these strands as divergent, they should rather be seen as complementary with each responding to different research questions in employability.

Another critique of employability as conceptualise as merely a way to getting employment, is that it tends to be narrow and focuses on individualistic 'amassing of asserts' for individual success (Cook, 2022) as opposed to collective solidarity, which is not only important for human sustainability, but also for social justice. The danger of positioning employment as the primary purpose of TVET is that it creates an impression that a job is the primary "if not exclusive, source of meanings and measure of value for human beings" (Anderson, 2003, Cited in Powell, 2014: 11). Furthermore, Powell (2014), using the work of McGrath, argues that the productivist approach underpinning the notion employability is not only narrow and individualistic, but it is also short-term in its framing and outlook as opposed to nurturing lifelong learning.

Furthermore, according to Powell (2014) productivist conceptions make assumptions about why students enrol in TVET colleges. Such assumptions tend to discount students' reasons and their aspirations in favour of the narrow economistic goals postulated by productivist enthusiasts (Powell, 2014). The challenge with discounting the views of the

students is that students are treated as a black box that must be fed with certain inputs (technical and practice skills) and then they will come on the other side of production conveyor belt as finished products (employable). Put different by Kruss and Wildschut (2015), the pathways developed by policy makers for TVET students may not necessarily coincide with the students' aspirations. Even more nuanced, is Kruss and Wildschut (2015)'s analysis that postulates that official policy in TVET students' pathways tend to assume that the transition to the labour market will be linear or as they put 'assumes linearity of transition' when the transition is far more complex and circular. The approach of discounting students' views could also have implications on the conception and implementation of internship programmes. Which implications will include that as the conception is based on narrow assumptions, the design of internship programmes is more likely to have limitations.

Powell (2014) argues for an alternative approach that foregrounds 'capabilities that matter to students' rather than only those that matter for policy aspirations and the needs of capital. The notion of capabilities as postulated by Sen considers student well-being rather than the needs of the economy (McGrath, et al., 2022).

Moreover, other scholars (Klein and Weiss, 2011: 2) see the internship as an "opportunity cost" because it reduces the time that students could use in class for tuition, and they further argue that internships delay entrance into the labour market. This view is supported by Rose (2020) who showed that internships and other work-readiness programmes delay entry into the labour market by about one and a half years. Whether this "opportunity cost" as argued above outweighs the benefits of internships could be answered by cost-benefit analysis.

Critiquing internships, Hora, et al. (2019: 3) had this to say "Too often, internships are conceptualized as a singular event that students take or not, with little explication of the specific elements the experience itself comprises. Without a detailed accounting of these features, internships risk becoming a "black box" that is poorly understood while assumed to causally (and automatically) lead to student academic and/or labour market outcomes". This argument highlights the importance of understanding the various elements of an internship rather than just viewing internships.

I submit that while limitations of the neoliberal model are noted and agreed with, it will be practically difficult in a world dominated by neoliberalism to ignore the short-term circumstances that require it. However, the goal should be to move away from this narrow conception.

2.2.14 Internships effectiveness

Effectiveness of the internship is a good indicator of their efficacy. Since the study assesses the efficacy of internship programmes, it is important to look at those factors that according to the literature account for such efficacy and those that militate against it. The effectiveness of internships as an intervention is still not clear with scholars indicating that the evidence is weak (O'Higgins & Pinedo, 2018). Internships and their effectiveness as a social phenomenon are impacted upon by a multiplicity of factors. The literature (McHugh, 2017; Chan, et al., 2020; Alawamleh & Mahadin, 2022; O'Higgins & Pinedo, 2018, Hora, et al., 2019; Mabiza, et al., 2017; Rose, 2020; Moodie, et al., 2019; Afeti, 2018; Pop, et al., 2013; Mchunu & Mutereko, 2020) highlights the following as important ingredients for the success of internship: strong institutional arrangements, purpose-driven partnerships, quality mentorship, reasonable duration of the internship. In this study, these factors will be used to assess the data generated in the study to make inferences about the efficacy of the TVET internship programmes.

Mabiza, Mahlalela and Mbohwa (2017) propose a much wider approach to internship, where the internship is not only to provide practical work skills but should be a way of looking at the possibility of retaining the interns upon completion of their programme. Their rationale is that this could contribute to reducing unemployment. This proposition has a great potential to improve internships in that institutions would be more likely to invest in the internship programme if the intention is to ultimately retain the interns. However, this proposition may be hobbled by the fact that in practice employers can only employ a certain number of people. It could also mean that, if retention of interns is the goal, institutions might reduce the number of available internship opportunities. The implication of encompassing the impact of internships on reduction unemployment for assessing the efficacy of internships is that the assessment will not only focus on work-readiness and employability, but it should also look at its impact on unemployment. Whilst this may be useful, it is not within the scope of this study and may be complicated and

require enormous resources, which may not be feasible for a study of this nature. So, the element of impact on reduction of unemployment will not be explored in detail in this study.

In the South African context, there is a culture of students moving from one internship to another or engaging in what Wolfgram and Ahrens (2022) call 'the culture of the multiple internship economy' because they could not find suitable employment. Whilst there are other factors contributing to this, like slow economic growth, this begins to raise questions about the effectiveness of internships as an intervention to help to open up the labour market for students. While in South Africa 'multiple internships' could be attributed to desperation, in the context of countries like the United States and South Korea, multiple internships are seen as a source of diverse experience for interns, which is assumed will result in increased marketability and by extension employability, and therefore they are encouraged. Wolfgram and Ahrens (2022) argue that engagement in activities that are deemed to increase marketability is in line with the 'neoliberal self', where the self is constructed around the capitalist notion of marketability influenced by global capitalist demands. Perhaps multiple internships could be useful in South Africa to expose interns to different experiences by designing internship programmes such that an individual is exposed to more than one employer without increasing the duration of the internship. This could come with planning and logistical challenges, but the idea of diverse experiences seems attractive given the need for versatile workers in the current economy. For this study, the important point to explore is whether multiple internships are a product of the inefficacy of internships or other factors or a combination thereof.

2.3 Take always from the literature

TVET by itself will not result in solving socio-economic problems- TVET should be seen as one intervention amongst other interventions rather than as a panacea to all the problems facing society. This implies that a holistic approach is required to grow the economy and deal with poverty and unemployment.

Dominance of Human capital theory and the attendant productivist views of education and skills development - Drawing from the discussions above, it can be concluded that the skills discourse as it currently obtains is still to a large extent dominated by human capital theory, which has been shown in the literature to be narrow and undermining the basic role of education, be it basic or TVET, which is to educate the whole person and to

educate for a better and sustainable society. Consequently, human beings are conceptualized as 'neoliberal subjects (Wolfgram and Ahrens, 2022). Furthermore, the productivist approach tends to cater to sectional interests, which the literature suggests is hampering the development of a broad and viable TVET and therefore part of the problem.

Human capabilities approach – which privileges the well-being of individuals and society rather than only the supply of skills to capital, seems to be emerging as a strong voice that counterbalances the dominance of human capital theory. Furthermore, it postulates that "the goal should be for everyone to have the capability to be and do what they have reason to value" (Moodie, Wheelahan and Lavigne, 2019:1). However, this is not the case because as the world stands now, human beings do what is valued by capital not by humanity irrespective of whether it has negative or positive consequences for society.

Skills debate should be more nuanced – The political economy of skills asserts that skills development is impacted upon by global and local political and socio-economic factors. Hence it should be contextualized to acknowledge that there is no single set of skills that can be transplanted in every context. The ever-changing world of work requires more theorizing so that policies and other interventions can respond appropriately.

Internship is a contested notion – There is no single view on what form of internships should take, however, the literature points to the importance of context as one of the determinants of efficacy. Furthermore, how internships are framed is also a product of how skills development is conceptualized.

Access to internship placements and internship outcomes are influenced by political and socio-economic factors such as class, gender, and race – as a result, there is unequal access to internship opportunities. Furthermore, these factors have been shown to impact the outcomes of internships as well.

There are multiple and interrelated factors that contribute to the efficacy of internships – the structure and design of an internship, the governance, the support, quality of mentorship, individual's socio-economic circumstances and effort are some of the crucial factors that influence the efficacy of internship.

Internships have the potential to improve understanding of the theoretical component of TVET courses – the literature suggests that internships provide an opportunity to reflect on the curriculum and assessment methods. In addition, some studies suggest that students who participated in internships have a better understanding and retention of the theoretical materials learned. This suggests that internships are supporting to learning process and by extension to employability.

Quality partnerships with a clear value proposition between the public TVET colleges, service partners, and industries are important for supporting internships - This does not only support placements of students in internships and provide them with work experience, but according to the literature above, it also helps to enhance TVET programmes. This is supported by experiential learning theories and advocates.

There is a gap in the internship *literature, particularly in relation to the efficacy of internships*- The literature points to the limited evidence that is available to support the thesis that internships are effective in what they are set out to achieve.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

A theoretical framework helps to examine the links and relationships between concepts with social theory (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, and Wright, 2010; Cunningham, 2019; Kivunja, 2018). Furthermore, a theoretical framework attempts to link concepts and themes emerging in a study and the broader social theory. The theoretical framework will be used to interpret and make scholarly sense of the data generated from the respondents sampled for the study (Kivunja, 2018). Furthermore, Kivunja argues that a theoretical framework holds the dissertation together by determining what data goes into the thesis and how it is interpreted. The theoretical framework will deal with the efficacy of the TVET internship programme and youth mainstreaming.

An analysis of the efficacy of internships in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), including institutional arrangements is complex and multifaceted and as such may require a combination of theories. A combination of two or more models is more likely to provide for a comprehensive analysis and a more complete response to the research questions as they complement each other. A process that impacts the efficacy of internships could better be understood using a combination of models

(Dwikurnaningsih, Waruwu and Wardani, 2022). It is for this reason that the researcher chose a combination of the theory of change, the logic model, and the transactional partnering model to provide a rigorous framework for assessing the effectiveness of internships.

2.4.1 Kirkpatrick Model

Donald Kirkpatrick introduced the Kirkpatrick model through his doctoral work in the late 1950s and although it has been critiqued over the years, it is still one of the most influential evaluation models (Reio, et al., 2017). The Kirkpatrick Model provides a structured approach to assessing the effectiveness of training programs, which can include internships. This model was chosen for this study because it could be used to assess the interns' reactions and perceptions of the internship program through surveys and interviews (Kirkpatrick, 1996), which is important to assess efficacy. It consists of four levels of evaluation (Dewi, and Kartowagiran, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2015)

- ***Level 1: Reaction***: This level assesses how interns feel about the internship experience, which in this study will be done through a survey questionnaire. It focuses on their satisfaction, perceptions, and attitudes towards the program.
- ***Level 2: Learning***: The purpose of this level is to assess what knowledge and skills interns have gained during the internship. Assess whether they have acquired relevant competencies and how well they have learned. This can involve tests, skills assessments, or evaluations by mentors and supervisors.
- ***Level 3: Behaviour***: At this level, you examine whether the skills and knowledge acquired during the internship are being applied in real-world situations. Evaluate whether interns are using what they've learned and assess their performance on the job. This may not be applicable as the sample does not involve those who are already in employment.
- ***Level 4: Results***: The highest level of evaluation looks at the broader impact of the internship program on the organization or industry. Measure the impact on organizational performance, productivity, and any long-term benefits resulting from the internship program.

2.4.2 Context-Input-Process-Product model

Historically, the CIPP can be traced to the 1960s in the United States of America. The model was developed for schools out of the need to make them accountable. However, over time it was used to evaluate programmes even outside schools, but in the broader social sciences (Stufflebeam, 2000). The CIPP Model is a framework used to assess various aspects of educational programs and services. The model serves several functions, including identifying needs and opportunities, evaluating strategies and budgets, monitoring activities, and assessing short-term and long-term outcomes (Stufflebeam, 2000). The CIPP was chosen because it provides a comprehensive analysis of the program's context, the inputs (resources and arrangements), the processes (how the internship is conducted), and the resulting products (outcomes and impacts). For the purpose of this study, the model will be used for the following, which have been established by the literature review as important for the efficacy of internships:

- ***Programme Design/conception***: Evaluate the structure and curriculum of the internship program, including the alignment with industry needs.
- ***Mentorship and Supervision***: Examine how mentors and supervisors are selected and trained to support interns effectively.
- ***Assessment and Feedback***: deals with how intern performance is assessed and how feedback is provided to facilitate learning.
- ***Integration with Curriculum***: Assess how well the internship aligns with the broader TVET curriculum and learning objectives.
- ***Partnerships***: Evaluate partnerships with industry and employers, as strong collaborations can enhance the quality of internships.

2.4.3 The Logic Model

The Logic model is defined by Hayes, Parchman, and Howard (2011: 1-2) as “a graphical/textual representation of how a program is intended to work and links outcomes with processes and the theoretical assumptions of the program”. This suggests that the Logic Model does not only help to clarify the theory underpinning a programme, but it is also meant to explain the logical sequence of events in a programme (Hayes, et al.,2011). The definition also implies that the Logical Model is a visual presentation of the logical and processes that a programme is intended to follow. In the case of this study, will depict

how actions and inputs will enable internships to function, how they will function, and what is the expected outcome. The literature cited earlier suggests that certain inputs such as functional institutional arrangements, mentorship, and meaningful tasks are among the factors that should be in place for the successful implementation of internship programmes. So, the model depicts an “if then” scenario of the programmes. For, example if one of the inputs cited above is absent, how will the programme be impacted. The Logic Model also emphasises the importance of resources in implementing programmes.

2.4.3.1 Components of the Logic Model

According to Savaya and Waysman (2005) citing United Way (2006) and Kellogg Foundation (2000), the basic level components of the logic model include:

Inputs – this will represent all important resources needed to implement a successful programme. In the case of a TVET internship programme, resources will include personnel, finances, and industry partners.

Activities – these are all key processes and actions undertaken where resources are used during the implementation of a programme. For the internship programme, processes focus on how and when the recruitment of interns is rolled out, and activities include workshops or seminars to prepare students to participate in the internship programme. Communication with students and key stakeholders is another important activity to collaborate in the TVET internship programme.

Outputs – the end products of all activities implemented will constitute the output. In the internship programme, output, taking into consideration activities undertaken includes several internship preparedness workshops held, career days with industry partners, memorandum of agreements/understanding or partners agreements entered with industry partners, and several students enrolled into the internship programme.

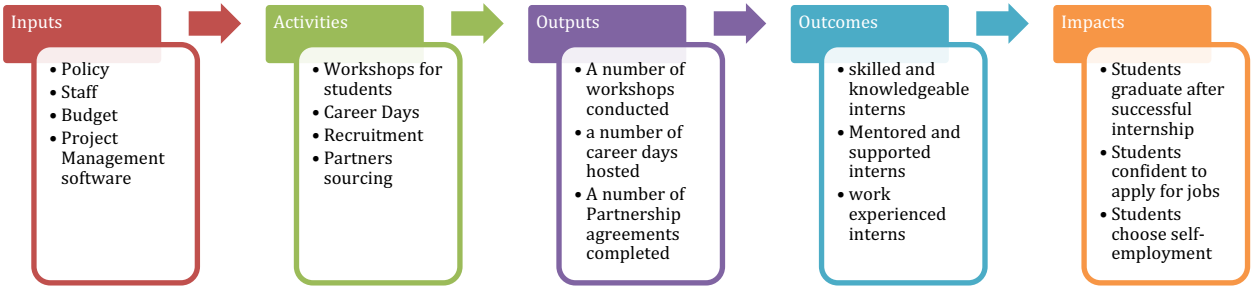
Outcomes – the visible and direct changes and benefits that are clearly observable and linked to the outputs of the programme. The main aim of a TVET internship programme is to mainstream and transition students from college to job through practical skills training, workplace experience through the allocation of meaningful tasks, and

mentorship. The clear outcome would translate into skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced interns who are confident to join employment.

Impacts – the end result of any intervention or a social impact programme is to create a meaningful and sustainable change. The TVET internship programme is expected to foster transition to work for students, therefore impact is seen when interns can graduate from their programme having successfully completed their internship and are able to compete in the labour market by getting employed by the industry, or self-employ.

Having outlined the important components of the logic model, figure 2.1 is a graphical presentation of these components in the context of this study.

Figure 2.1: Components of the logic model



Source: Adapted from Savaya & Waysman (2005)

The logic model has not only provided a framework for easy understanding of the TVET internship programme planning, and implementation but also provided for monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes to determine if an impact is created. According to McLaughlin and Jordan (2015), applying the logic model to programmes or interventions has the following benefits:

- A useful tool for conceptualising, planning, and communicating with relevant stakeholders about the programme

- Enables advanced organising for programme evaluations and performance measurement system
- Helps build a shared understanding and expectations amongst all participants and stakeholders
- Empowers implementors to describe the unique programme elements and their logical linkages
- Fosters continued programme improvements derived from information gathered

In this study, the logic model allowed for a simplification of the goals and objectives of a TVET internship programme, a depiction of its necessary and basic components, thus providing for a comprehensive, well-organised, clearly communicated, and monitored implementation, which is all significant factors in an effective internship programme.

2.4.4 The Transaction Partnering Model

The Transactional Partnering Model (TPM), which was first postulated by Sameroff and Chandler in 1975, is when two or more partners work together to achieve a mutually beneficial goal(s) (Sameroff & Mackenzie, 2003). In the case of this study, industries that provide internships and the TVET colleges have a mutual interest in that colleges benefit from students being exposed to real work experience and putting their theoretical knowledge into practice, while the industries benefit from the productive capacities of the students at a lower cost than prevailing market labour costs. In addition, other partners like the SETAs and other state organs benefit from internship partnerships by using internships to pursue their mandates, while assisting colleges to place students in internships. This approach to partnerships aligns with the view advanced by HRDC (2014) when asserting that partnerships should not be arbitrary, but they must be centred around a specific outcome, lack of such an intended outcome could render partnership ineffective.

While the Transactional Partnering Model has potential in terms of leveraging resources from the partnership, it has its own challenges and limitations. Potential problems with the Transactional Partnering Model are that partners come with different organisational cultures, bureaucratic systems and approaches, monetary interests, and in some cases different understandings of the envisaged mutual outcomes, which could cause contradictions and potentially overshadow the mutual interests between the partners

(Thompson and Jesiek, 2017). Given the complexities and contradictions that may arise when two organisations or more enter partnerships (Thompson and Jesiek, 2017), the internships are likely to be impacted by such partnerships. For example, an organisation that is only interested in low labour costs is less likely to contribute to the optimal development of students. In line with a Theory of Change, Transactional Partnerships constitute part of some of the actions or inputs that are taken by colleges to achieve changes envisaged by the internship programmes.

2.4.5 A Theory of Change

A theory of change is defined as "a particular approach for making underlying assumptions in a change project (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020: 2).

The theory of change postulates that an understanding of the underlying theory of a programme is the basis for understanding how the programmes work and whether it works (De Silva, et. al., 2014). The ToC [theory of change] is a pragmatic framework that describes how the intervention affects change (De Silva, Breuer, Lee, et al., 2014). ToC gives the 'big picture' and "summarises work at a strategic level" (Brown, 2016). The ToC is project-specific (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). Theories of Change can be linked to different management processes through project and programme cycles (O'Flynn and Moberly, 2017). It makes the underlying rationale of a project explicit, which supports planning, implementation, and assessment of the project (Reinholz, and Andrews, 2020). The definition suggests that a change theory is not only focused on the programme outcomes, but it can also be a planning tool for programmes (Reinholz, and Andrews, 2020).

ToC at organisational level might enable the development of a better strategic plan, whilst a Theory of Change at the programme level might enable the development of a more robust logical framework or another type of planning document (O'Flynn and Moberly, 2017). It has been widely adopted in various fields, from education and healthcare to community development and policymaking (Main 2023). The assumption is that theory provides a better foundation to conceptualise and implement programmes. In the case of this study, the underlying theory is that workplace training has the potential to prepare the youth as they transition to work. In the present study, it means that assessing the inputs

such as institutional mechanisms available to support the internship programme are as important as assessing the outcomes of the programme. Historically, a theory of change was informed by the need to base programme evaluations on theory as opposed to merely looking at input and outputs in a programme without any theoretical underpinnings (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). This means that the underlying assumptions and rationale for the evaluation approach must be made explicit and justified theoretically (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). In this study, the ToC is linked to internship programmes.

As a theory-driven evaluation practice, it shifted its focus from merely assessing the achievement of outcomes to understanding the causal linkages that lead to those outcomes (Main 2023). The historical roots of a theory of change come from the field of theory-driven evaluation, which came to prominence in the 1990s (Reinholz, and Andrews, 2020). The historical roots of a theory of change come from the field of theory-driven evaluation, which came to prominence in the 1990s (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). It is argued that "evaluation efforts should not just be about proving but also improving" (Main 2023). Their basic tenet is that understanding the theory underlying a program approach is necessary to understand whether, and how, it works (De Silva, et al., 2014). The theory-driven evaluation aimed to “move beyond a simplistic input-output notion of evaluation” and “instead required that program designers explicitly state how they expected a program to work”, thereby making their implicit assumptions explicit (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). This allows an evaluator to better understand what is being implemented and why, making clear connections between a given intervention and its outcomes (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020).

These are characterised in the theory as the input into the programme, in this case, the internship programme. Notwithstanding the value of programme evaluation, World Vision (2014) points to the complexities of assessing programmes and the potential change that programmes make because change is not linear, and it can be unpredictable given the multiple factors at play at the same time. These complexities suggest that assessing a programme may not be a simple activity, meaning that the assessment would not have clear-cut outcomes. However, basing impact assessment on a sound theoretical basis gives the assessment scientific credibility.

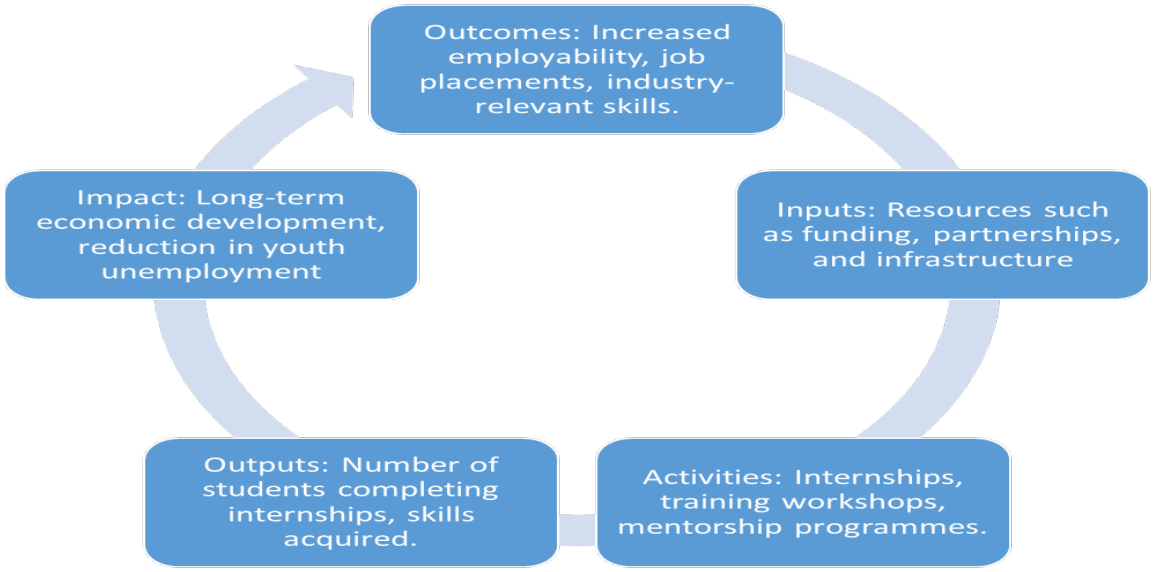
2.4.5.1 Characteristics of the theory of change

The Theory of change explains how a “group of early and intermediate accomplishments sets the stage for producing long-range results” (Anderson, 2005). A theory of change is based on the understanding of the interconnectedness between programme activities/inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Using this theory to design programmes entails postulating a goal and then going backward and looking at activities/inputs that will be required to achieve the intended outcome (Mayne, 2015; Vogel, 2012). So, evaluating a programme using a change theory will assess the input, outputs, and impact. Activities are the things that an organisation does to deliver a project day-to-day (Harries, Hodgson and Noble, 2014). Harries, Hodgson and Noble (2014) identified inputs as resources that go into the project that a team or organisation needs to be able to carry out its activities (Harries, Hodgson and Noble, 2014).

In the context of TVET internships, a change theory can be expressed as a cycle of inputs (necessary resources), activities (actions taken to realise the goals), outputs (skills that the interns acquire), impact (e.g. reduced unemployment), and outcomes (economic growth) (see figure 2.2 below). The theory also recognizes the importance of continuously evaluating and investigating change and understanding its implications for an organization within a specific context, industry, and demographic context (James, 2011). It operates on the fundamental assumption that meticulous planning, comprehensive implementation, and ongoing evaluation are vital components for ensuring the success and effectiveness of any programme. Figure 2.2 below depicts important characteristics of the theory of change relevant to the TVET internship programme.

The TVET internship programme is aimed to propel the transition of students from school to work, however, it is not given that this change happens automatically. It is through this theory that the activities undertaken by the college management and its stakeholders could be assessed when evaluating the efficacy of the internship programme. As a point of reference, a theory of change could also empower colleges to design internship programmes and develop a comprehensive framework to monitor if the intended change is achieved. Figure 2.2 below depicts important characteristics of the theory of change relevant to the TVET internship programme.

Figure 2.2: Elements of Theory of Change Model



Source: **Researcher's Own (Using; James, 2011; Mayne, 2015; Vogel, 2012)**

While the figure above shows the processes, their outputs, and their impact, internships are also underpinned by planning, implementation, and continuous assessment. Theory of Change is used for planning and evaluation as a planning tool (Taplin, Clark, Collins and Colby, 2013). "Theory of change can be both a planning and issue-framing tool and a monitoring and evaluation tool (Bridenbaugh, 2021).

- *Planning*

The ToC helps organizations ask important questions about their work (Taplin, et al., 2013). The initial phase of any project or intervention is its planning. It can strengthen partnerships, support organizational development, and facilitate communication (Taplin, et al., 2013). Planning involves vision setting, resource planning, performance indicators, assessment tools, and risk management among others. In this study, planning focuses on institutional capacity, which focuses on the institutional policy of the TVET colleges governing the internship programme, the staff capacity to oversee, coordinate and execute the programme, the non-financial and financial resources to enable execution, and the monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the programme impact and resolve any challenges that will arise, and the availability of industry partners to collaborate with to host students in their workplaces.

- *Implementation*

Development projects attempt to contribute to achieving long-term development goals, by the implementation of their strategy and actions (French, Bachour and Mohtar, 2020). Implementation in a programme is an important element as it puts the plans into action to achieve impact or change. A programme's effectiveness can only be tested if there is the execution of planned activities in a logical manner. In the TVET internship, implementation focuses on the recruitment and placement of students in a workplace, training of students with practical skills linked to the theory studied, mentorship, communication, and support. The TVET college and the employer collaborate to ensure that the internship is achieving its purpose of ensuring students are capacitated with employability skills that will assist them to transition to employment after completing the programme.

- *Assessment*

As an evaluation tool, ToC identifies the specific goals of the program and ties those goals to particular interventions (Bridenbaugh, 2021). To establish whether a programme achieves its intended purpose, it needs to be regularly assessed against set targets and performance indicators. Assessing a programme also ensures that progress is monitored, gaps are identified and resolved, and continuous improvements from what is observed from the assessment can be implemented. Without assessments, organisations can never establish if an intervention is reaching its deliverables and impact. The TVET college and industry partners would need to establish a monitoring and evaluation tool and communicate it to all stakeholders. Regular feedback with all role players is necessary to track the progress of the internship, resolve challenges, and use information gathered during assessment for continuous improvement of the internship programme.

2.4.5.2 Theory of Change Key Components

The process of developing a theory of change begins with recognizing the context in which the change effort will occur (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). Taplin & Clark (2012) and Taplin et al (2013) provided a useful synopsis of the key components of the Theory of Change, namely: "outcomes and pathways, indicators, rationales interventions, assumptions, and a narrative".

- *Identifying long-term goals*

Goals are the desired long-term outcomes that a program seeks to achieve (Main, 2023). It usually starts with people thinking about their long-term goals before working backwards to identify challenges and opportunities. It defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify changes that need to happen earlier (preconditions) (French, Bachour, & Mohtar, 2020). As an evaluation tool, ToC identifies the specific goals of the program and ties those goals to particular interventions (Bridenbaugh, 2021).

Backwards mapping and connecting outcomes

After describing the context, the team goes through a process of backwards mapping, first focusing on the end results and then working backwards to describe how one is supposed to get to those results (Reinholz and Andrews 2020). It is necessary to conduct backwards mapping and connecting the preconditions to achieve the desired goal. Developing well-articulated outcomes and preconditions helps a team choose interventions intentionally (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020).

- *Completing the outcomes framework*

The outcomes framework helps to identify the missing middle steps that need to occur for the desired change to happen (Main, 2023). Outcomes and pathways are regarded as the ‘building blocks’ of the Theory of Change (Taplin et al, 2013). It also introduced the concept of "Outcome Mapping," which shifts the attention from outcomes to the behaviours, relationships, and activities that lead to those outcomes (Main, 2023). As one expert aptly put it, "The Theory of Change is not just a predictive model but a narrative that tells a story of transformation (Main, 2023).

Theories of change are used to develop theories of action, which may differ from project to project. Based on the theory of change, desired outcomes are identified, and mapped (French, Bachour, & Mohtar, 2020). These outcomes may be intermediate or long-term, and they represent the positive changes or results that the program is expected to bring about (Main, 2023). The long-term outcome will eventually be attained only after a number of medium-term and short-term outcomes which are called preconditions are first achieved (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). Each long-term outcome or precondition is

paired with a number of indicators, which describe the types of evidence needed to determine whether or not an outcome has been achieved (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020).

- *Identifying Assumptions*

A critical part of Theory of Change thinking is the articulation of assumptions (O'Flynn and Moberly, 2017). An assumption is the underlying beliefs about how a project will work, the people involved, and the context (Harries, Hodgson, and Noble, 2014). Institutions may develop a series of assumptions. These assumptions are often linked to specific places in the conceptual pathway and can be seen as conditions that are necessary for change at one level to influence change at another level (O'Flynn, and Moberly, 2017). Assumptions are necessary for the formulation of a Theory of Change (French, Bachour, and Mohtar, 2020).

- *Embedding risk analysis*

Embedding risk analysis in a theory of change is also a crucial and challenging element of design, but exploring assumptions first can help in the identification of the risks. Often, assumptions and risks are inversely related (UNDG, 2023). A theory of change approach encourages consideration of various types of potential risks, including: "environmental and political", "Opportunities", "Design", "Partnerships" (UNDG, 2023). Internship programmes may encounter political risk due to elections and stakeholder sensitivities around particular issues (UNDG, 2023). Currently, the South African government is applying a government of national unity; a mayor of a particular municipality may be charged with a vote of no confidence. Often, this leads to the freezing of budgets and municipal activities. This may affect the interns appointed in that institution. The TVET College may encounter the ability to incorporate new partnerships when opportunities arise due to tensions that develop in the interim (UNDG, 2023).

Developing a theory of change allows you to explore how and why you think your program will work (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). This process allows managers to determine the gaps or missing parts that need to be filled to meet their goals (Anderson, 2005). Assumptions make us think about how and why the strategies will work in our community (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). These assumptions should be about the problem, or

how the program will operate, including assumptions about resources, staff, knowledge base, and participants (Berra, 2024).

- *Developing Indicators*

These indicators may be measured in a variety of ways, depending on the research methodologies adopted by a project (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). A given Theory of Change also identifies measurable indicators of success as a roadmap to monitoring and evaluation (French, Bachour, and Mohtar, 2020). Indicators are how a project team determines if each precondition and the long-term outcome have been met. Ideally, a theory of change specifies one or more indicators for each precondition and the long-term outcome (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). This allows a project to assess the degree to which implementation of project activities is having the intended impact. Indicators must be fully operationalized to usefully inform a project (Anderson, 2005).

Operationalizing an indicator includes determining what variable will be measured, the target population for change, what threshold of change will be sufficient to conclude that a precondition or outcome has been met, and how long it is expected to take to achieve this threshold in the target population (Anderson, 2005). Setting indicators aids in setting outcomes for a project, so they should be set early in the planning stages of a project (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). Assessing indicators helps measure progress made toward those outcomes as a project is being implemented (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). Indicators can relate to any part of the program and its logic model or program description.

The most common categories of indicators include Input indicators, Process indicators, Outcome indicators, and impact indicators. This may be associated with youth unemployment. An internship goal may have indicators for halving poverty, economic development, and several females appointed into the internship programme. The assessment of indicators helps communicate the outcomes and progress toward outcomes for people outside of the project team (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). Strong indicators are simple, precise, and measurable. In addition, some programs aspire to indicators that are ‘SMART’: Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (Fullan, 2007).

- Identifying Interventions

The theory of change process describes “interventions (a single program or coordinated initiative) that bring about the outcomes depicted in the outcome’s framework map. Each intervention is tied to an outcome in the causal framework, revealing the often-complex web of activity required to bring about change” (Clark, & Taplin, 2012). An intervention is what a project “does” to try to achieve change (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). The intervention to achieve change that will make the youth employable is an internship (De Silva, el.al., 2014). But for internship to be effective certain fundamentals must be in place such as support mechanisms underpinned by strong institutional arrangements, collaboration between the colleges, employers, and other relevant stakeholders, mentorship, and communication.

2.4.5.3 Benefits of Theory of Change

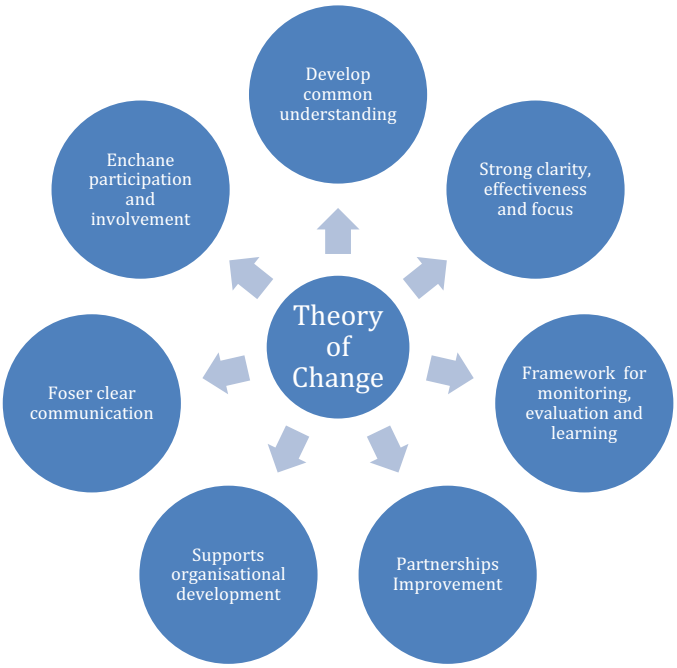
Supporters of the Theory of Change thinking see many benefits in the approach (James, 2011). Figure 2.3 depicts a graphical presentation of the adaptation of important elements of theory of change that are relevant to the TVET internship programme implementation.

Applying a theory of change enables organisations to adopt a holistic approach toward achieving an impactful programme or intervention. In a review by James (2011), the following are highlighted as benefits derived from adopting the theory:

- Development of a common understanding

For any intervention or program to be successfully implemented within an organization, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive and shared understanding of its fundamental aspects. This encompasses an agreement on the rationale behind the program, the specific anticipated outcomes, all activities that will be involved in its execution, and the intended impact it aims to generate. This shared understanding ensures that all members of the organization are aligned and working cohesively towards the common objectives of the program.

Figure 2.3: Benefits of Theory of Change



Source: Adapted from James, C. (2011). Theory of change review. Comic Relief, 835

- Strong clarity, effectiveness, and focus

It is absolutely essential that every component of the programme is thoroughly outlined and clearly communicated, including even the smallest details. This level of clarity is vital to guarantee the smooth and effective execution of the programme, and to maintain a strong and unwavering focus on its goals.

- Provision of the framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of program management. By regularly monitoring and evaluating programs against predefined success indicators, organizations can ensure that their programs are on track to achieve their goals. A robust framework for monitoring and evaluating programs is crucial for identifying areas of success and potential improvement. Moreover, the data obtained from monitoring and evaluation efforts serves as valuable input for continuous learning and enhancement of the program. This iterative process allows organizations to adapt and refine their

programs based on evidence and insights gathered from the monitoring and evaluation results, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful initiatives.

- Improving partnerships

Efforts aimed at creating social impact through programs require close collaboration and partnerships with organizations that share similar goals and values. Establishing strong, cooperative relationships with relevant partners is crucial to ensure that all stakeholders are fully engaged and actively contributing to the program. This approach emphasizes the importance of maintaining and nurturing these relationships to foster mutual benefits, trust, and shared success within the program, ultimately maximizing its potential for creating positive social change.

- Supporting Organisational Development

The primary aim is to establish the program firmly and effectively within the organization, ensuring that its objectives and activities are fully integrated and embraced by the organization. This will enable the program to make an equal and meaningful contribution to the overall development and success of the organization.

- Clear communication of work

In order to ensure the success of the program, it is crucial that all stakeholders have access to and are provided with comprehensive and timely information about decisions, progress, challenges, resource allocation, and other pertinent aspects. The Theory of Change (TOC) plays a pivotal role in facilitating clear and strong communication to prevent the spread of misinformation and minimize conflicts among the various individuals and entities involved in the program.

- Enhance participation and involvement

It is crucial to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are actively engaged and participating in the programme for it to be successful. Without full involvement from key stakeholders, there is a risk of unnecessary delays and potential harm to the overall viability of the program. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize the inclusion and participation of all important stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of the program.

In this study, the theory of change is applied to achieve comprehensive implementation of an effective TVET internship programme by embracing all significant elements embedded in the theory. Ensuring there is a common understanding, clear focus, clear communication, strong relationships, monitoring and evaluation tools and participation of all relevant stakeholder holders remains central to the achievement of an effective TVET internship programme.

2.4.5.4 Reflections of TOC

The discussions identified key activities and interventions that are crucial to implementing the program effectively. Most theories of change are weak on capacity building and that is one of the key reasons why they fall short (Fullan, 2017). “The ToC [theory of change] gives the ‘big picture’ and summarises work at a strategic level, while a logical framework illustrates a programme (implementation) level understanding of the change process” (Brown, 2016). The Theory of Change (ToC) is grounded on the recognition that new approaches are required to address root structural problems, namely the relationships, mindsets, and behaviours of the key influential actors in the system, as necessary precursors to biodiversity conservation (Harries, Hodgson and Noble, 2014). We saw how the Theory of Change expresses long-term outcomes, preconditions, and interventions, and can therefore underpin visioning papers, strategic and/or annual plans, and goal-setting processes (Taplin, et al., 2013). Collins, Taplin and Clark (2016) indicated that the Theory of Change “allows the identification of the short-term and intermediate steps that need to occur to realise a long-term result or outcome”. The sections above also showed that the ToC is a rigorous yet participatory process that allows groups and stakeholders in a planning process to articulate their long-term goals and identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for those goals to be met Taplin & Clark (2012). Taplin et al. (2013:2) provide a useful summary that encapsulates what the Theory of Change is: ‘At its heart, Theory of Change spells out initiative or program logic. A theory of change can help an organisation improve its strategy, measurement, communication, and partnership working (Harries, Hodgson and Noble, 2014). Further, the process is necessarily inclusive of many perspectives and participants in achieving solutions.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed some of the key concepts and research findings pertaining to the ideas of skills development, TVET, Human Capital theory, Capability approach, Internships and employability. It also provided a conceptual framework to analyse the data and to relate it to the literature review. Building on this chapter, the following chapter provides an overview of TVET in South Africa and the international experience of internships in the context of TVET.

Chapter Three

Overview of the South African TVET and Internships

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the architecture of Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) Colleges in South Africa, in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in particular. TVET colleges in South Africa were conceptualised as a cornerstone of the country's skills development approach and as a vehicle to deal with socio-economic challenges (Needham, 2019; Republic of South Africa, 2013). At a fundamental level, the philosophy underpinning TVET is the incorporation of a work experience component in the TVET Colleges programme to increase youth employability in light of unemployment increasing stubbornly. The political and socio-economic context plays an important role in preparing the students to transition to work.

3.2 Political and Socio-Economic Environment

The democratic South Africa has positioned itself as a developmental state considering the country being plagued by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequalities. In line with that posture, the state has sought to deal with these developmental issues using various policy instruments that include using public TVET colleges to increase access to education and to improve employability through providing skills-orientated educational programmes (Wedekind, 2014; Powell, 2014; McGrath, et al, 2022). Both education and employment are seen as a way out of poverty and to some extent a way of closing the gap of inequality (Needham, 2019). Inequalities are not only a recipe for social instability but are also a stumbling block to economic growth and development (Kruss and Wildschut, 2015). The rationale is that educated and employable citizens will have a positive impact on the economy and by extension help the state to solve economic challenges referred to above. Patterns of unemployment show that those who have lower levels of education are the ones who are more likely to be unemployed and unemployable. For instance, Statistics South Africa (2023)'s Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2nd quarter) shows that the majority of the unemployed are less skilled, and have low-level qualifications, while those more qualified and skilled have smaller unemployment figures.

However, with slow economic growth, it seems the challenges alluded to above are still a long way from being tackled satisfactorily – in this regard, Statistics South Africa (2023) reports a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of only 0,6% in the second quarter of 2023, which is miniscule improvement on the first quarter growth of 0,4%. The GDP projections also look gloomy. Compounding, the situation is high inflation at 4,7% in July 2023 with food as one of the main contributors at an increase of 9,9% year-on-year (Statistics South Africa, 2023). This means the poor feel the effect of inflation more given that a substantial portion of their income is spent on food. According to the 2023 second quarter Labour Force Survey report, about 7,9 million people, or 32,6% of the workforce were unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2023). And the proportion of the unemployed who have been in long-term unemployment is at 77,3%. Long-term unemployment could eventually result in low employability prospects. Furthermore, unemployment has been associated with mental issues such as anxiety and depression and in some cases low self-esteem (Mseleku, 2022).

The second factor that informs TVET is the critical shortage of technical skills in the country. The shortage is well documented and catalogued in several publications including the 2020/2021 Critical Skills Survey by EXPATWEB (2021), which shows that the shortage is so dire that 77% of companies that participated in the survey said they struggle to find critical skills in South Africa which they require for their operations. The Department of Higher Education and Training also compiles its own list of skills that are in short supply. This list also indicates a shortage of particular skills. There is also pressure to make work visa application processes easier and quicker for individuals with skills in the areas of shortage (EXPATWEB, 2021), which pressure arises out of the critical shortage.

The emphasis on using education as a panacea for socio-economic challenges like poverty and unemployment as outlined above is informed by the dominant global productivist ideology of education or what other scholars broadly refer to as neoliberalism (Powell, 2014; Ngcwangu, 2019: Needham, 2019). This ideology propounds an instrumentalist conception of education, which suggests that education serves as an instrument to access economic opportunities, neglecting other more fundamental benefits like education for active citizenship.

3.3 Policy environment

Historically technical and vocational education in South Africa like other areas of education was segregated with better-resourced institutions reserved for the white students, who had exclusive access to those skills (Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath, 2005; Terblanche, 2017). This resulted in part of the potential workforce being underdeveloped and unable to contribute optimally to the economy as they could only perform semi-skilled jobs while skilled jobs were performed by white workers (Maluleke, Edoun and Pooe, 2022; Balwanz, and Ngcwangu, 2016). In fact, technical education institutions only started admitting African black students in the mid-70s (Badroodien 2004, cited in Matenda, 2020). Kruss and Wildschut (2015) also point out that even apprenticeship is to a certain extent still influenced by race, class, and gender to a certain extent, which they argue also influences how one navigates the labour market. So, even after many years of democratic rule, South Africa is still grappling with the challenge of unequal access to education because of this historically skewed access to technical education. (DHET, 2013; Kruss and Wildschut, 2015).

To undo this negative legacy and to create an equitable education system, the democratic government introduced new policies and legislation based on the Constitution, Act No. 27 of 1996, which is founded on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities. These legislations include amongst others the National Education Policy Act of 1996 which provides “for the determination of national policy for education” based on non-discrimination- and various basic and higher education policies and statutes. The White Paper on Post School Education states amongst its intentions to redress the aftermath of apartheid in the sector (DHET, 2013). As a general principle, the post-apartheid South African policy intends to bring social justice in all sectors of society (Botha, et al., 2023; Needham, 2019; Matenda, 2022; DHET, 2013). In addition, the TVET policy in particular, also aims to improve the quality of the skills qualifications and to increase the number of students enrolling in technical to cope with the increased demand for skills (Wildschut and Meyer, 2016). However, Needham (2019) points out that despite the policy change and the investment of considerable resources in TVET, there is little to show in terms of returns. In addition, a combination of global economic decline and the changing world of work underpinned by improved production technologies has caused a

decline in demand for certain skills, which in turn could undermine the policy intention of increasing skilled individuals.

One of the limitations of policies used to construct the TVET response to the needs of South Africa is that theories and policies designed in the north for a different set of circumstances are transplanted to countries of the South like South Africa which have a different set of challenges (McGrath, et al., 2022; McGrath, et al., 2020). For these reasons, McGrath, et al. (2022) argue that TVET policies tend to fail, and as such these scholars advocate for the development of new theories that will not only shift the discourse but will also inform policies. Rose (2020) also makes this point in the context of South Korea, when he points out the domination of the use of Western theories in the internship scholarship.

The colonial roots of TVET are also questioned because it is not sanitised from being employer-driven as opposed to being driven by the needs of the country and the people of the country (McGrath, 2009). Furthermore, McGrath, et al. (2022) question the “skills can save us” discourse that is perpetuated by South Africa’s productivist approach to TVET. The limitation of ‘skills can save us’ is that it oversimplifies complex global and local political-economic contexts that define the skills and employment landscape (Ngcwangu, 2019). For Moodie, Wheelahan, and Lavigne (2019), the over-privileging of “skills can save us” undermines the fact that TVET must educate the whole person rather than treating people as robots that exist for the sole reason of providing skills (in a narrow sense) to capital.

In terms of the National Higher Education Act, TVET Colleges are structurally located in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

White Paper on Post-School Education and Training

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training seeks to establish a highly articulated post-school education and training system that connects youth and adults to work and higher education, aligning education with economic needs and promoting social and economic transformation. It envisions significant enrolment growth, reaching one million by 2015 and 2.5 million by 2030 (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)., 2014; Papier, et al., 2017).

3.3.1 Skills Development Policies

A Workplace-based Learning Policy: The National Perspective (2015)

This policy perspective by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), is a response to UNESCO's Work-based learning policy guide and is intended to provide a comprehensive framework that facilitates the integration of work-based learning into TVET learning programmes. Furthermore, the policy perspective is intended to improve the quality of TVET through providing work-based learning opportunities for TVET students. To achieve its intention, the DHET set out the following responsibilities for different stakeholders:

Table 3.1: Stakeholder Responsibilities

Role player	Role and responsibility
Government (DHET includes SETAs)	policy, incentives, funding, links with other government agencies and departments, report
Institutions (HEI, TVET)	curriculum development, implement WPBL, manage and monitor, assess, QA arrangements, support students, staff and employers, report
Employers	workplace opportunities, safe environment for learning, mentor, monitor and feedback
Students	LEARN, adhere to workplace rules as learner-workers, complete workplace related tasks; submit logbook

Source: DHET (2015)

The Skills Development Act

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 was enacted, with the intention to improve employees' skills through workplace training and education. It provides for employees to participate in learning programmes and be afforded opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills. This act also provided for the establishment of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which are responsible for skills development in specific sectors. It also provides for investment in skills through the Skills Fund. Its main strength is that it emphasises lifelong learning and supports the quality of education within the

work environment to empower workers (Republic of South Africa, 1998). By implication, the policy contributes to creating a conducive environment for internships.

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III)

National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III) is intended to promote skills development through supporting the development of quality skills programmes and access to skills development programmes. A study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on the NSDS and its impact found that while the NSDS has made progress in increasing skills development opportunities, challenges persist in reaching marginalized groups. This suggests that NSDS did not have the desired impact.

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are a crucial component of the skills development architecture in South Africa (Botha, et al., 2023). Their overall responsibility is to contribute to skills development per sector. There are 21 SETAs in South Africa representing all various sectors of the economy ranging from agriculture to health. The primary role of SETAs is to support skills development. The SETAs do not only fund internships run by other institutions, but they also run their own internships to contribute to the transition from school to work. However, many of the SETAs have been hampered by limited capacity, with a considerable number of resources allocated returned to government because of failure to spend all the resources (Botha, et.al., 2023). Furthermore, although the participation of SETAs in internships has been increasing, there is limited research on the impact of SETAs' contribution to skills development (Botha, et al., 2023). For this study, this means that the contribution of the SETAs to internship efficacy is not fully known except that they have increased internship opportunities, which as indicated earlier, are hard to find.

Internship policy in South Africa

While there is no umbrella policy that governs internships in the private sector, public sector internships are governed by an umbrella policy – the Directive of the Employment of Persons to Developmental Programmes in the Public Service: Internships, learnerships apprenticeships, graduates' recruitment, and related services" (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2018). This directive is a replacement for the Determination

on Internship Programmes in the Public Service, which was developed in 2009. This policy details the issues like what should an internship contract entail, the duration of the internship, stipends, and monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the internship programmes. The policy also attempts to connect internships to the broader skills development agenda. Although further research needs to be done, it seems that public service internships are more likely to be effective, given the policy framework governing them, as compared to the private sector ones. In terms, of TVET internships, there is no direct national policy dealing.

3.4 Institutional environment

Moodie (2019) has shown the importance of what he calls 'intermediate institutions' like colleges in mediating and shaping TVET. While the policy environment may set a broad framework within which TVET colleges must operate, it is up to each college how it configures itself to function optimally. So, the systems that have been put in place by each college have implications on how that college contributes to the national TVET policy objectives. The systems will include how internships are designed and how they are implemented. Internship as alluded to earlier will be an area that will receive attention in this study.

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2020), there are 50 public TVET colleges with 264 campuses in the nine provinces of South Africa. These institutions offer a diverse range of programs, including NATED (National Accredited Technical Education Diploma) Report 191 qualifications, apprenticeships, National Senior Certificate (matric) programs, skills programs, SETA-based qualifications, competency-based modular training, trade test preparation, higher education certificates, bridging courses, and the flagship National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) programs. TVET colleges no longer focus solely on artisan training but also offer intermediate skills in various fields like information technology, business studies, hospitality, tourism, educare, and more (Papier, et.al., 2017).

These TVET Colleges are governed at national level through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and at a local level through councils which are composed of various stakeholders. The governance at national level is indicative that TVET is treated as an important national priority (Arfo, 2015). Amongst the stakeholders

constituting councils are a representative of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) in the province where the college is based, staff representatives, donors, and student preventatives. The value of multi-stakeholder representation is that all the components of the college have a voice in shaping the policies and practices of the institution. The implication of this is that the college is likely to perform better and achieve better outcomes than in a situation where governance is monolithic and not inclusive. In other words, inclusivity fosters ownership which in turn contributes to better performance.

The South African government aims to prepare workers for the labour market and enable self-employment. Various initiatives and targets have been set to encourage work placements for TVET college graduates, including commitments from companies to provide internship/apprenticeship opportunities. However, there is limited data on the extent to which these commitments have been fulfilled. There is also limited data on the employment outcomes of NATED graduates, with conflicting reports on the perceived value of N-qualifications compared to the NC(V) within the industry (Papier, et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that in South Africa TVET graduates are perceived negatively by employers because TVET colleges are seen as providing inadequate preparation for students (Ndlovu and Van Wyk, 2023). This perception is to some extent supported by evidence – for example, Arfo (2015)'s study found that there was poor training in the sector and that only a small number of staff were suitably qualified to teach in TVET colleges. The negative perception of TVET is also apparent in society in general, where TVET colleges are perceived as institutions for academically less able students rather than as an integral and complementary part of the education system (Arfo, 2015).

The approach to TVET in South Africa is framed as what Cook (2022) refers to as intra-curricular or co-curricular activities (Hora, Parrott, and Her, 2020), meaning the work experience through internship is integrated into the curriculum as opposed to being extra-curricular – which on the contrary means that work experience is not regarded as part of the curriculum, but something that takes place outside the prescribed curriculum. The rationale for co-curriculars is that it is seen as complementary and necessary to provide students with practical skills. It is also meant to provide an all-round education that prepares the youth for employment.

3.5 Individual circumstances

Over and above institutional arrangements the individuals participating in TVET are crucial for the success of TVET and internships. “Internships are a high-impact practice requiring considerable student effort” (O’Neill, 2010 cited in Alawamleh and Mahadin, 2022: 492). This assertion suggests that for individuals in internships to derive maximum benefit, they need to try. Furthermore, this is also corroborated by other studies that the ‘intrinsic capabilities’ of interns are crucial to the success of an internship – for example, the ability of the intern to think critically and the ability to work in teams. This, however, is not to diminish the role of structures in internships. Whether institutional arrangements are strong or weak, and whether the curriculum is well designed or not, different individuals will still experience the institutions and the curriculum differently.

Furthermore, whether the internship programme is well-designed and supported institutionally, students will have a different experience. It is therefore important to also look at the efficacy of TVET colleges’ internship programmes through the eyes of the students. According to Robeyns (2017), personal circumstances, or what he calls ‘personal conversion’ include “internal to the person, such as metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills, or intelligence’ play a critical role in the success of the internship. However, he points out that personal conversion is mediated by social conversions like social class, geographic location, gender, and many other factors that emanate from the socio-economic context within which one exists. For example, students from the upper classes are more likely to get internship opportunities compared to those from poor backgrounds (HSRC, 2011, cited in Botha, 2023).

In addition, students from privileged backgrounds are more likely to have easy access to mentors even within their families or even more likely to be exposed to work environments than those from poor backgrounds (Klein and Weiss, 2011). Whilst interventions such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) have somewhat mitigated the socio-economic background of poor students, poverty and inequality have deeply entrenched in South Africa to be solved in the short run.

3.6 International experience

One of the outcomes of this study is to propose a model for TVET internship for Ekurhuleni, which with appropriate changes can be used in the whole country. There is no doubt that such an undertaking would benefit from global TVET internship experiences. While countries differ based on their political, cultural, and socio-economic circumstances, there are lessons that could be learned from other countries, especially in the context where the global economy become more interconnected and where there is consensus that internships are meant to enhance skills and by extension economic growth. Furthermore, globalisation and the rise in technology have increased the adoption of similar ways of production of goods and services globally and how they are distributed (IMF, 2018). The global consensus on the role of skills in the economy has also created an expectation for educational institutions to 'respond' to employability, which is a key concept in the skills discourse (McGrath, 2009; Kattiyapornpong & Almeida, 2022). This has implications for the curriculum and how it is taught – which is why there is an assertion by scholars like Terblanche (2017) that the TVET curriculum in South Africa should be changed to respond to the needs of industries. However, what this would mean in practice and how it would work in relation to internship has not been fully interrogated by research so far. International agencies like the World Bank and international agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) are also driving the role of skills in the economic discourse, which has elevated and entrenched the discourse globally (Wedekind, 2014). Corroborating this, Kraak's (2018) study found that there is an expansion of TVET in many countries in Northern Europe, and South and East Asia as a response to skills demand and the changing nature of work, while South Africa is showing stagnation in the sector. Based on this, Kraak argues that South Africa may not be responding adequately to the skills needs of the country.

On the other hand, the world is facing common challenges like limited participation of the youth in the economy mainly manifesting through youth unemployment. There is a crisis with almost a quarter (23.5 percent) of the youth in the world being not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in 2022 (Das, 2023). This means that these youths are not building their skills through education in an educational institution or gaining experience through employment (Soudergren, Karkee, and Kapsos, 2023), which by extension implies that their productive capacity is not only being lost to the economy but

to those youths as well. The danger of not acquiring education or experience is that in the long run, these youths will be unemployable or may find it difficult to start their own businesses. In addition, as a global trend, young people are more likely to find 'precarious' and short-term employment and at times unsafe, which is not likely to lead to permanent and decent work (McGrath, 2009; Afeti, 2018). According to McGrath (2009), research shows the youth in this short-term employment do not enjoy the full benefits of being employed like employers investing in their training and development, and that only a minuscule number of youths are likely to invest in their own training and development. Covid 19 has deepened these challenges with many global economies having contracted and businesses closing because of the aftermath of the pandemic.

Thirdly, all countries are facing rapid changes in the world of work that come with changing technologies, climate change, and the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), which push them to look at similar solutions (The World Bank, UNESCO, and ILO, 2023; Tripney, et al., 2012; Kapareliotis, Voutsina and Patsiotis, 2019). Global economies have seen more integration compared to in the past and the liberalisation of trade has also resulted in more global competition (Tripney, et al., 2012). In addition, Kattiyapornpong & Almeida (2022) show the proliferation of international internships that come with increasing globalisation and changing nature of work. International internships involve interns completing their workplace learning in another country. These developments, one may argue, bring global economies closer in terms of their approaches and in terms of dealing with the challenges they encounter. And by implication, this increases opportunities for countries to learn from each other.

The key question in this section then is what mechanism have TVET colleges in other countries used to navigate the practical element (particularly internship) of TVET education and what has been the efficacy of their programmes? Two countries from the each of regions below will be used for illustrative purposes in this section:

- Africa
- BRICS
- Asian tigers
- Europe

The rationale for this choice was threefold:

To have broad exposure to the experiences of other countries the net had to be cast wider. Secondly, the selected regions reflect different levels of economic development and a wide spectrum of cultures. The benefit of the spread of experience is that multiple lessons could be drawn from them. Thirdly, some of the regions have similar challenges that South Africa is facing – e.g. Brazil, Kenya, and to a limited extent Ghana. Fourthly, some countries like Taiwan, South Korea, and Germany are characterised as doing well on the TVET and internship fronts, from which South Africa could learn. The discussion of the experience will be general as opposed to a detailed account of each of the countries selected.

In Ghana, like in South Africa, internships is compulsory for students in TVET institutions (Arthur, Boampong and Dare, 2022). And both countries face challenges in placing students in internships. Arthur, et al. show that in Ghana the limited placement opportunities is attributed to employers' reluctance to provide the opportunities, which is driven by amongst others, discrimination based on the socio-economic background of the students. The weak regulatory framework for internships in Ghana also seems to be a factor.

In the case of Kenya partnerships between TVET institutions and the industries are acknowledged as one of the factors that play an important role in creating effective internships (Ayieko, Okemwa and Muthoka, 2023). To facilitate these partnerships, Kenya has what they call Industrial Liaison Officers (ILOs). Secondly, strong regulation through the State Department for Vocational and Technical in the Ministry of Education

The World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2023) report cite South Korea as one of the countries with a better TVET system in the world.

Rose (2020) argues that the education system in South Korea was historically influenced by Confucianism, which tends to be elitist and as such associates TVET with lower status. As a result of this historical influence, graduates of TVET in Korea still face discrimination and social 'stigma'. This scenario seems to mirror South Africa, whereas the work of Afro (2015) has shown that TVET colleges are seen as second-rate institutions meant for

those who are academically less capable. The important issue for this study is what has South Korea done to shake off the low-status image of TVET, if anything.

South Korea, like South Africa, has historically produced many university graduates compared to TVET graduates, which in both cases is gradually resulting in increasing graduates' unemployment (Rose, 2020; Chiang, 2014). This implies that both countries might benefit from a focus on technical skills underpinned by internships to increase employability.

With regard to the actual internships, Rose (2020) observes that there is a sense in which interns are treated as outsiders in the workplace. Such outsider status may have an alienating effect on the interns and by extension affect their learning. In addition, interns could become vulnerable to exploitation when treated as outsiders. The question is what support mechanisms are put in place to counter this. In South Africa, there are anecdotes about how interns are exploited by permanent employees like sending them on errands that are not necessarily related to their course or training (Mabeba, 2019). The experiences of both countries suggest that there is a need to improve the protection of interns and to provide them with meaningful tasks that could enhance their skills.

Rose (2020) found that in South Korea internship is regarded as an extra 'qualification' in the labour market, which he argues militates against the object of internship, which is experiential learning. By contrast, internships in South Africa are seen by participants as a way of dealing with poverty, with some interns moving from one programme to another instead of graduating to employment. In both the South Korean and South African cases, this suggests that the internships may not be effective.

From a government support point of view, a wage subsidy has been proposed for small and medium enterprises to participate in offering internships (Rose, 2020). A similar subsidy has been in place for South African employers, but its contribution has not been fully evaluated. Nevertheless, this suggests that incentivising internships could contribute to the success of the internship.

Like South Africa, higher education and secondary education in Taiwan is made up of the general stream, and the vocational and technical stream. Internships are central to the Taiwanese technical education and to this extent, the Taiwan Experience Education

Program (TEEP) is used to place students in various internships. This suggests that the internship programme in Taiwan gets more support from outside government. Like in South Africa, in Brazil TVET is offered and managed by both private and public institutions. In Brazil there are strong institutional arrangements for internships, which are governed by federal regulations - Government enacted Law No. 11,788 (Brazil, 2008) - (de Souza Júnior, et al., 2018). This suggests that practices that do not align with the intentions of the internship, like exploitation of interns, are likely to be minimised compared to countries, like South Africa where such legal provisions do not exist. There is also a strong collaboration between the private sector and the public sector to implement internships. The Brazilian Service of Support for Micro and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE) and the National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI) play a significant role in supporting TVET (Almeida and Packard, 2018). This suggests that TVET has access to resources beyond what the state can provide, which is important to increase access to TVET and internships. The partnership between the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and the public sector to facilitate internships is also noted by Klassen (2024). Like in South Africa, internships are compulsory for certain learning programmes (de Souza Júnior, et al., 2018).

Germany is renowned for its well-established TVET system, and its programme of experiential learning is seen as one of the most successful in the world (The World Bank, UNESCO, and ILO, 2023) – so what have they done to achieve this success? Germany's dual vocational system is a renowned educational model that combines practical, on-the-job training with theoretical instruction in a classroom setting. This integrated approach allows students to acquire hands-on experience while also receiving a formal education. Typically, trainees spend part of the week at a vocational school (Berufsschule) and the rest working at a company (Betrieb) (Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012). These internships or apprenticeships at companies play a critical role, allowing trainees to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, understand workplace norms, and gain relevant skills. By the end of their training, which usually lasts for two to three and a half years, the apprentices receive a certification recognized nationwide. This system has been credited for Germany's low youth unemployment rates and the high skill level of its workforce (Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012). It appears that the emphasis on students spending time in the real work situation has positive outcomes.

In Germany, compulsory internships are mainly found in Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences), which Klein and Weiss (2011) refer to as “second tier practically oriented” institutions. Despite the internships being mandatory, not all institutions have partnerships with employers to facilitate access to internship opportunities – so at times, some students find themselves in a position where they must find internship opportunities themselves. But when they do have those partnerships, they are well coordinated.

In a study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) found that about 37% of job opportunities were taken by those who have done internships, and they also found that about 50% of employers indicated that individuals who have not done internships are more likely to be disadvantaged in the recruitment processes. High Fliers Research (2017) also found that job seekers with no previous work experience were less likely to get employed. This underscores the importance of acquiring work experience through internships amongst others. This illustrates the importance of an internship.

3.6.1 Key lessons from international experiences

Overall, the literature cited above, dealing with different contexts, affirms the importance of internships in work transition. Secondly, while there may be a movement towards a more common approach to TVET globally, necessitated by common global challenges, contextual factors still play an important role in shaping TVET. It is therefore important that more research and theorizing work should be done outside the Western context. This will help to conceptualise internship programmes that are contextualised and that are more likely to be effective. However, this is not to reduce the value of research done in different contexts. It appears that the support of the private sector is crucial for the success of TVET and internships as seen in the cases of Taiwan and to some extent Brazil. Such support involves providing opportunities and increasing access to internships – which has proven to be a challenge in South Africa and to a lesser degree in Germany, as discussed earlier.

Allocation of more time to internships seems to improve skills and employability, as seen in the case of Germany where less time is allocated to theoretical learning as compared to practical learning. While in the case of South Africa, equal duration is allocated for theoretical and practical learning, research suggests that the TVET graduates in South

Africa are not adequately prepared for work. Whether this is a function of the duration of the internship or the rigour of the internship remains contested.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed policies that constitute a framework for skills development in South Africa. As a principle, these policies are predicated on social justice and the quest to redress past injustices. The golden thread that runs through the policies is the provision of opportunities for individuals, particularly the youth, to develop and hone their skills. While there is a range of policies intended to support skills development as detailed in this chapter, there is no national overarching policy that governs TVET internships. Furthermore, the national policy on internships only applies to the public sector, and the private sector participation in internships is regulated by the general laws of the country. Secondly, the chapter provided a brief overview of some features of internships in other countries, with the intention of learning from them. In general, strong institutional arrangements, participation of the private sector through partnership, and enough exposure to the work environment through internships were among the factors that contributed to the efficacy of internships in the countries referred to in this section.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed an overview of TVET education in South Africa and the internship programme implemented. It further highlighted international experiences related to the internship programme, and how it is structured to achieve skilling and improve young people's employability. The chapter concluded with lessons learned and how they can be domesticated into the local setting to make sense of how TVETs can better frame internships to achieve their intended purpose.

This chapter explains the research methodology underpinning this study. It presents the philosophical and practical context, the research design, the sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The primary objective is to ensure that the research questions, research philosophy, data collection, analysis, and presentation of results are all aligned. This alignment is intended to strengthen the 'methodological coherence' and consistency (Saunders et al., 2019). The specific method applied in the study is a mixed method, which is thoroughly explained in the rest of the chapter, highlighting its purpose, tenants, and how it helps the study achieve its objectives.

4.2 Research Paradigms

Research philosophy centers around assumptions made in every step of the research. Saunders et al., (2019) posit that these assumptions underpin the research strategy and method chosen for the study. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche` and Delport (2011), citing Barker (2003), defined a paradigm as a model or pattern that consists of a set of validated assumptions and a framework for gathering and analysing information. A paradigm can be defined as the fundamental belief system that guides scientific investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, as cited in Krauss, 2005).

Kaushik and Walsh (2019) posit that as much as there are several paradigms that structure and organise research, for example, the postpositivist, constructivism, and

pragmatism, they are all essentially philosophical in nature, and they entail common elements such as axiology (believes about the role of values and morals in research), Ontology (assumptions about the nature of reality), epistemology (assumptions about how we know the world), methodology (share understanding of best means of gaining knowledge) and rhetoric (shared understanding of the language of research). Rahi (2017) citing Myers and Avison states that for the research to be deemed valid, it is recommended that it follows a research paradigm method. The author further contends that using the research paradigms is essential to demonstrate that the researcher does not dwell on their own created philosophical know-how, and they get a better stance concerning other alternatives. The two dominant paradigms as stated by Mingers (2001) are positivist and interpretivist.

4.2.1 Ontology

As per the research conducted by Saunders et al. (2012), ontology pertains to the researchers' underlying assumptions about the functioning of the world and their adherence to specific perspectives. The authors highlight two key facets of ontology - objectivism, which asserts that entities exist as an objective reality beyond social actors' involvement in their existence (Crotty, 1998), and subjectivism, which posits that social phenomena are formed by the perceptions and actions of the concerned social actors.

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is about how knowledge is acquired and what constitutes valid knowledge. According to Bryman (2008:13), epistemology is defined as “an issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline”. Furthermore, Carter and Little (2007) see epistemology as a method that describes assumptions and values about the type of knowledge that can be developed through a study.

4.2.3 Interpretivism

In this paradigm, emphasis is on the meanings attached to facts and the assumption that the meaning of reality is due to the interactions of humans. According to Brown and Strega (2005), the reality in interpretivism is about meanings people construct during their social

interactions; the world around them is not about facts but rather meanings attached to the facts as people negotiate and create meaning. The observations human beings make in the world around them and how they interpret these observations to create meaning are what is central to this paradigm.

4.2.4 Positivism

In a positivist paradigm, the object of study is independent of researchers, knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena; facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its components (Krauss, 2005). According to Bryman (2008:13) cited in Flick (2015), assumptions about the positivist paradigm are as follows:

- Only a phenomenon confirmed by the senses can be warranted as knowledge (phenomenalism).
- Theories are used to generate hypotheses that can be tested to allow explanations of laws to be assessed (deductivism).
- Knowledge can be produced by collecting facts that provide a basis for laws (Inductivism)
- Science must and can be conducted in a way that is value-free and thus objective.
- There is a clear distinction between scientific and normative statements.

4.2.5 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical perspective that emphasizes the practical consequences and real-world utility of ideas and beliefs. It rejects the concept of absolute truth and instead focuses on examining what is effective and functional in concrete situations. This approach encourages individuals to consider the practical implications of their actions and decisions, rather than relying solely on abstract principles or theories. According to this theory, the importance of ideas lies in their ability to facilitate action, as stated by Kelemen and Rumens (2008), as cited in Saunders et al. (2019). Saunders et al. (2019) also propose that pragmatists acknowledge the existence of numerous approaches to understanding the world and conducting research. They emphasize that no single perspective can fully capture the complete picture and that multiple realities may coexist. In this study, it is assumed that an overall understanding of the efficacy of an internship

programme in the employability of TVET students can be derived through adopting different approaches, hence the adoption of a pragmatic paradigm.

Table 4.1 details how paradigms interact with research philosophies to give a clear meaning and understanding of their relationship. It also gives directions regarding the relevant data collection techniques relevant to which paradigm.

Table 4.1: Comparison of four research philosophies in business and management research

	Pragmatism	**Positivism**	**Realism**	**Interpretivism**
Ontology: the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	External, multiple, view chosen to best enable answering of research question	External, objective and independent of social actors	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist)	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple
Epistemology: the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively,	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details, subjective

	research question. Focus on practical applied research perspectives to help interpret data	phenomena to simplest elements	phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). Focus on explaining within a context or contexts.	meanings motivating actions
Axiology: the researcher's view of the role of values in research	Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Research is value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing. These will impact on the research	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective
Data collection techniques most often used	Mixed or multiple methods designs, quantitative and qualitative	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can use qualitative	Methods chose must fit in the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative

Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012:140)

Having interacted with philosophies and paradigms, the researcher found that the pragmatism paradigm is the best suited for the study. This assumes that for research to be valid, knowledge gathered can be objective or subjective depending on the studied object. The belief is that a research process must be scientific, data collected must produce facts, and findings must be generalisable. In this instance, a hypothesis was developed and tested through observations, a literature review, and a student survey. To triangulate the results, in-depth interviews with key informants produced rich information to corroborate the findings. Methods used to collect and analyse data have empowered the study to produce valid and credible findings.

4.3 Research Approach

The purpose of the study is to assess the efficacy of TVET college internships in transitioning youth into the world of work. Based on different theories and models relevant to this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted. Quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined in a single study to benefit from the generalizability and representativeness of quantitative results as well as the contextual and in-depth nature of qualitative results. This approach is supported by Greene and Caracelli, as cited in Migiro and Magangi (2011). The study also adopted the positivist research paradigm, which Saunders et al. (2012), citing Gill and Johnson (2010), state that the researcher will prefer collecting data about an observable reality and search for regularities and causal relationships in the data to create law-like generalisations like those produced by scientists.

4.4 Research Design

Research designs serve crucial roles in the research process, primarily focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, and the quality of data gathered. Firstly, they are fundamental in minimizing expenditure, as a well-conceived research design ensures maximum information is obtained with the least amount of effort, time, and financial resources. This is achieved by laying a solid foundation for the research, thus enhancing its effectiveness and reliability. Good research design means planning, which allows for the most efficient use of resources and guarantees that the research will be as effective as possible (Pandey and Pandey, 2021).

Secondly, research designs facilitate smooth scaling and operation of research activities. By providing a clear plan for data collection methods and analytical techniques, they help in organizing the research process (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). This planning is crucial in avoiding poor preparation that could jeopardize the entire project. It's like a blueprint for a building: just as architects need a blueprint to guide the construction process, researchers need a research design to guide their work. This guidance is essential not just for the researcher but also for the interested parties such as evaluators, ensuring that everyone involved has a clear understanding of the research objectives and methods.

Lastly, a good research design is instrumental in providing direction and overview to the research team and experts in the field. It helps in organizing ideas, recognizing and fixing faults, and ensuring a systematic approach to the research (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). The design also helps in consulting and incorporating the views of experts, which is vital for the validation and enhancement of the research. Importantly, a well-thought-out research design minimizes bias and maximizes reliability, which is essential for the credibility of the research. In essence, the best research designs are those that yield the most information, allow for the consideration of various aspects of a problem, and result in the smallest experimental error.

This study employed descriptive research to assess the success of TVET internships in aiding the transition of young people into the workforce in Ekurhuleni. Descriptive research seeks to provide an accurate and methodical depiction of a population, situation, or phenomenon. It is utilized when researchers wish to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories. As McCombes (2015) has noted, the aim of descriptive research is to provide a comprehensive overview without any preconceived notions or biases.

Through the utilization of a comprehensive research approach, the researcher effectively collected data from a diverse range of respondents regarding the effects of TVET internships in the designated study area (Sileyew, 2019). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to achieve the primary research objectives, which involved the utilization of both primary and secondary data. The qualitative data aided in reinforcing the results of the quantitative analysis (Sileyew, 2019).

4.5 Research Methods

It is important to clarify the methods used and the justification for the choice of a research project. This section serves that purpose, and it outlines the practical steps that will be undertaken to pursue the study. Barbie and Mouton (2001) assert that research design addresses the planning of scientific inquiry or designing a strategy for finding out something. They further distinguish research methodology and research design, and make the following points:

Table 4.2: Differences between research design and research methodology

Research design	Research methodology
• Focuses on the end product • The point of departure is a research problem or question • Focuses on the logic of research, what kind of evidence is required to address the research question adequately	• Focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used • The point of departure is a specific task (data collection or sampling) at hand • Focuses on the individual steps in the research process and the most objective procedures for the employed.

Source: Barbie and Mouton (2001:75)

4.5.1 Qualitative

The qualitative method involves perceiving the world from the point of view of the actor or participant, using their written or spoken words about the experiences or perceptions (Brynard and Hanekom, 2006). In this approach, theory is developed as the end product of the study. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with key informants and reviewed literature from current sources in the discipline.

4.5.2 Quantitative

According to Flick (2015), quantitative research refers to the study of a phenomenon, whereby the first step is to start with a concept, which will spelled out theoretically beforehand (through literature or observation), formulate a hypothesis (s), and then test

it. In a nutshell, in this approach, theory is a starting point that will be tested. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from final-year students and those who participated in the internship programme, per their academic requirements.

4.5.3 Mixed method

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined in a single study to benefit from the generalizability and representativeness of quantitative results as well as the contextual and in-depth nature of qualitative results. This approach is supported by Greene and Caracelli, as cited in Migiro and Magangi (2011). This approach is also used to ensure triangulation to test the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments; in essence, both the qualitative and quantitative methods play a complementary role.

This study adopted a mixed methods approach. According to Migiro and Magangi (2011:3759), citing (Newman and Benz,1998; Martens, 2003; and Cresswell et al., 2008), the mixed method approach has the following advantages:

- ⇒ Different methods can be used for different purposes in a study;
- ⇒ The approach enables triangulation to take place;
- ⇒ The approach helps to explain quantitative results with subsequent qualitative data;
- ⇒ Uses qualitative data to develop a theory, which is subsequently tested;
- ⇒ Enhances data with a supplemental data set, either qualitative or quantitative.

The researcher adopted the mixed-methods approach to benefit the study from the advantages mentioned above. The method also enabled the researcher to answer research questions and prove or disprove the hypothesis. This achieved a balanced view regarding the results of the study and ensured their validity.

4.5.4 Sampling and Population

Pandey and Pandey (2021: 40) define a sample as “a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis”. In other words, a small number of units are selected from the target population, in this study, students from selected Ekurhuleni TVET colleges and key informants from relevant institutions, using specified criteria. The

sampling strategy is about the method used to select respondents or documents for analysis and any other data sources or objects from the known population (Saunders et al., 2019). This section, therefore, outlines how the respondents will be selected and for what purpose. A purposive sampling will be used to identify key informants. Purposive sampling is used where the researcher, based on the requirement of the study, uses his/her knowledge and his/her judgment to generate a sample (Barbie and Mouton, 2001; Bryman, 2013). Like other forms of non-probability samples, purposive sampling does not claim representativeness, instead, the purpose of the sample is the key defining factor of who gets selected to participate in the study.

Secondly, in the recruitment process for the quantitative component of this study, participants will be sourced from the databases of chosen TVET colleges in Ekurhuleni, which will serve as the sampling frame. Specifically, the study will focus on final-year students as the target population. To ensure a balanced representation of gender, a stratified sampling approach will be employed. Within each stratum, a random sample will be drawn, and selected individuals will receive survey questionnaires electronically via email. The researcher will also take on the responsibility of following up with participants to gather feedback.

Unlike in non-random sampling, all the units in a simple random sampling procedure have an equal chance of being selected for participation (Saunders, et al., 2019). But in this case, instead of using a simple non-probability sample, the target population will be sampled using a multi-stage procedure, which is a “sampling design that occurs in two or more successive stages” (Saunders, et al., 2019: 325). In the first stage, two TVET colleges will be sampled from Ekurhuleni. Furthermore, in the second stage, the units (students) will be stratified according to gender to ensure gender representativeness. So, the required sample will be drawn from two strata of males and females from each sampled college. An online probability sample calculator will be used to calculate the sample size – however, a minimum of 200 participants were sampled to ensure that statistical analysis could be performed, aged between 18 years and 35 years would be sampled for surveys.

4.5.4.1 Inclusion/Exclusion criteria

Table 4.3 details who will be included in the study and who will be excluded – this is informed by the sampling strategy as detailed above.

Table 4.3: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Youth in TVET (19 and 35 years)	Adults, other youth and employees in study area
Youth mainstreaming manager/ coordinator	Cooperate departments
TVET active and graduates	University students and graduates
Municipality and DHET, selected SETAs	All other government institutions

Source: Researcher's Own

4.6 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is deemed one of the main stages in the research study. Furthermore, data collection assists the research in finding answers to the research question (Taherdoost, 2021). According to Kabir (2016) as cited in Taherdoost (2021), it is emphasised that to obtain accurate findings, researchers must pay sufficient attention to the data collection phase. Inadequate and imprecise data hinders the accuracy of research results.

In this study, the triangulation approach has been adopted. Triangulation of method is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to get deeper insights into the research problem. When these different methods are used synergistically, the researcher benefits from the advantages of each (Cassim, 2015). It allows the researcher to provide a bigger picture and still explore the nuances of a phenomenon.

According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), there are four techniques used within the quantitative and qualitative methods, and those are review or scrutiny of relevant

literature, interviews, questionnaires, and observation. The research involved conducting thorough in-depth interviews with key informants. Additionally, a comprehensive literature review was conducted which included sources such as peer-reviewed articles, books, unpublished dissertations, journals, policies, and legislation. Furthermore, survey questionnaires were utilized as part of the study.

4.6.1 Interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants. Such interviews are conducted to yield a vast amount of rich information (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014). The researcher conducted these interviews with key informants from targeted institutions (SETAs and TVET College Managers). An interview guide with semi-structured questions was developed to guide the discussions. According to Taherdoost (2021), semi-structured interviews are conducted formally and rely on a guide for structure.

4.6.2 Literature Review

This is secondary data, whereby someone else has collected data and it is greatly available to the researcher (Brynard and Hanekom, 2006). Sources may include books, libraries, and the internet (Adams et al., 2014). The authors further state that secondary data is used to validate the sample. The information and analysis from the literature empower the researcher to gain insights and understand empirical knowledge from the experiences and perspectives of people in the discipline. The researcher consulted a wide variety of resources such as books, journals, dissertations, articles, and the Internet to collect documentary data and review literature relevant to the study.

4.6.3 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is an instrument tool used to collect information from respondents in a study. Questionnaires are used for different purposes but are commonly used to gather statistical data (Taherdoost, 2021).

In this study, quantitative survey questionnaires were self-administered by respondents. 200 respondents, who are final year students and those who participated in the internship sourced from the database of Ekurhuleni East and West colleges responded to the survey

questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions developed on a four-item Likert scale.

The researcher developed an online questionnaire, which was shared with respondents by the colleges through their databases. The online survey questionnaire utilized was both efficient and confidential. It allowed for complete anonymity since the researcher did not interact with any respondents, thus preventing any attachment of responses to specific individuals. Moreover, the online questionnaire provided the researcher with the ability to track the responses, making it possible to determine when the maximum target had been achieved.

4.6.4 Observation

This technique involves the systematic viewing, recording, description, analysis, and interpretation of people's behaviour in each setting (Saunders, et al., 2019:378). In this study, the researcher used the observation technique during the review of literature from documentation (in the internship and TVET Education disciplines), and the interviews conducted with key informants. This assisted the researcher in combining information received to triangulate responses with those in the survey to validate the research results.

4.6.5 Validity and reliability of data collection instruments

Techniques used to collect data should be tested for validity and reliability to produce relevant and accurate data. According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), the validity and reliability of data-measuring instruments are crucial to any scientific research.

4.6.5.1 Validity

Validity is referred to as truthfulness, accuracy, authenticity, genuineness, and soundness (Salkind in De Vos, et al., 2011). The authors further state that validity refers to the degree to which an instrument is doing what it is intended to do. Citing Grinnell and Unarau (2008:127), De Vos et al. (2011) emphasises the three questions posed when assessing the validity of an instrument:

- How well does this instrument this instrument measure what we want it to measure? How well does the instrument measure the theoretical construct we want it to measure (content validity)?
- How well does this instrument compare with one or more external criteria or measures purporting to measure the same thing but not related to a measure that measures something else (criterion validity)?
- What does this instrument mean – what is it in fact measuring, and how and why does it operate the way it does (construct validity)?

4.6.5.2 Reliability

When a particular technique is applied repeatedly to the same object and yields the same results each time is referred to as reliability (Barbie, 2004). This definition is further supported by Brynard and Hanekom (2006), who state that reliability pertains to the accuracy and consistency of measures.

4.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the systematic process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. It includes interpreting raw data to extract meaningful insights relevant to the specific objectives of a research endeavour, as stated by Finch in 1990. Having adopted a mixed-method approach for this study, the researcher analysed both qualitative and quantitative data.

Saunders et al. (2019:547) made the following distinctions between quantitative and qualitative data:

Table: 4.4: Distinction between quantitative and qualitative data

Quantitative Data	Qualitative data
Based on meanings derived from numbers	Based on meaning expressed through words
Collection results in numerical and standardized data	Collection results in a non-standardised data requiring classification into categories

Analysis conducted using diagrams and statistics	Analysis conducted using conceptualisation

Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

The study used regression and factor analysis to analyse data. According to McNabb (2010), regression analysis is a statistical procedure developed to determine whether two or more interval or ratio-level variables are related. It allows the research to determine how different values of one variable (dependent) might or might not help to explain variation in another variable (independent variable). Factor analysis is a statistical technique for summarising interrelationships among a set of variable measurements, identifying the underlying structure in a dataset, and reducing the number of variables with which the researcher must work (McNabb, 2010). The SPSS, a computer software was used to analyse statical data from the survey questionnaire. The statistician was consulted to assist in the analysis of quantitative data.

To analyse qualitative data, the study adopted thematic analysis. According to Saunders et al. (2019) citing Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis offers a systematic yet flexible and accessible approach to analyse qualitative data. In this research, thematic analysis was utilized to carefully examine and interpret datasets. This method led to the development of detailed descriptions, thorough explanations, and the formulation of theories based on the data. The researcher actively sought to understand the underlying meanings within the data and successfully identified themes that were intricately connected to the research objectives.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Researchers must ensure that they conduct studies ethically, which requires them to always do things correctly. One of the factors that guarantee data integrity and validity is adhering to moral standards when collecting and presenting data. In accordance with Brynard and Hanekom (2006), research ethics concerns the moral considerations involved in conducting research. Mc Nabb (2010) further suggests that research ethics entails the application of moral principles to the decisions made throughout the research process, from planning and implementation to reporting of findings. Moreover, it ensures the protection of study participants from any potential harm.

To adhere to clear ethical standards, the researcher applied for ethics approval from the North-West University Ethics Committee. Such approval ensured that the researcher conducted the study in recognition of binding conditions that the committee has put forward, and those aligned with the institution's codes of ethics. Some of the ethical considerations that were applied to this study are discussed.

4.8.1 Informed consent

Before the study, participants were asked to provide informed consent. In the case of the student survey, the researcher made sure that the survey form clearly stated the purpose of the survey at the outset and emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary. Students who completed the survey questionnaire were fully informed that their participation was not obligatory and that they could withdraw at any time.

For the in-depth interviews with key informants, the researcher sent a gatekeeper letter to request permission to conduct interviews. Additionally, at the beginning of the interview, the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and the option to refrain from answering questions or withdraw from the interview if unsatisfied were explained to the participants.

4.8.2 Voluntary participation

The participants involved in the study were provided with detailed information regarding the voluntary nature of their participation. They were assured that there was no pressure to take part and were explicitly informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences. The researcher actively ensured that participants comprehensively understood their rights and autonomy within the study.

4.8.3 Privacy and anonymity

The researcher took measures to ensure the protection of participants' privacy and anonymity throughout the study. This was achieved by designing questionnaires that did not solicit any personal details from the respondents. Additionally, an online survey form was specifically developed to allow students to complete it independently and submit their responses anonymously to the researcher.

4.8.4 Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work as your own without giving credit to the original source. In this study, all information obtained from existing literature and other sources has been duly recognized and accurately referenced. The researcher made sure to cite the authors and provide the sources, including online references, for all retrieved information. Additionally, Turnitin software was used to avoid plagiarism and ensured similarity index remained below 15%.

4.8.5 Confidentiality

The researcher is deeply committed to upholding the confidentiality of sensitive information and protecting the identities of all participants involved in the study. During the interviews, stringent measures were implemented to prevent the disclosure of any personal information. In cases where specific details were necessary for analysis, unique codes were meticulously assigned to ensure that the information could not be linked back to any individual participant. Furthermore, to safeguard the integrity of the interview data, the researcher diligently transcribed and securely stored the notes on a laptop with robust access controls, thereby ensuring that only authorized personnel could access the sensitive information.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined how the study meticulously adhered to a rigorous research methodology, which included a clear framework designed to ensure the scientific gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data. The adoption of a mixed-method approach ensured that the study derived the benefits of triangulating data and results from both empirical evidence and in-depth information, thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings. Furthermore, the researcher implemented a well-defined ethical framework to safeguard and respect the rights of the study participants, ensuring their protection and dignity throughout the research process. Additionally, the researcher diligently followed the approved guidelines set forth by North-West University to uphold the highest ethical standards. In the next chapter, we discuss the presentation of study results emanating from data analysis.

Chapter Five

Presentation and discussion of the research findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of an investigation into the effectiveness of the TVET College Internship Programme in mainstreaming youth transition to work in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng Province, are presented and discussed. The results are based on a survey of TVET college students and interviews with key informants from the colleges' various service partners. In addition to presenting the results, this chapter synthesises quantitative and qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants and the survey questionnaire responses, in line with the mixed methods used in the study. Out of the 200 questionnaires sent out for the student survey, there were 193 completed and returned questionnaires, representing a 96,5% response rate. Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the survey data, while thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. In the case of survey data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The presentation and discussion of the TVET internship programme results are framed by research questions and the hypotheses postulated in Chapter 1.

The presentation and discussions are built around these key concepts: Youth mainstreaming, internship, employability, and employment transition from TVET colleges to the workplace. Furthermore, the chapter attempts to address the following questions: To what extent do service partners help TVET students get internship opportunities and jobs? To what extent does a structured internship programme contribute to mainstreaming youth transition from TVET College to employment? Which TVET internship metrics support youth mainstreaming optimally? What is the most effective TVET internship model for mainstreaming the youth into the workforce?

This research was motivated by the growing focus on technical and vocational education and its potential role in reducing youth unemployment and improving employability. TVET institutions are crucial in preparing students to be job-ready and to develop practical skills required in the workplace (Schröder, 2019). However, for a variety of reasons, the

transition from college to job remains difficult for the youth (ILO, 2021). Internships provide real experience and workplace exposure, thereby helping to close this gap (Fei, Waheeb and Sulaiman, 2020; Goia, Marinaș, and Igret, 2017). Evaluating the effectiveness of the TVET internship programmes is therefore essential to understand the overall impact of TVET education and for enhancing the design and implementation of effective programmes to support the youth transition to work.

To provide for a robust TVET internship analysis through quantitative and qualitative data triangulation, mixed methods were used. The qualitative interviews with seven (7) key informants from TVET institutions and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) provided an inkling into the internship programmes' operations and perceived efficacy. These interviews reflect internship implementers and managers' experiences, including problems that they experience, and the accomplishments of their organisations with respect to supporting TVET internships.

On the other hand, quantitative data generated from the 193 survey respondents, provided a perspective of the students on the effectiveness of the internship program. The Likert scale questionnaire was used to measure the latent concept of internship efficacy. Students who completed internships provided insights into the program's strengths and weaknesses. The qualitative and quantitative approaches detailed above complement each other to enhance the rigour of knowledge generated on the effectiveness of the internship programmes (Bell, et al., 2022). The starting point for this chapter is a brief demographic profile of the respondents, which forms the core of the descriptive presentation of the data.

Descriptive Statistics

This part of the data presentation and discussion focussed on the description of the data mainly through frequencies. The section described the demographic of the respondents and their responses to specific questions. This was followed by inferential statistics, which sought to test the study hypotheses and make inferential conclusions.

5.2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

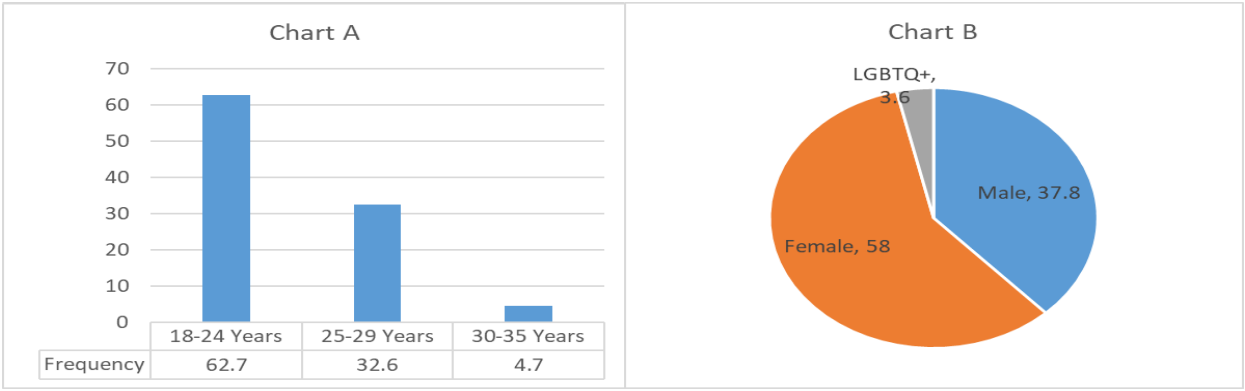
The demographic profile of the respondents does not only provide context for the study but is also indicative of how various demographic groups experienced the internship programme and how it impacted them, without necessarily homogenising the respondents. Furthermore, demographic information could be used as a launching pad for improving the existing internship programmes and/or creating a new evidence-based internship programme.

5.2.1 Age and Gender Distribution

This survey showed that most of the respondents were in the age category 18-24 years. While the respondents are not necessarily representative of the TVET population in South Africa, the data mirrors the age range of TVET students as reflected in the data from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Statistics South Africa. The 18 to 24-year-old cohort is typically in transition from school to job, making them a key focal group for assessing internship initiatives to mainstream young employment. In turn, this necessitates crafting TVET internship programmes that speak to this demographic distribution to deal effectively with key challenges impacting transitioning to employment. Figure 5.1 below shows the age and gender distribution of the survey respondents. With age distribution illustrated in Chart A, showing that the bulk of respondents (62.7%) are aged 18-24 years, followed by those aged 25-29 years, with 32.6% of respondents. Only 4.7% of the sample was aged 30-35 years old. Chart B in Figure 5.1 shows that 58% of the respondents identified as female 37,8% identified as male, while 3,6% identified as LGBTQ+.

Females are well-represented, which is a good sign for transformation, given the historical exclusion of females in all sectors of education. Older students are underrepresented probably because they are likely to have already completed their TVET programmes or they are likely to be using other platforms to develop their skills, or they are likely to be in employment already. This skewed distribution is not an anomaly as it is reflective of the general statistical trend with most students participating in high education and TVET being in the age category 18-24 years (Bosiu, 2023).

Figure 5.1: Distribution of respondents by age (chart A) and gender (chart B)



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The data presented above seems to be consistent with research on TVET and youth employment literature. With respect to gender, studies have indicated the proliferation of females at many levels of the education system (e.g. Matenda, 2020). While the number of female enrolments has increased, the system is still configured in ways that are not supportive of full participation by women (Matenda, 2020). In terms of age, Allais and Wedekind (2020), for instance, emphasise targeted TVET initiatives for younger groups, which is in line with the age distribution in the data and as corroborated by DHET data (DHET, 2023). Afeti (2018) stresses the importance of TVET in teaching job-related skills to the youth, which is likely to be of benefit to the younger cohort, many of whom have never been exposed to the work environment. Although the older respondents (30-35 years) are underrepresented, Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022), advocate for lifelong learning and continual professional growth in TVET frameworks. Akkermans, et al., (2024) concur that youth transition and mainstreaming should not necessarily be limited

to the period between school and employment, instead, it should be lifelong in orientation. This suggests that other learning platforms and mechanisms should be made available for older students or youth who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), of which the number is on the rise (StatsSA, 2024).

5.2.2 Racial Composition

Most respondents were African, reflecting Ekurhuleni's large African population. This suggests that the internship programme is reaching the majority demographic group in the area.

Figure 5.2: Racial composition of respondents

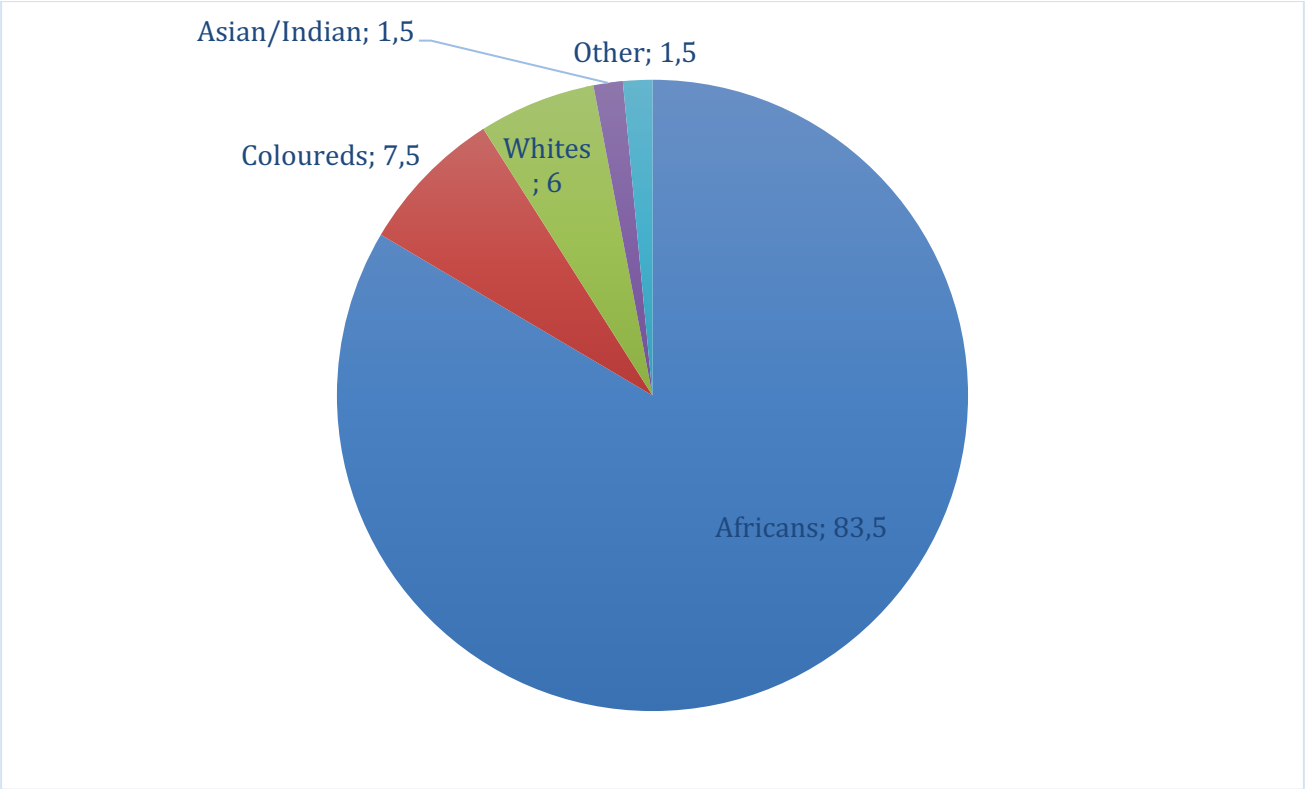


Figure 5.2 above shows that the respondents were constituted by 83,5% Africans,7,5% Coloured,6% White 1,5% Indian/Asian, while 1,5% did not specify their race. Whilst in general the distribution reflects the demographics of the country, White, Indian/Asian, were slightly underrepresented. Currently, the population of South Africa is composed of Black African 81.4%, Coloured 8.2%, White 7.3%, Indian/Asian 2.7%, and other 0.4% (Statistics South Africa, 2023). The slight underrepresentation of Whites and Indians

could reflect the geography of the sample rather than racial exclusion. Coloureds are also slightly underrepresented, which could also be a function of location, with a low Coloured population in Ekurhuleni compared to places like the City of Cape Town, for example.

Comparing this racial distribution to previous literature shows that this study's racial makeup matches South African TVET college patterns as reflected in official enrolment figures (DHET, 2023). According to Allais (2022), in line with the country's demographics and historical issues, TVET institutions in South Africa serve mostly African students, manifesting in this study's 83.5% representation. TVET institutions are seen as one of the instruments to bring social justice, especially for Africans who were deliberately excluded from educational and employment opportunities (Maluleke, et al., 2022; Botha, et al., 2023; Needham, 2019). This aligns with Allais and Wedekind (2020)'s assertion that education and training programmes should be inclusive and egalitarian.

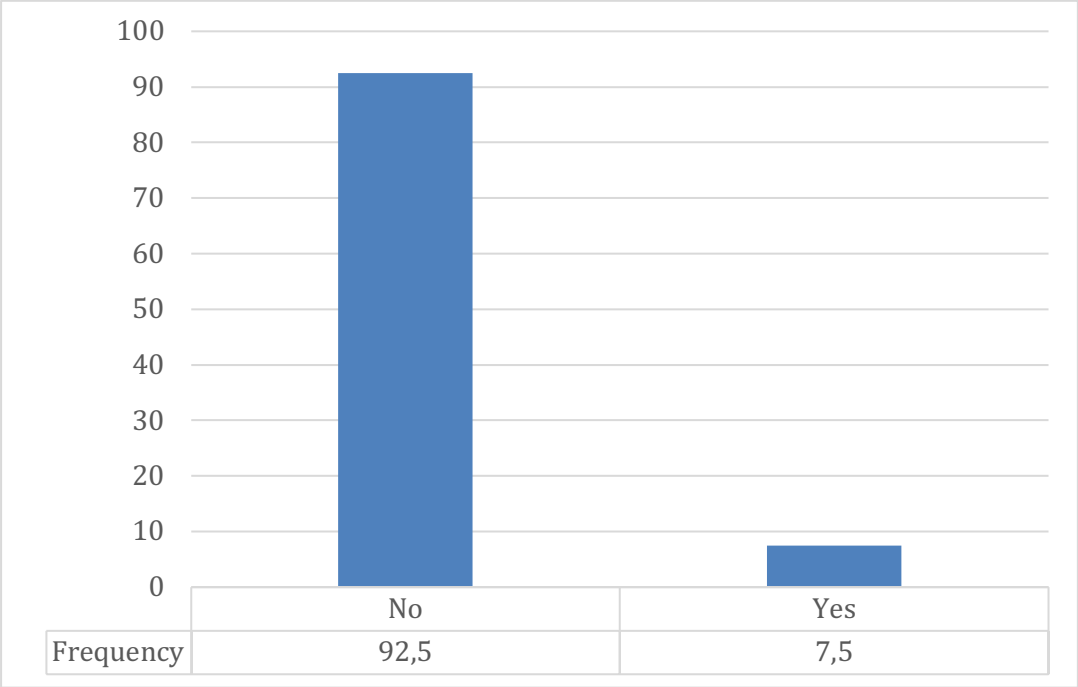
5.2.3 Disability Status

Figure 5.3 below shows the distribution of respondents with disabilities. The data shows that 7,5% of the respondents were people with disabilities. This intimates an equitable representation of people with disabilities, in line with the national prevalence of disability currently estimated at 7,5% (Statistics South Africa, 2022). However, this does not necessarily mean that barriers that may include physical accessibility, lack of inclusive support systems, or inadequate disability outreach are adequately dealt with in the TVET internship programmes. Whether these issues are adequately dealt with is subject to more research.

Previous literature has advocated for inclusiveness in TVET and other sectors. Allais (2022) points to the need for educational systems that serve all students, including those with disabilities. On the other hand, Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) provide evidence that the inclusion of people with disability in educational programs is highly likely to increase after the provision of services that facilitate accessibility. This suggests that colleges should have deliberate programmes to facilitate the representation of students with disabilities. Furthermore, an important aspect of internship efficacy is its ability to reach all sectors of society, especially the marginalised, which is expressed in the

literature through the idea of social justice (Ngcwangu, 2019; Nilsson, 2019; Needham, 2019; Seekings & Nattrass, 2015).

Figure 5.3: Disability Status of Respondents



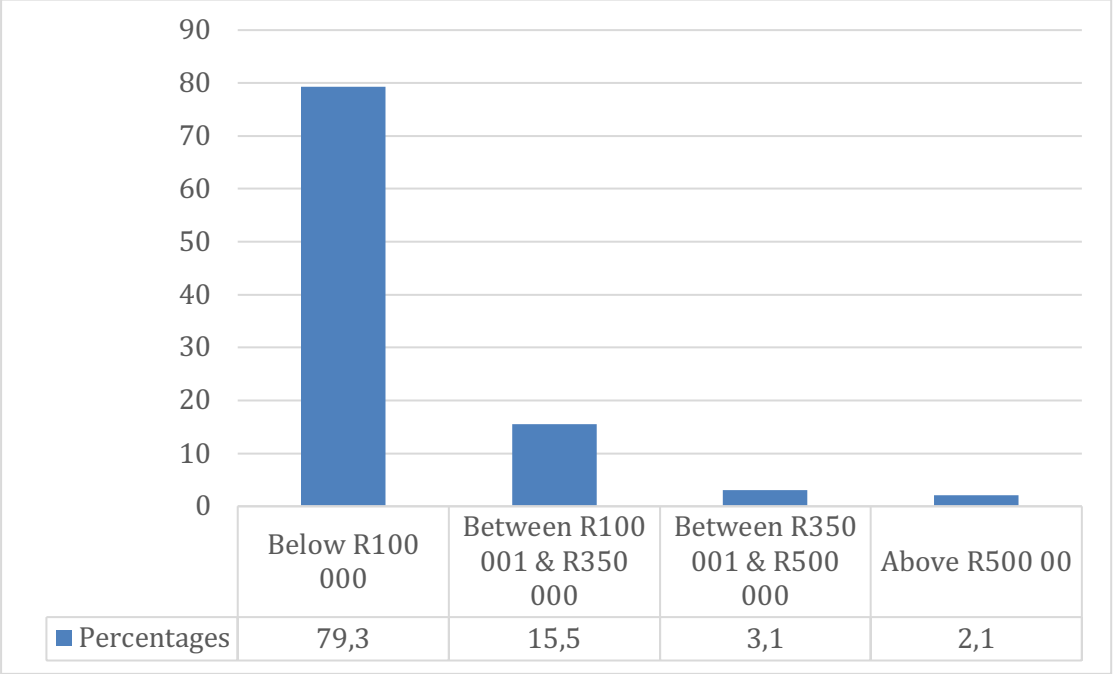
5.2.4 Home Language

Forty percent of respondents speak Zulu at home, followed by Xhosa speakers at 25% of the sample. English speakers make up about 15% of respondents, Sotho 10%, and other languages including Afrikaans constituted 5% of responses. Ekurhuleni has a large Zulu and Xhosa population, which explains the preponderance of these languages.

5.2.5 Total Annual Household Income Distribution of Respondents

The data shows that a high percentage of the respondents are from the low-income segment. Figure 5.4 below shows that 60% of respondents reported a family income of under R50,000 per annum. The next income band had fewer responses, with even fewer reporting family earnings beyond R350,000. That many TVET college students are from low-income homes may reflect the socioeconomic background of the Ekurhuleni communities, many of which have high levels of poverty (COGTA, 2020).

Figure 5.4: Distribution of Respondents by Total Annual Household Income



The income distribution suggests the economic struggles of most TVET internship participants, which is also reflected in the national statistics on poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Understanding this economic backdrop is essential for understanding how TVET internship programmes and their outcomes are influenced by externalities such as class, race, gender, and other socio-economic variables.

The respondents' income distribution is consistent with previous research on the economic problems impacting TVET students, which showed that most students attending TVET colleges are from low-income ((Wildschut & Meyer, 2016; Botha, et al., 2023; Needham, 2019). Furthermore, social class has been shown to impact the outcomes of both internship and TVET training (Klein & Weiss, 2011; Tomlinson, et al., 2017). Allais and Wedekind (2020) found that lower-income students tend to be overrepresented in TVET institutions, which could be a function of the institutions' relative affordability and the fact that most TVET programmes lead to direct career routes. This ties up with the assertion by some scholars that well-designed TVET courses may help break the cycle of poverty by teaching employable skills to students (Akala & Changilwa, 2018; Needham, 2019). The low-income backgrounds of many survey respondents

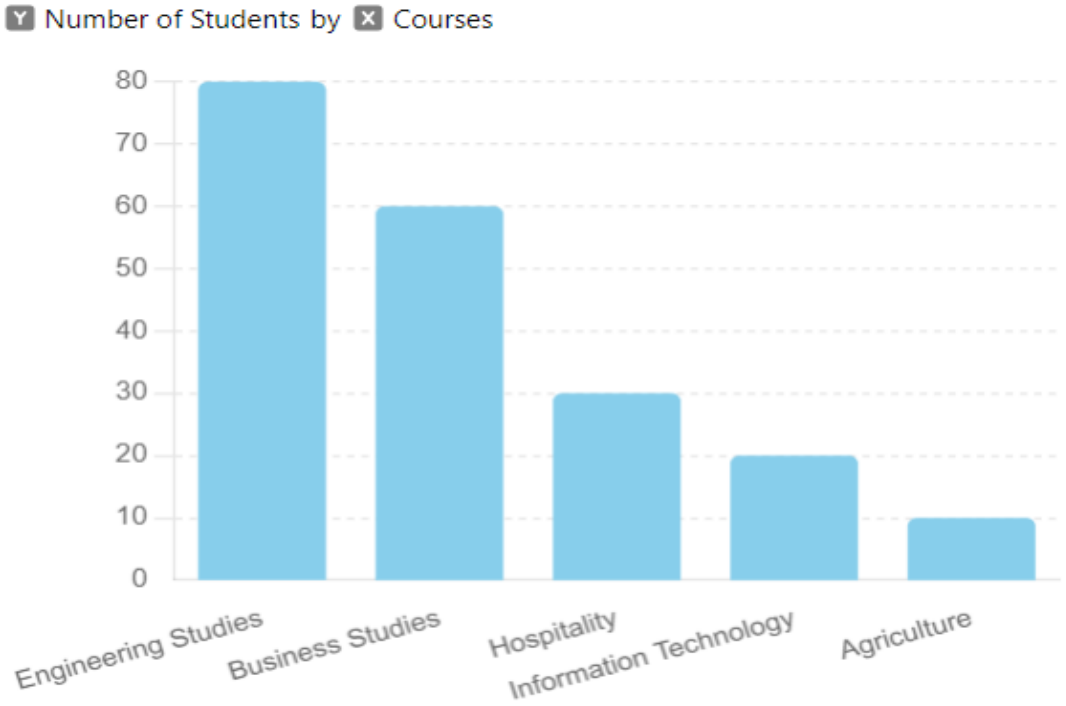
emphasise the need for comprehensive internship programmes that consider this dynamic. Putting emphasis on providing valuable job experience and career chances, and possibly boosting their economic prospects, should be central.

5.2.6 Course Choice and Internship Participation

5.2.6.1 Courses Studied

Figure 5.5 below shows respondents' course selections. Data shows that 80 students choose Engineering Studies, the most popular subject. Business Studies, Hospitality, IT, and Agriculture follow with 60, 30, 20, and 10 students, respectively.

Figure 5.5: Distribution of Courses Studied by Students at Ekurhuleni TVET College



Hospitality, Information Technology, and Agriculture have smaller enrolments, suggesting lesser interest or demand. This may hint that students are prioritising courses with clearer career paths and that increases their chances of getting employment. This could have implications on the provision of these – for instance, there may be a need to expand provision to meet business and student needs.

The data seem to support the idea that technical and vocational education provides job-relevant skills that are more likely to facilitate the transition to employment. Reviving technical and vocational education is essential for dealing with skills shortages and improving employability (Afeti, 2018). Akala and Changilwa (2018) found that technical skills are important to enhance employability in post-secondary education in Kenya, which has similar socio-economic context to South Africa. While in the South African contexts, scholars made similar findings (e.g. Needham, 2019; Allais & Wedekind, 2020; Ndlovu & Van Wyk, 2023). However, Seekings and Nattrass (2015) argue that the acquisition of skills alone is not enough to deal with the socio-economic challenges facing the country. This suggests a holistic approach to dealing with socio-economic challenges. However, gaps in skills intimate a disconnect between educational programmes and national development aspirations, according to Allais and Wedekind (2020), who advocate for TVET reform to better serve varied economic sectors.

5.2.6.3 Sources of Workshops/Seminars

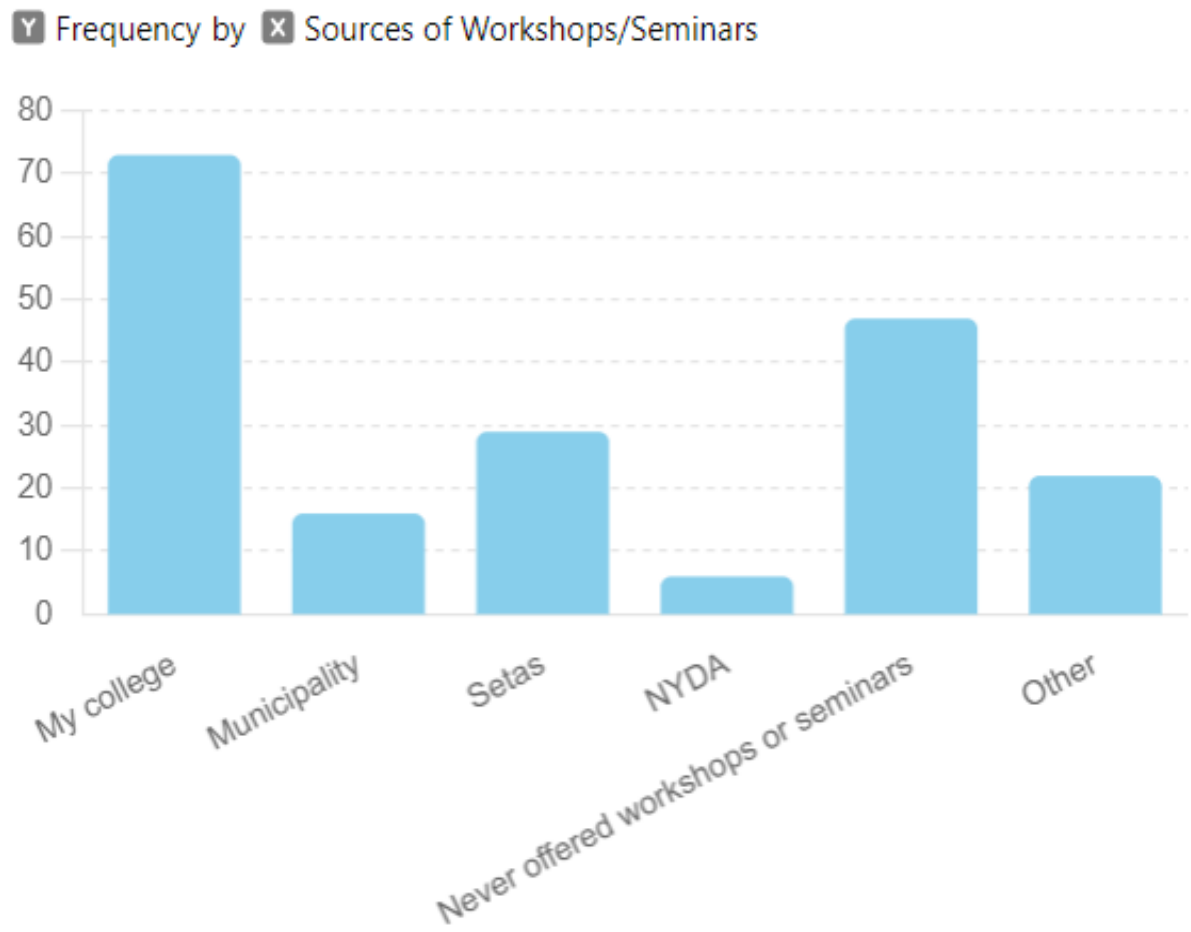
Figure 5.6 below shows the distribution of internship workshops according to the institution providing the workshop. Many of the workshops and seminars that respondents participated in were organised by their institutions. This approach emphasises the importance of institutions in career preparation and employability. High frequency for "My College" as the provider shows that the colleges are the main career development programme facilitators probably because of their direct connection with students and awareness of their requirements.

The large percentage of respondents (47%) who have never attended workshops or seminars on internships, suggests limited availability or accessibility. The fact that many youths are losing out on career preparation opportunities needs attention. Lower frequencies for "Municipality" and "NYDA" participation may reflect students' lack of awareness of these sources or inadequate outreach and support from these organisations.

This data supports the literature that emphasises the value of the involvement of educational institutions in career development. Alla-Mensah et al. (2021) state that TVET institutions are crucial to teaching students workforce skills. The popularity of "My college"

seminars supports this view, demonstrating that colleges lead in employability skills training.

Figure 5.6: Sources of Workshops/Seminars



Many students have never attended workshops or seminars to prepare for an internship, intimating a less-than-ideal situation, which is accessible by all students, as suggested by research (e.g. Jackson and Bridgstock, 2021). Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) propose that career planning materials must be used regularly to improve graduate employability. The disparity found in this research shows that institutions are not doing enough to provide these tools to all students.

The poor interaction with "Municipality" and "NYDA" resources signals that these organisations need to increase visibility and outreach. Allais and Wedekind (2020) agree that youth transition to work requires a coordinated strategy including numerous stakeholders, including government and non-government organisations.

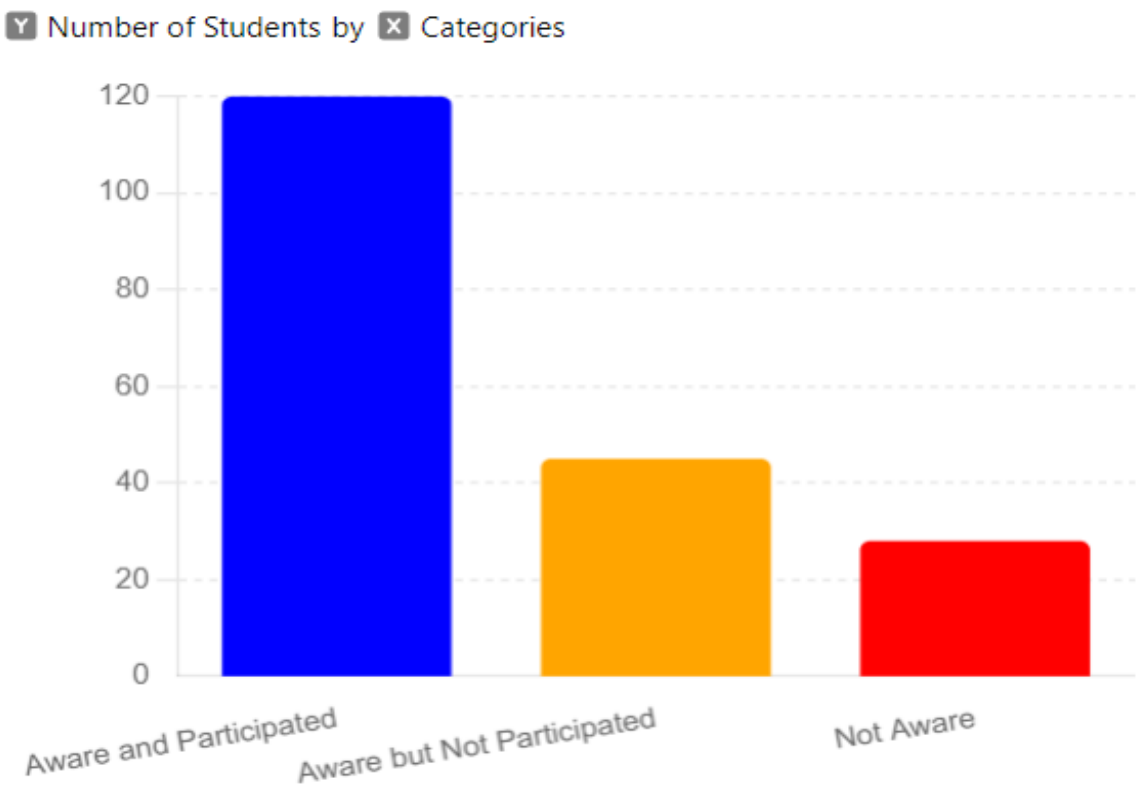
5.3 Analysis of Research Questions

5.3.1 What does youth mainstreaming, internship, and transition to employment entail in a TVET College context?

Awareness and Participation in Internship Programs at Ekurhuleni TVET College

A large percentage of students (62.18%) know about internship programmes and have participated in them, which shows great involvement. This high participation percentage implies that the internship programmes are well-promoted and accessible to students, demonstrating the college's dedication to providing actual job experience.

Figure 5.7: Awareness and Participation in Internship Programmes at Ekurhuleni TVET College



Out of 193 respondents, 120 are aware and have engaged in internship programmes, 45 are aware but have not participated, and 28 are unaware.

However, 23.32% of students are aware but have not engaged, suggesting room for growth. Lack of jobs, scheduling issues, or other personal restrictions may preclude this

group from participating. Addressing these hurdles might boost participation and ensure more students benefit from these essential learning opportunities. The fact that 14.51 percent of students are unaware of internship programmes suggests there is room for improving communication or outreach.

This data is in concord with the literature on internship programmes at TVET institutions that internships bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills, improving graduates' employability, according to Afeti (2018). This study's high participation rate supports Allais and Wedekind (2020)'s claim that well-structured internship programmes help students move into the workforce.

According to Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022), internships increase students' confidence and job market preparation. Ekurhuleni TVET College data, suggests that most students benefitted from internships. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) conclude that good communication tactics are necessary to maximise student involvement in career development programmes, therefore the results also indicate greater outreach. A significant number of students are not aware of Ekurhuleni TVET College's internship programmes, which might decrease the participation and preparation of students for employment if not addressed.

5.3.2 To what extent are the service partners involved in supporting TVET graduates for transition to employment?

In response to one of the indicators of service partners' support in the survey questionnaire, the respondents said that TVET college is the stakeholder that contributed most to helping graduates find jobs. The data shows that 68.9% of respondents said they got internships via their institution. This high positive response rate about the role of colleges shows the colleges' active role in offering academic education, practical training, and career possibilities for its students. About 15% of respondents highlighted the role of SETAs in supporting sector-specific training bodies in connecting education and employment, while 8.3% of respondents, affirmed local government's role in transitioning youth to employment. Whilst qualitative findings, as will be discussed in the qualitative section, suggest that service partners play an important role in supporting internships, the low percentage of their participation reflected here seems to suggest their limited contribution compared to the colleges.

The data above indicates that service partners contribute to providing TVET graduates with opportunities. TVET college, municipality, SETAs, and NYDA are important stakeholders in TVET education. The responses show the proportion of respondents who acknowledged these entities' assistance. The TVET college provided the greatest help, followed by SETAs, the municipality, and the NYDA.

NYDA assistance is the least rated, with just 3.1% of respondents recognising its contribution. This shows that although the NYDA is a national youth development agency, its influence on TVET graduates' Ekurhuleni career transfer may be limited or its mandate may not be direct when dealing with TVET colleges. The lack of localised programmes or TVET partnerships may be a contributing factor to its limited role. Educational institutions and sector-specific authorities are vital to the job transition, but local government and national youth organisations may have to strengthen their contributions.

This data seems to support previous research on the significant role played by TVET institutions in graduate career transitions. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) state that educational institutions provide critical theoretical and practical abilities for employment. TVET colleges' large engagement supports this claim, showing how institutional assistance mainstreams youngsters into the workforce.

While research (e.g. Almeida and Packard, 2018; Klassen, 2024) suggests that service partners have a role to play in supporting youth transition in work, the NYDA's minimal engagement is glaring. Alla-Mensah, McGrath, and Henderson (2021) emphasise the central role of national youth organisations in helping underprivileged youth, suggesting that there is potential for the NYDA to play a bigger role. Perhaps this suggests that the NYDA could look at ways to support effective TVET graduate assistance programmes.

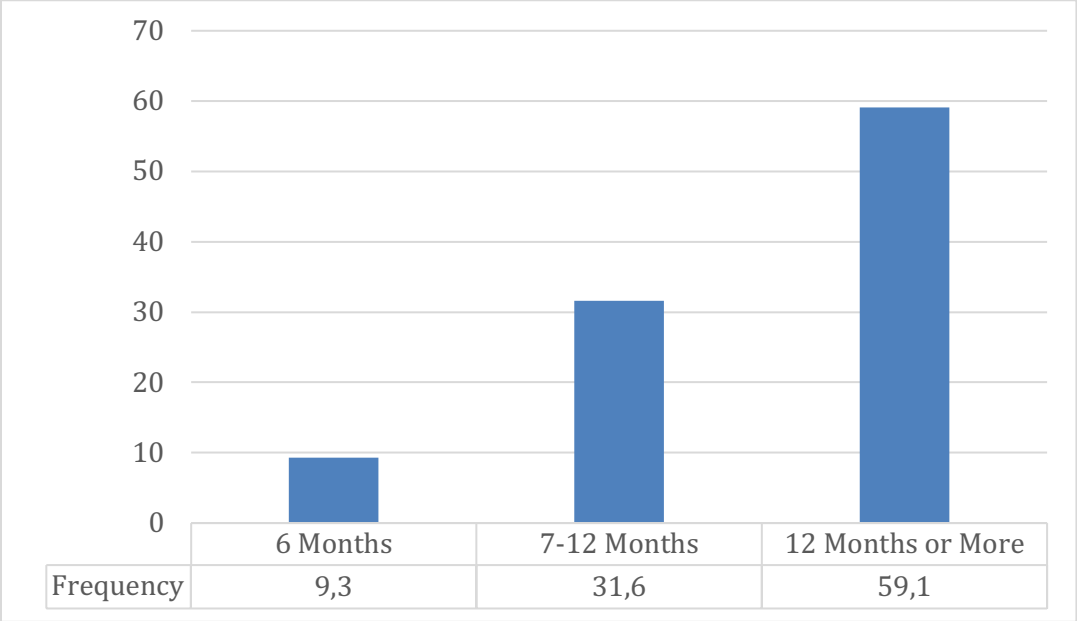
5.3.3 What are the elements of a structured internship program for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges?

The graphs below show three essential internship elements for mainstreaming youth transition to TVET college jobs:

Duration of Internships:

Figure 5.8 depicts TVET students' internship length percentages. Most internships last over 12 months (59.1%), followed by 7-12 months (25.6%) and 6 months (15.3%).

Figure 5.8: Internship duration

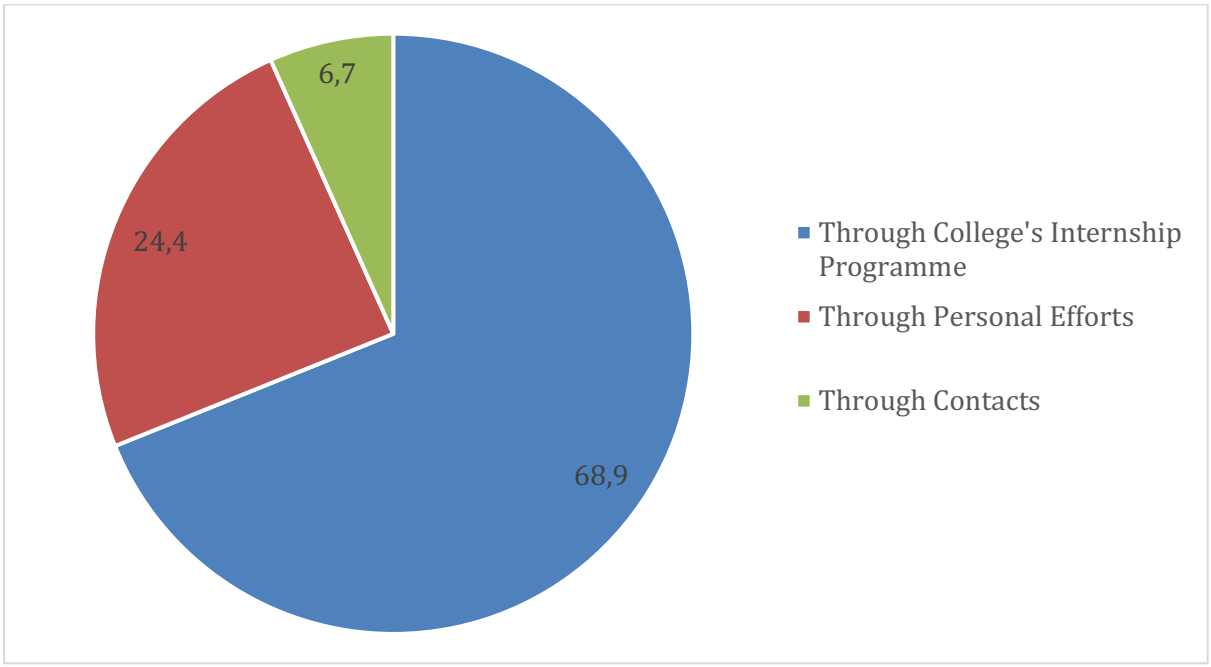


***Methods of Accessing Internships*:**

Figure 5.9 shows how students find internships. Most students get internships via college programmes (68.9%), while others use personal efforts (24.4%) or connections (6.7%).

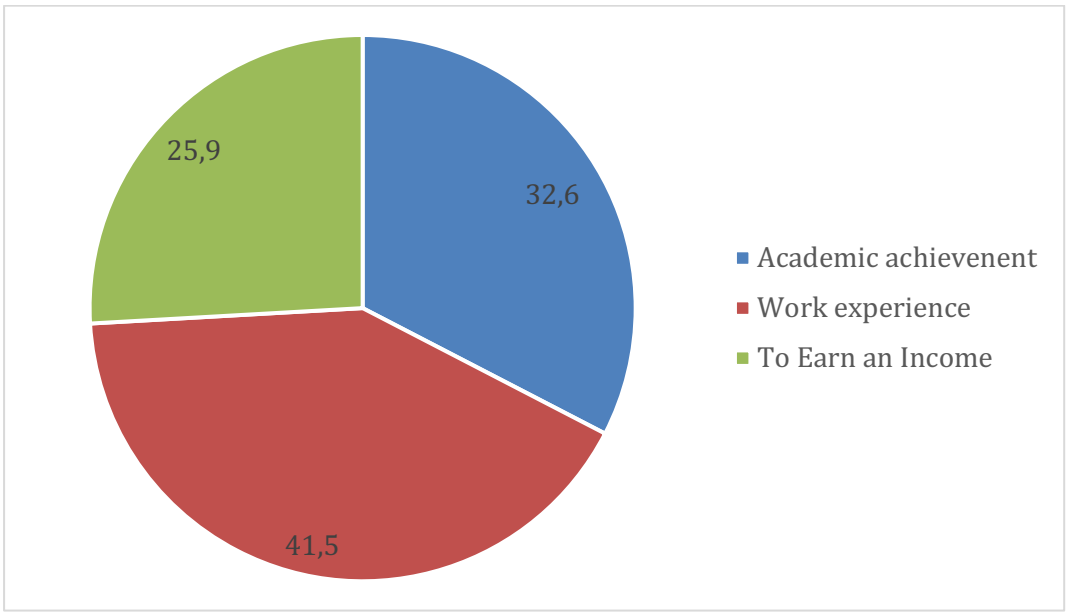
The data shows that many TVET internships last more than a year, demonstrating a recognition that duration could be an important ingredient for a successful internship. This prolonged period may benefit students by giving them enough time to gain professional experience and practical skills. This was consistent with a study by Mchunu and Mutereko (2020) who found that interns who did at least twelve (12) months of internship had a greater chance of finding employment after the internship. On the other hand, Hora, et al. (2019) found that there were different views between students, colleges, and employers as to what constitutes sufficient duration of an internship. It seems a consensus is yet to be reached on what the ideal time for an internship should be, although the inclination seems to favour a longer period**.**

Figure 5.9: Methods of accessing internship



Primary Aims of Internships: Figure 5.10 shows student-reported internship goals. The majority want job experience (41.5%), followed by academic success (30.5%) and money (28.0%).

Figure 5.10: Primary aim of internship



The data shows that many TVET internships last more than a year, demonstrating a recognition that duration could be an important ingredient for a successful internship. This

prolonged period may benefit students by giving them enough time to gain professional experience and practical skills. This was consistent with a study by Mchunu and Mutereko (2020) who found that interns who did at least twelve (12) months of internship had a greater chance of finding employment after the internship. On the other hand, Hora, et.al. (2019) found that there were different views between students, colleges, and employers as to what constitutes sufficient duration of an internship. It seems a consensus is yet to be reached on what the ideal time for an internship should be, although the inclination seems to favour a longer period.

Approximately 60% of the Ekurhuleni TVET College respondents said that they were in internships lasting for more than a year. This trend is possibly an indication that institutions and businesses prefer or demand lengthier internships. Longer internships may be preferred since provide reasonable time for more hands-on experience and greater professional integration. Furthermore, for one to fulfil the requirements of a TVET qualification one must complete eighteen (18) months of internship.

The literature supports the longer internship duration. Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) and Di Meglio et al. (2022) advocate for extensive internships for skill development and job market preparation. These findings reflect the trend at Ekurhuleni TVET College that longer internships let students work on significant projects, build professional networks, and learn about industry procedures. However, there are dissenting views that suggest long internships may strain students financially and distract them from school (Mseleku, 2022). Furthermore, other scholars (e.g. Rose, 2020; Klein & Weiss, 2011) argue that long internship duration may be an opportunity cost in that they delay employment and by extension earnings. The Ekurhuleni TVET College research shows that longer internships improve employability and job readiness more than the drawbacks. Shorter internships give swift industrial experience and theoretical knowledge application, but they are often condemned for their small scope and insufficient time for students to fully integrate into the workplace (Jeske and Linehan, 2020). Respondents preferred six-month internships less, reflecting a common awareness of the necessity for longer practical experiences to help successful transitions to work. On the contrary in a study done by Mchunu and Mutereko (2020), most of the respondents suggested internship of 24 months or longer would be more effective in preparing interns to acquire skills and experience that would enhance their employability.

As illustrated in Figure 5.9, most internships are obtained via college programmes, demonstrating the importance of educational institutions in the internship placement of students. The lower percentages for personal efforts and connections may either show that students struggle to find internships independently or that the colleges are doing relatively well in placing students. The high placement rate by colleges augurs well for students from low socio-economic backgrounds as the literature suggests that those from lower socio-economic stratum are less likely to get placement because they possess low social and cultural capital compared to students from high socio-economic backgrounds (Tomlinson, et al., 2017; Klein and Weiss, 2011). The low number of internships acquired by personal efforts and relationships provides a different perspective to Alawamleh and Mahadin's (2022) conclusions that networking and individual initiative are vital to gaining employment chances in developing countries.

Most of the respondents said that they were involved in internships to gain workplace experience, supporting internships' goal of on-the-job training. The less emphasis on academic accomplishment and income highlights while income is important in a context like South Africa, many of the students view internships as a way to gain work experience. The data seems to support the thesis that well-structured internships improve student growth, employability, and financial security. This is also consistent with similar findings in the literature (e.g. Hora, et al, 2019; Silva, et al., 2016)

This data suggests certain fundamentals need to be in place for vocational education internships to be effective in line with the literature that addresses this issue – this includes amongst others, reasonable time frames, increased awareness, and clarity on the primary role of internships (Tomlinson, et al., 2017; Hora, et al., 2019). Afeti (2018) stresses the value of internships for vocational education students' hands-on experience and employability. Silva et al. (2018) note that internships improve job chances by providing real-world experience and skill development. College programmes dominate internships, supporting McGrath and Henderson's (2021) claim that institutional assistance is key to closing the education-employment divide.

5.3.4 Which Indicators of Youth Mainstreaming Feature in the TVET Internship Setting?

The examination of youth mainstreaming indicators in the context of TVET internships highlights several principal elements that support the effectiveness and inclusiveness of these initiatives.

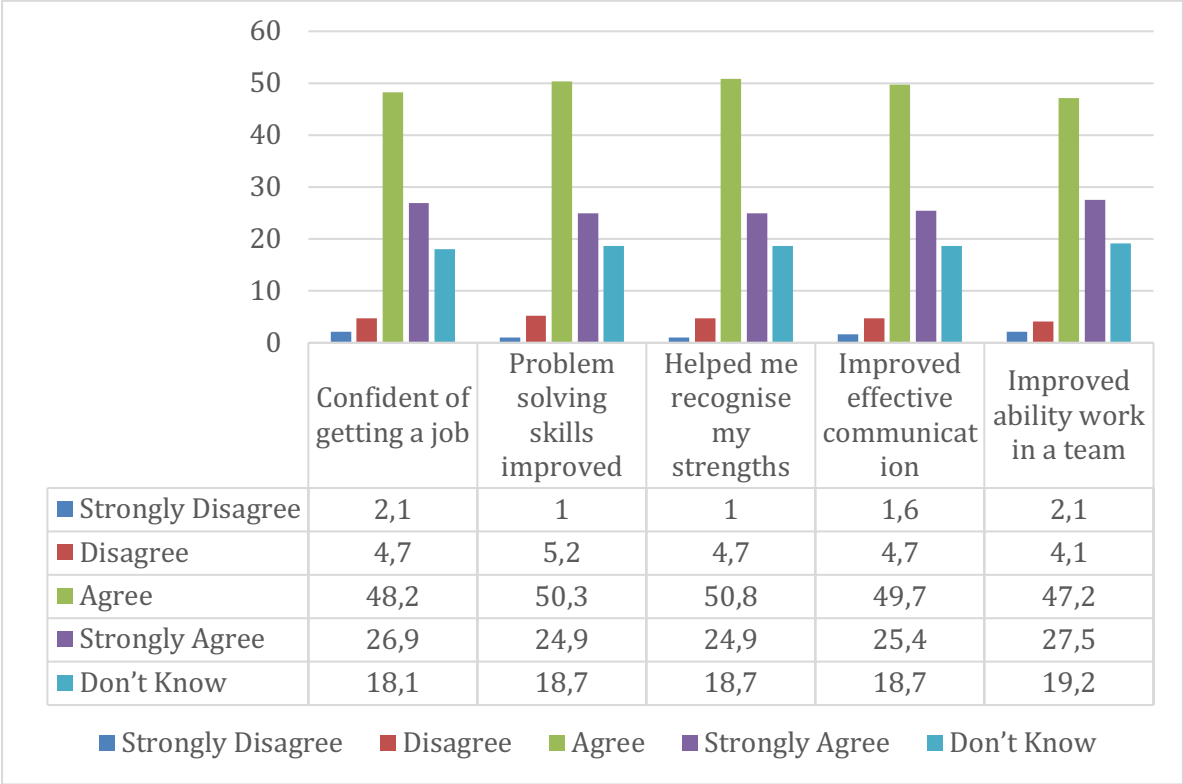
Employability and Skill Development:

The acquisition of technical and soft skills is one of the fundamental contributors to youth mainstreaming in the context of TVET internships (Ndlovu and Van Wyk, 2023; Tomlinson, et al., 2017). These skills are essential for improving employability and facilitating a seamless transition from school to the working world. Quantitative data showed that a sizable majority of respondents reported notable gains in soft skills like problem-solving, communication, and collaboration, as well as technical abilities like competency with industry-specific tools and technology. These results are consistent with qualitative views from key informants, such as internship coordinators and HR managers, who highlighted the structured aspect of internship programmes intended to offer all-encompassing skill development.

Figure 5.11 below depicts respondents' views on their employability through selected indicators. These indicators include amongst others confidence in getting a job, improved problem-solving skills, internship helped respondents recognise their strengths, improved ability to communicate effectively, and improved ability to work in a team. All these indicators show that the respondents found the internship to be beneficial in preparing them to transition to work. For example, with reference to confidence after participating in the internships, many of the respondents (75.1%) indicated that they felt confident to get a job after the internship – with 26,9% expressing strong agreement. This is as compared to 6.8% who felt that they were not confident to get a job after training and 18,1% whose response was I don't know. The high confidence level could be attributed to skills that interns are likely to be exposed to if they are given meaningful tasks during their internship. In addition, the increased ability to relate theory to real work situations could be valuable. An increase in self-confidence is supported in the literature (e.g. Pietersen and Malatjie, 2022; Alawamleh and Mahadin, 2022; McHugh, 2017; Da Silva and Teixeira, 2013). For instance, Pietersen and Malatjie (2022) found that the interns'

exposure to various networks of experienced individuals in their field contributes to the increase in confidence and to some extent employability.

Figure 5.11: Composite measures of employability



	Confident of getting a job	Problem solving skills improved	Helped me recognise my strengths	Improved effective communication	Improved ability work in a team
Strongly Disagree	2,1	1	1	1,6	2,1
Disagree	4,7	5,2	4,7	4,7	4,1
Agree	48,2	50,3	50,8	49,7	47,2
Strongly Agree	26,9	24,9	24,9	25,4	27,5
Don't Know	18,1	18,7	18,7	18,7	19,2

The qualitative data also supported employability, for example, one respondent pointed out that "*students need to have employability skills like communication and teamwork before beginning an internship programme*" (Participant 1). Another informant affirmed this view when they said, "*The internship programmes are designed to provide practical experience, which is vital in complementing the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom*" (Participant 3). These quotes, which are amongst important markers of youth mainstreaming, emphasise the need to acquire both technical and soft skills as essential elements of the internship experience.

These findings are consistent with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of skill development in vocational education. According to Silva et al. (2018), internships provide students with firsthand experience, thereby enhancing their practical skills and making them more employable. Similarly, Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) argue that the combination of technical and soft skills is essential for graduates' success in the labor

market. Thus, the emphasis on comprehensive skill development in the TVET internships aligns with broader educational objectives and industry expectations.

- *Participation and Inclusivity:*

The degree of involvement and diversity in the internship programmes is another important metric. The demographic data revealed a wide range of participation in terms of age, race, and socioeconomic class. Nonetheless, despite the quantitative data suggesting fair representation of people with disabilities, one of the key informants had a different view. S/he noted that "TVET colleges need to adopt more inclusive policies, as the underrepresentation of respondents with disabilities exposes." (Participant 6). This contradicts the representation of respondents with disabilities in the survey's results, which showed that 92.5% of respondents did not have a disability and 7.5% did. This in line with disability in the South African demographics, which coincidentally reflect the same percentages.

This finding aligns with research by Allais (2022), who emphasizes the need for educational systems to be inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. While nominally people with disabilities, women, and Africans are well-represented literature points out that numbers may not necessarily mean substantive confrontation of factors that exclude historically excluded groups (Kruss and Wildschut, 2015; Matenda, 2020; Botha, et al., 2023; Needham, 2019). This means that substantive barriers should be confronted beyond just numbers.

- *Retention and Success Rates:*

Important markers of successful youth mainstreaming are also the interns' retention and success rates once their programmes are over. Although not evaluated by quantitative data, high retention rates were suggested by the qualitative data. For example, qualitative insights by multiple informants related success stories of interns receiving permanent job offers because of their excellent internship performance. One participant (Participant 3) had this to say, "*Several interns have successfully transitioned into full-time employment after completing their internships*" This suggests that well-designed internship programmes successfully maintain young people into the workforce by giving them the

skills they need and a route to long-term employment. However, this assertion needs to be validated with data.

These findings are in line with Di Meglio et al. (2022), who found that internships significantly increase the likelihood of graduates securing employment. Furthermore, Afeti (2018) argues that internships are crucial in bridging the gap between education and employment, which is essential for the successful transition of youth into the labor market.

- *Stakeholder Engagement and Support:*

SETAs, industrial partners, and educational institutions are among the stakeholders whose roles are crucial in mainstreaming youth through internship programmes. The information showed that these stakeholders' active participation and solid collaborations are key factors in the internships' success. 68.9% of respondents who provided quantitative feedback were able to obtain internships through their TVET programmes, demonstrating the critical significance that institutional support plays.

Qualitative information underlined the significance of these partnerships even more. An informant stated, "Partnerships with industry have been instrumental in providing our students with the firsthand experience they need to transition smoothly into the workforce" (Participant 1). According to another, "*SETAs provide students with a work readiness programme aimed at supporting interns and assisting them to adjust to the working environment*" (Participant 4). These collaborations guarantee that interns get the assistance and training they need to succeed in their positions in addition to helping with internship placement.

This finding is supported by Allais and Wedekind (2020), who highlight the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and industry in ensuring the relevance and quality of vocational training programs. Additionally, Alla-Mensah et al. (2021) emphasize that effective partnerships enhance the employability of graduates by providing them with real-world experience and industry-specific skills.

- *Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:*

A successful internship programme must have systems for monitoring and evaluation that are both effective and efficient. The significance of regularly evaluating intern

performance using instruments like logbooks, progress reports, and performance assessments was demonstrated by both quantitative and qualitative data. These systems aid in making sure that the interns' educational and professional objectives are met by the internship.

One participant said, "We hold frequent reviews and feedback meetings to gauge intern performance and offer required assistance" (Participant 2). This continuous evaluation supports the broader objective of mainstreaming youngsters into the workforce by pointing up areas for development and confirming that the internships are having the desired effect.

This finding is supported by Allais and Wedekind (2020), who highlight the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and industry in ensuring the relevance and quality of vocational training programs. Additionally, Alla-Mensah et al. (2021) emphasize that effective partnerships enhance the employability of graduates by providing them with real-world experience and industry-specific skills.

These practices are consistent with the recommendations of Hora et al. (2020), who argue that regular monitoring and feedback are crucial for the success of internship programs. Additionally, Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) emphasize that continuous assessment helps in making necessary adjustments to the programs, thereby enhancing their effectiveness, and ensuring that they meet the needs of both students and industry partners.

5.3.5 What would be the effective model for implementing TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work?

This section discusses some of the key components of an efficacious internship programme. Amongst these key elements identified in the literature and through the Rotated Components Matrix are mentorship, good working conditions for interns, integration of theory and practical application, and the relevance of the programme to what it seeks to achieve or personal development.

Table 5.1: Rotated Component Matrix[a]

Statement	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
It helps me recognise my strengths	0.855	0.307	0.256	0.207
I improved my ability to communicate effectively	0.854	0.248	0.286	0.190
Developed professional competence	0.852	0.296	0.297	0.155
Working conditions for interns	0.241	0.868	0.209	0.109
Internship office's efficiency (college)	0.290	0.867	0.157	0.144
Policies and procedures (college)	0.313	0.864	0.140	0.136
My internship mentor provided feedback about my performance	0.408	0.206	0.809	0.263
My internship mentor communicated effectively	0.401	0.203	0.805	0.261
Work allocated to me was relevant to what I studied	0.257	0.000	0.236	0.846
Practical knowledge and skills provided matched theoretical knowledge	0.296	0.000	0.214	0.831
Other staff members were supportive	0.277	0.000	0.238	0.828

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

Table 5.1 above summarises the key themes by grouping the questions or statements into four components. This helps to get a summary of the findings without looking at individual questions. The summary is expressed through these themes, Quality of mentorship, personal development, working conditions, and programme effectiveness/institutional arrangements.

Interpretation:

Strong Relationships: Columns in the table show key themes and the rows show the statements that constitute each theme. The closer the number is to 1 the more closely related is the statement that component or theme. A statement like, "It helps me recognise my strengths" has a high loading of .855 under Theme/Component 1, which means that it's strongly related to the theme of personal development.

Grouping Statements: When statements have high loadings (i.e. number closer to 1) under the same component, it implies that themes are important in each group.

Quality of Mentorship:

Mentorship is one of the key components of internship identified in the literature and therefore measuring its strength is important when assessing the efficacy of an internship programme (Hora, et al., 2019; Zehr, 2016). This section will consider the questions asked to measure the strength of mentorship in the survey.

Asked whether the mentors allocated to them were qualified, 66,8% reported that they were allocated qualified mentors. Only 9.4% did not agree that their mentors were qualified, while 23,3% said they did not know. The importance of qualified mentors in making internships effective is documented in the literature (Pop, Swanepoel and Barkhuizen, 2013; Johari and Bradshaw, 2008; McHugh, 2017; Hora, et al., 2019). So, the data suggest that the internship programmes that many of the interns participated in were effective. The provided data evaluates different aspects of an internship program, including the quality of mentors, working conditions, the relevance of the program, and the alignment of practical skills with theoretical knowledge. Here is a breakdown of the findings:

Table 5.2: Quality of mentor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very low	6	3.1	3.1	3.1
	Low	15	7.8	7.8	10.9
	High	76	39.4	39.4	50.3
	Very high	58	30.1	30.1	80.3
	Do not know	38	19.7	19.7	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation: A high percentage (69.5%) of the respondents said that the quality of mentor allocated to them was high or very high, which shows a high level of satisfaction with mentorship.

Table 5.3: Working conditions for interns

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very low	9	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Low	14	7.3	7.3	11.9
	High	74	38.3	38.3	50.3
	Very high	59	30.6	30.6	80.8
	Do not know	37	19.2	19.2	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation: Asked to rate working conditions, 68.9% rated the working conditions high or very high, which suggests that the working environment was conducive.

Table 5.4: Relevance of the Programme:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very low	7	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Low	15	7.8	7.8	11.4
	High	71	36.8	36.8	48.2
	Very high	63	32.6	32.6	80.8
	Do not know	37	19.2	19.2	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation: A large number (69.4%) of respondents indicated that the internship program was relevant to assist them acquire the necessary skills and dispositions.

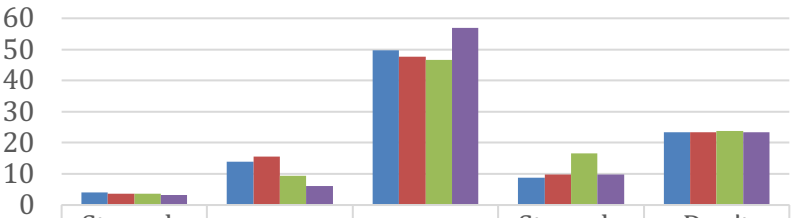
Table 5.5: Alignment of Practical Skills and Theoretical Knowledge:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very low	6	3.1	3.1	3.1
Low	15	7.8	7.8	10.9
High	73	37.8	37.8	48.7
Very high	61	31.6	31.6	80.3
Do not know	38	19.7	19.7	100.0
Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation: A high percentage (69.4%) believed that the practical skills provided during the internship aligned well with the theoretical knowledge learned in college. The internship experiences of respondents were investigated with specific reference to mentor quality, working conditions, program relevance, and the alignment of practical and theoretical knowledge.

The data presented above indicate that overall, the respondents had a positive experience from participating in the internship programme, with about 70% indicating a high level of satisfaction in all the matrices measuring the elements discussed above. In particular, the quality of mentorship was rated high by the respondents at 69.5%, which suggests that the allocated mentors were effective and largely supportive. Amongst the elements used to assess mentorship, were the mentor's qualification, knowledge, effective communication, supportiveness, and provision of opportunities to learn for the interns. Figure 5.12 below is a graphical representation of some of the matrices used to measure the quality of a mentor – shared below for illustrative purposes.

Figure 5.12: Composite elements of the mentor quality

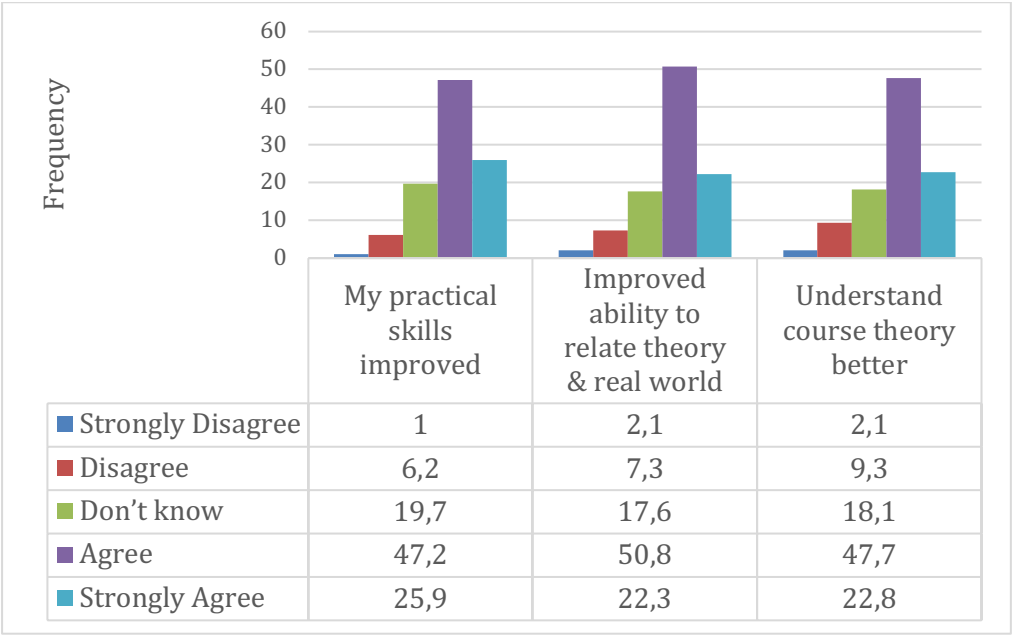


	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Regular Feedback	4,1	14	49,7	8,8	23,3
Helps with work areas I'm weak at	3,6	15,5	47,7	9,8	23,3
Provide opportunity to learn	3,6	9,3	46,6	16,6	23,8
My mentor is qualified	3,2	6,2	57	9,8	23,3

Secondly, a high percentage (68,9%) of interns rated their working conditions positively, hinting that the work environment was conducive. In terms of the relevance of the programme, 69,4%, indicated that the content and activities of the internship were appropriate and of benefit. Furthermore, the respondents rated the alignment of practical skills that they gained from the internship programme and theoretical knowledge learned from college high or very high at 69.4%. This could possibly indicate that the internship

programme was effective as a connector of academic knowledge and practical application, implying a positive contribution to the efficacy of the internship. Figure 5.13 is illustrative of some of the elements considered to measure alignment between theory learned in college and practical application in the work environment.

Figure 5.13: Alignment of theory taught at college to the real world



	My practical skills improved	Improved ability to relate theory & real world	Understand course theory better
Strongly Disagree	1	2,1	2,1
Disagree	6,2	7,3	9,3
Don't know	19,7	17,6	18,1
Agree	47,2	50,8	47,7
Strongly Agree	25,9	22,3	22,8

The high level of affirmation of the importance of practice in enhancing understanding theory is consistent with literature. Wolfgram and Ahrens (2022) found that experiential learning has the potential to support a better understanding of theory, and one might add that a better understanding of theory will also improve its application. This is corroborated by the work of Hora, et al. (2019) and that of Zehr (2016). However, in addition to highlighting the value of practice in understanding theory, Zehr (2016) has pointed out that to make learning more robust, there should be more involvement of the academy in what is being learned during internships. In other words, academic learning and practical learning should be integrated rather than be treated as insular. This suggests a more aligned and structured internship programme, which Zehr (2016) seems to suggest will be more efficacious.

Whilst these findings shine a spotlight on the strengths of the internship programme and suggest that it is effective in driving its objectives, the data also suggests that there is room for improvement. This is implied by the minority of the respondents who indicated

that they were not satisfied with the quality of the mentor, the alignment between theory and practical application, the relevance of the programme, and the working conditions.

Overall, the internship was beneficial

Although there was no pre-test in this study, this self-reporting data suggests a positive impact of the internship.

Figure 5.14: Overall, the internship was beneficial

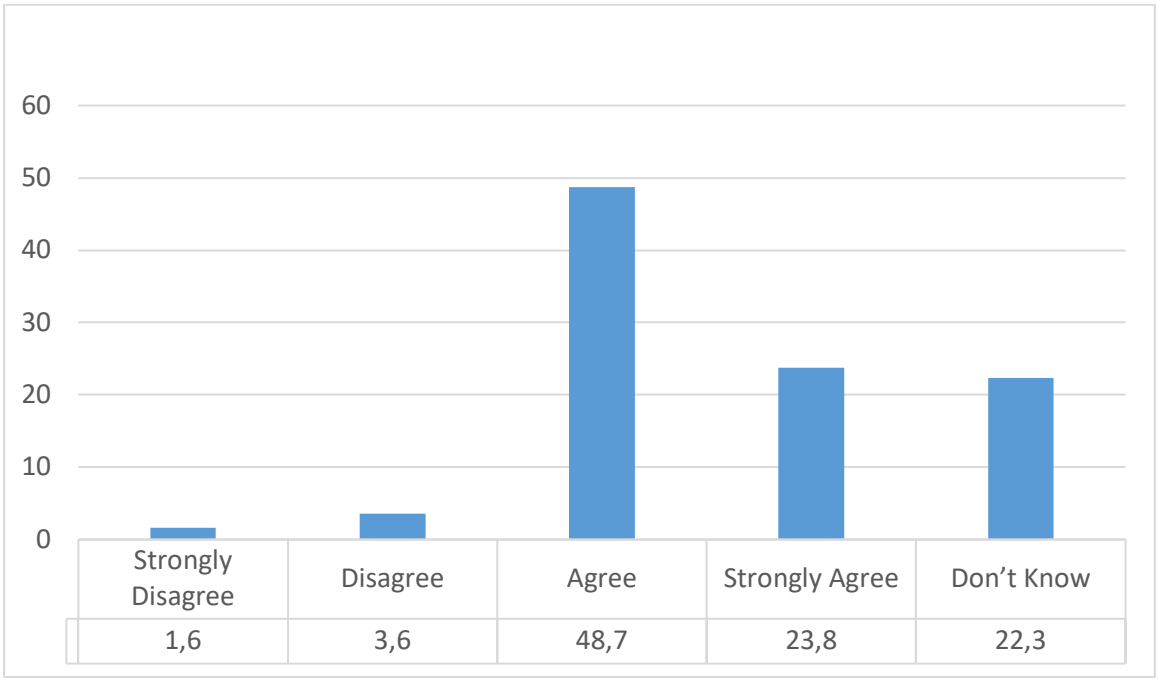


Figure 5.14 shows that 72,5% of the respondents found the internship programme beneficial overall, with 23,8% indicating a very strong level of benefit. Only 5,2% found the programme not to be beneficial, while 22,3% said they did not know.

The high level of agreement expressed suggests that the internship programmes were efficacious for the respondents, which supports hypotheses 1 and 2 (*see hypothesis testing section*). This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that despite some shortcomings, internships are generally beneficial to the youth (Apriyani, et al., 2022; Rose, 2020; O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). For, instance, some scholars associate

internships with employability (e.g. Mabeba, 2019; Rose, 2020; Hora, et.al., 2019). While the are many elements that contribute to the efficacy of internships institutional arrangements seem to be foundational. Apriyani, et al. (2022) suggest that an internship programme that is “supervised and planned’ is more likely to succeed. This view is corroborated by O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018) who underscore the importance of structured internships as a central element in making them efficacious.

5.4 Statistical Analysis

5.4.1 Inferential Statistics Hypothesis Testing (H1, H2, H3)

The data examined above shows how various components of the TVET internship programme contribute to mainstreaming youth transition to work. In this section, the contributions of programme structure, service partner participation, and skill development are examined using inferential statistics. In particular, the section tests the hypotheses that were postulated in Chapter 1. Each aspect is assessed by the proportion of responses that affirm the importance of the component in supporting the efficacy of internships. Service partners had the greatest influence on work transition, with 80% of respondents indicating a favourable impact. Next is the programme framework, which 75% deemed helpful for 21st-century skills.

Table 5.2 show the results of hypotheses testing conducted using statistical analysis. For hypothesis 1, the Chi-square test was used and found that a P-value of 0,03 as indicated in the first row, which is statistically significant, given that it is below the alpha value of 0.05, which means that the null hypothesis, which stipulates that a well-designed TVET internship programme does not benefit institutions and does not help a young person develop the 21st-century skills they need for work and life, is rejected. An alternative hypothesis, which states that a well-designed TVET internship programme serves to benefit institutions and help a young person develop the 21st-century skills they need for work and life. This means that there is a positive correlation between a well-designed TVET internship programme and the benefit for students participating in that internship programme.

Table 5.6: Testing Results

Hypothesis	Test Used	P-Value	Decision	Interpretation
H1: A well-designed TVET internship programme can benefit institutions and help a young person develop the 21st century skills they need for work and life	Chi-Square Test	0.03	Reject Null Hypothesis	There is a significant effect of well-designed TVET internships on skill development.
H2: TVET internship experience influences graduates' future educational advancement along the career paths	ANOVA	0.04	Reject Null Hypothesis	TVET internships have a significant influence on graduates' educational advancement.
H3: The involvement of service partners for mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment is effective	Logistic Regression	0.02	Reject Null Hypothesis	Service partner involvement is significantly effective for youth transition to employment.

Similarly, in the second row, the p-value of 0.04 yielded by the ANOVA test is statistically significant meaning that the null hypothesis, which states that TVET internship experience does not influence graduates' future educational advancement along the career paths, is rejected. The rejection means the alternative hypothesis, which shows the significant influence of TVET internship training on graduates' future educational advancement is accepted. In summary, the ANOVA Test shows that TVET internship experience has a statistically significant influence on future educational advancement, which in turn increases employment prospects and career advancement.

A Logistic Regression test yielded a p-value of 0.02 as reflected in the third row, which is statistically significant, meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected. The rejection of the null hypothesis means that an alternative hypothesis, which assumes an association

between the involvement of service partners and mainstreaming of youth into employment is accepted. This means that the involvement of service partners plays an important role in TVET internships and by extension in transitioning into employment. This finding is consistent with the transactional model, which highlights the importance of leveraging resources from other organisations to maximise the effectiveness of a programme. Ayieko, et al., (2023), for instance, showed the importance of role-played by Industrial Liaison Officers (ILOs) to facilitate partnerships in the context of Kenya. This has been shown to have positive outcomes for Kenyan internships, particularly placements.

The research shows a trend in TVET internship programme efficacy. The high rate of positive service partner participation suggests that there high TVET college-external organisation cooperation, which has the potential to improve the education-to-employment transition. This supports hypothesis H3, which states that service partners are essential for mainstreaming the youth into the workforce.

An organised internship programme is likewise highly acknowledged as a contributor to programme efficacy, with 75% of respondents citing its skill development benefits. This supports hypothesis H1, demonstrating that students need a well-designed programme framework to learn skills. The Chi-Square Test and ANOVA confirm that programme structure and partner engagement are statistically significant.

Looking at the data with the literature lens, it suggests consistency with previous studies. Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) and Alla-Mensah et al. (2021) emphasise organised internship programmes and stakeholder participation, supporting the thesis that well-designed internship programmes are highly likely to be effective. Clear regulations, supporting structures, and financial incentives from host organisations improve internship programmes, according to these researchers (Apriyani, et al., 2022). Silva et al. (2018) propose that mentoring and career development opportunities are equally vital for maximising internship advantages, indicating that financial and institutional assistance should be matched with professional growth. In other words, a well-structured internship programme will also consider support for students.

Table 5.3 below shows the mean, median, and mode for each hypothesis (H1, H2, and H3) examined in the research. These metrics are in the columns, while hypotheses are

in rows. Each column is a statistical measure, enabling hypotheses to be compared across metrics.

Table 5.7: Statistical Measure of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	P-Value
H1	3.5	3.4	3.3	0.5	0.03
H2	4.2	4.1	4.0	0.6	0.04
H3	4.8	4.7	4.6	0.7	0.02

In table (5.3), a high Mean, Median, and Mode suggest a high level of affirmation for each of the hypotheses. H3 has the greatest mean, median, and mode of the three hypotheses, meaning that the hypothesis has strong support from the data. The findings substantially support the hypothesis that service partners play an important role in mainstreaming adolescents in their transition to work strategies and programmes (H3). The large standard deviation for H3 (0.7) compared to H1 (0.5) and H2 (0.6) implies increased response variability, although the low P-value (0.02) verifies its statistical significance. In other words, whilst most of the responses agree that service partners are important for effective internships, the responses are more likely to differ from the Mean compared to those of H1 and H2.

H2, that TVET internship experience affects graduates' job progress, also has a mean of 4.2 and a P-value of 0.04, showing statistical significance. The persistent median and mean readings around 4.0 support this, because a high mean and persistent median shows that most respondents agreed with the positive impact of the TVET internship experience.

H1, that a well-designed TVET internship programme may benefit institutions and assist young people build 21st-century skills, had the lowest mean (3.5) and greatest P-value (0.03) of the three hypotheses. Though statistically significant, the findings demonstrate that responses supporting the efficacy of this element were not as strong as those supporting the efficacy of the independent variable in H1 and H2. Nevertheless, the efficacy of well-structured internship programmes in improving employability skills is affirmed by the data.

These results support and contradict previous literature. Afeti (2018) and Alawamleh & Mahadin (2022) support H1, emphasising the role of internships in skill development. H2 supports Alla-Mensah et al. (2021), who claim internships boost professional and educational achievements. H3's large variability contrasts with research (Allais, 2022) that implies service partner engagement has a more homogenous impact.

5.4.2 Correlation Analysis

All variables in the correlation matrix show significant positive relationships. Workshop attendance is strongly correlated with job market confidence (0.85), indicating that students who attend more workshops are more confident. Technical and soft skill development also correlates with job market confidence and workshop attendance.

Students' job market confidence increases dramatically when they actively participate in internship-related programmes and activities. Amongst these internship-related programmes are workshops, and the development of technical and soft skills. The development of technical and soft skills during internships is particularly important since they boost confidence and job market preparedness. Table 5.4 below shows that there is a strong correlation between the acquisition of soft skills and increased confidence at 0.81. In other words, respondents who acquired soft skills through internships are more likely to be confident that they will get a job. Because this study is cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal, it has not measured the extent to which those who participated in internship were able to get employment, but the acquisition of soft skills and high confidence is associated with high employability (Tomlinson, et al., 2017; Alawamleh and Mahadin, 2022; Robeyns, 2017).

Correlation Analysis of Internship Program Variables:

Table 5.8: Table of Correlation Results

	Confidence in Job Market Entry	**Participation in Workshops**	**Technical Skills Developed**	**Soft Skills Developed**
Confidence in Job Market Entry	1.00	0.85	0.78	0.81
Participation in Workshops	0.85	1.00	0.83	0.88
Technical Skills Developed	0.78	0.83	1.00	0.86
Soft Skills Developed	0.81	0.88	0.86	1.00

Allais (2022) stresses the need to incorporate practical skills development into educational programmes, supporting the substantial association between technical skills development and job market confidence. Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) further note that internships bridge academic learning and professional work contexts, supporting the substantial positive link between workshop attendance and job market entrance confidence. McDonald (2020) and Sishi (2022) emphasise the challenges of internship accessibility, which may impact confidence in its efficacy. This militates against the universally strong correlations in this analysis, demonstrating that although the internship programme at Ekurhuleni TVET College is beneficial, results may vary depending on context or implementation quality. This is corroborated by Mabeba (2019) who found that variations in the quality of internships, especially be regard to the quality of mentorship and contractual issues. Furthermore, this implicates the robustness of the institutional

arrangements. Context as a central factor in the efficacy of internships is also highlighted in the literature (e.g. McHugh, 2017; Chan, et al., 2020; Moodie, et al., 2019; Zehr, 2016). Theoretically, this places emphasis on the point made by a change theory that for a programme to be effective (in this case internship), it must be underpinned by a sound theory that explicates how the programme is intended to work and what are the components that make it work (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020; De Silva, et al., 2014). The logical model also makes this point by emphasising that mapping a programme makes it easier to see all the necessary inputs required to make the programme works (Hayes, et al., 2011; McLaughlin and Jordan, 2015). Practically, the importance of participation in internship-related programmes and activities suggests that for an internship to be efficacious, the quality and quality of these programmes and activities need to be supported and stepped up (Moodie, et al., 2019; Mabeba, 2019; Hora, et al., 2019).

Gender:

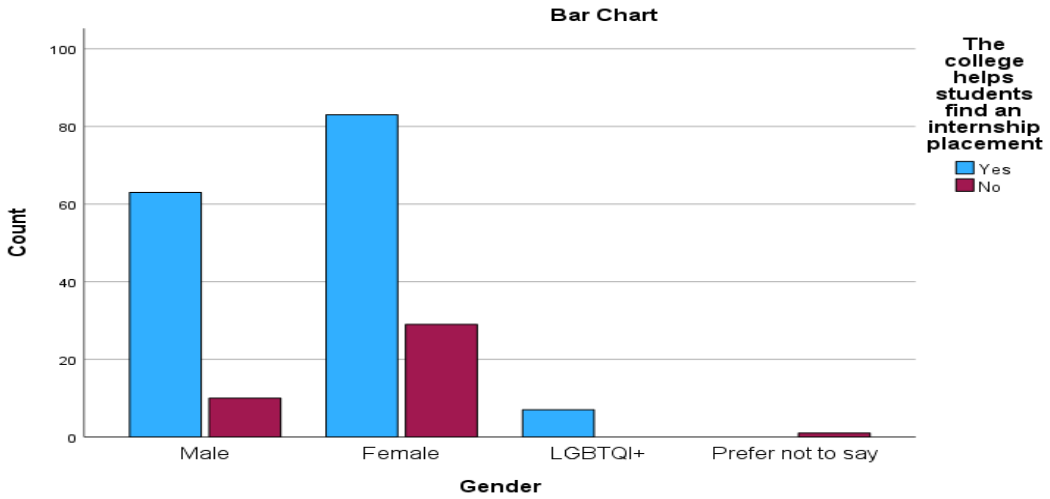
Since gender has historically been used as an exclusion tool it is important to examine its bearing on internship programmes support. Pearson Chi-square was used to assess the views of the respondents on the support services provided by the colleges. The results are presented and discussed below.

Gender * The college helps students find an internship placement

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.669[a]	3	.022
Likelihood Ratio	10.541	3	.014
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.673	1	.102
N of Valid Cases	193		

a. 3 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .21.



Interpretation: The Chi-square test shows that the association between gender and the perception that the college helps students find internship placements is statistically significant (p = 0.022). The implication of this is that males and females perceive the college's assistance in finding internships differently.

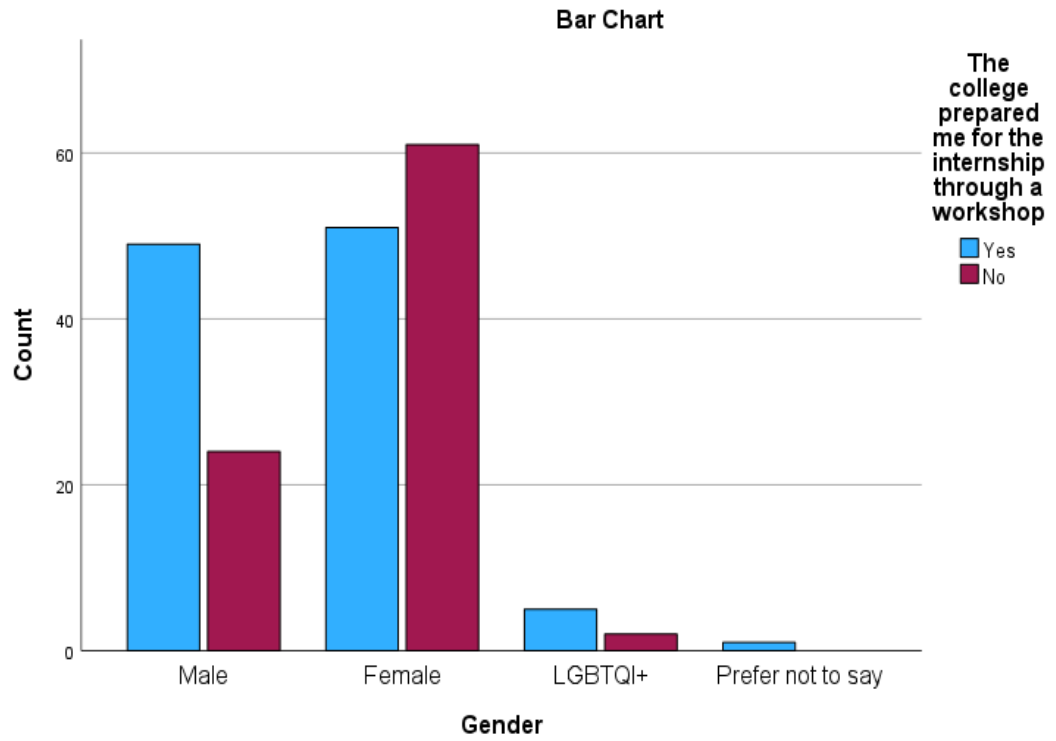
The college prepared me for the internship through a workshop:

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.966[a]	3	.019
Likelihood Ratio	10.473	3	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.003	1	.083
N of Valid Cases	193		

a. 4 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .45.

Interpretation: The association between gender and the perception that the college prepares students for internships through workshops is statistically significant (p = 0.019). This is an indication that males and females view the college's preparatory workshops differently.



Interpretation: The association between gender and the perception that the college prepares students for internships through workshops is statistically significant (p = 0.019). This is an indication that males and females view the college's preparatory workshops differently.

Internship Placement Support: A significant gender difference in the perceptions of the respondents on the college assisting students to find internship placements was found. The implication of this is that male and female respondents view the effectiveness of the college's placement assistance in different ways.

Workshop Preparation: The data also indicate that gender affected the respondents' perceptions of the internship preparatory workshops run by the college, suggesting that male and female students perceived the workshops differently.

Confidence in Internship Unit: Gender also influenced the confidence inspired by the college's internship unit, suggesting that interaction with the unit was experienced differently by males and females.

Efficiency of Internship Unit: On the other hand, there were no significant gender differences in how the respondents perceived the internship unit's efficiency, implying that

there is a general agreement by both male and female students on how the unit is perceived in terms of its operations. The notable differences between males and females in how they perceive the college support services suggest that gender is a factor and that to improve the services gender must be factored into the equation. This is consistent with those who found that it is not sufficient to increase physical access to TVET colleges

5.5 Qualitative Analysis

5.5.1 Qualitative Research Demographics

The following table provides a detailed overview of the key informants who participated in the qualitative analysis of the TVET College Internship Programme in Ekurhuleni. It includes their roles, institutions or organizations, and primary responsibilities.

Table 5.9: Overview of Key Informants

Participant Number	Role/Position	Institution/ Organization	Key Responsibilities
1	HR Manager	Ekurhuleni TVET College	Overseeing HR functions, student recruitment, and placement support
2	Deputy Principal: Academic	Ekurhuleni TVET College	Overseeing academic programs, policy implementation, and student support
3	Manager: Learning Programmes	SETA	Managing internship programs, liaising with industry partners
4	HR Manager	SETA	Overseeing SETA projects, providing support and funding for internships
5	Senior Manager	SETA	Managing national-level TVET projects, ensuring consistency and support
6	Manager: Talent and Development	SETA	Managing student records, supporting academic and internship programs
7	Project Specialist	SETA	Providing advice and support for students in internship programs

Source: Researcher's Own

5.5.2 Major Theme 1: Understanding Youth Mainstreaming, Internship, and Transition to Employment in a TVET College Context

5.5.2.1 Sub-Theme 1.1: Definition and Scope of Youth Mainstreaming

The semi-structured interviews showed TVET colleges' diverse functions in youth development and mainstreaming. The importance of these institutions in preparing young people for the workforce was often stressed by participants. Participants agreed that a strong policy framework for youth mainstreaming and employment is needed, which suggests that they view the current regulatory framework as inadequate. The Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) guidelines provide a framework to shape these projects' structure and results.

Participants' perceptions regarding TVET college youth mainstreaming strategies and frameworks varied. Deputy Principal of Academics highlighted that the DHET national policies guide the conceptualisation and implementation of the internship programme. A top-down strategy where national decisions impact local decisions and behaviour. Through agreements with SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities), TVET programmes were aligned with industry needs, showing the collaboration between education providers and industry stakeholders.

"The Department of Education (national) policies for TVET colleges guide the implementation of the internship programme" (Participant 2).

"Policies like recruitment and selection are integral to the internship programme at the college, ensuring a structured approach to student placement" (Participant 1).

"The discretionary grant policy of the SETA plays a significant role in informing the youth internship programme" (Participant 4).

"Research-driven policies that align educational outcomes with market demands are crucial" (Participant 5).

"Institutional policies such as HR and Business Unit policies ensure that the programme is well-organized and effective" (Participant 1).

These quotes from participants show how multilevel policies govern internship programmes and have implications on whether they encourage youth mainstreaming or not. National policies promote uniformity and standardisation across institutions, whereas institutional policies give practical details to execute these frameworks.

Policies are crucial to youth mainstreaming. These policies shape youth development and match TVET colleges with national goals. SETAs integrate these regulations with industry demands, making student skills more relevant and employable. Participant 5 underlined the need for research-driven policy formulation and continual evaluation and adaptation to suit labour market demands. The interviews support policy-driven youth mainstreaming above earlier literature. A coordinated policy framework by Allais and Wedekind (2020) links educational outcomes to labour market demands for youth mainstreaming. This relationship helps the youth move into jobs by making TVET skills relevant and valued by employers. Institutional-level partnerships are highlighted as an important component of successful internships (e.g. Afeti, 2018; Fei, Waheeb, and Sulaiman, 2020; Fleming, McLachlan, and Pretti, 2018), which suggests strong ties between education providers and industry stakeholders to strengthen vocational training programmes.

5.5.2.2 Sub-Theme 1.2: Structure and Implementation of Internships

Structure and execution impact TVET college internships' ability to assist the youth to find jobs. The interviews showed a clear institutional structure for internship administration that emphasises college units' roles and duties. The length and contractual responsibilities of these internships also shape interns' experiences and employability.

Participants stressed the importance of TVET college units in internship programme management. Intern recruiting, placement, and assistance were often attributed to the HR and Business Unit. This systematic method ensures interns and host organisations have clear responsibilities and assistance.

“HR and the Business Unit are responsible for the internship programme, ensuring that all processes from recruitment to placement are well-coordinated” (Participant 1).

“The college's Deputy Principal Registrar, along with other officials, oversees the internship division, ensuring proper implementation and monitoring” (Participant 2).

“Projects and Clients Services Department at the national office and project managers provincially are responsible for smooth running of internship projects” (Participant 4).

“Senior manager, manager, advisors, and admins play various roles in ensuring the effective implementation of the internship programme” (Participant 5).

“The internship programme is housed within the TVET work-base experience (WBE) programme, managed by a dedicated team” (Participant 6).

These comments demonstrate the complete institutional support for internship programmes. Multiple sections guarantee a comprehensive approach, from recruiting to intern work experience.

These extracts show a strong institutional context for organised internships. The internship's recruiting, placement, and support are handled well using this framework. Clear roles and duties at institutions provide a supportive environment for interns, improving their experience and career readiness. This is in line with the literature (e.g. Mabeba, 2019; de Souza Júnior, et al., 2018; Hora, et al., 2019 Rushbrook, 2020; Samuel and Moagi, 2022), which suggests that institutional arrangements, which includes policies and procedures are crucial for internship effectiveness. Anderson, Brown, and Rushbrook (2020) argue that a well-structured internship programme has defined institutional structures that define stakeholder roles and duties. Such a framework is likely to help interns learn and grow by offering a supportive atmosphere. Batholmeus and Pop (2019) also stress the necessity of a coordinated approach to internship programmes, including many educational departments to provide interns with full assistance.

5.5.2.3 Sub-Theme 1.3: Transition to Employment

The internship-to-employment transition is an essential step in the mainstreaming of youth in TVET colleges to employment. Evidence from the interviews suggests that multiple enabling mechanisms are in place to assist this transition. These mechanisms include acompañage each level of interns with industry stakeholders, the process monitoring and evaluation, and post-internship support to be well-prepared in the job market. Industry partnerships were consistently seen as supporting the move from intern to employee in participants' responses. Establishing more of these partnerships is likely

to increase opportunities for exposure of the youth to real-world experiences. Sometimes these experiential learning opportunities may lead to a job offer after the end of an internship. Monitoring and evaluation processes for the colleges and SETAs also ensure that interns are up to standard, and fully competent when entering the workplace.

"The college reaches out to companies and SETAs to form partnerships related to internship opportunities for students" (Participant 2).

"SETAs provide students with a work readiness programme aimed at supporting interns and assisting them to adjust to the working environment" (Participant 4).

"Placement department intervenes with counselling and motivation for students as and when the need arises" (Participant 2).

"Hosting companies use their own internal monitoring tools for students" (Participant 3).

"SETAs and TVETs need to have an impactful relationship that ensures full benefits for students" (Participant 4).

These statements demonstrate TVET colleges and SETAs' diverse approach to intern-to-employment assistance. Partnerships and assistance guarantee interns receive practical experience and are equipped for long-term employment.

A deep investigation of these passages shows the importance of partnerships and support systems in the job transition. Partnerships with industry stakeholders provide interns with real experience and boost their employability. Colleges and SETAs monitor and evaluate interns to ensure they satisfy criteria and are job ready. Counselling and support following the internship help trainees transition to employment.

Interview findings are in concord with the Transactional Partnering (TP) model, which emphasises the value of partnership, especially if they are underpinned by clearly defined objectives. Amongst the internship-to-employment transition best practices is the role of partnerships as articulated in the literature (HRDC, 2014). Furthermore, Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) suggest industry partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and post-internship support to buttress a smooth transition to work. These elements are crucial for

interns to flourish in the sector and secure long-term work. Silva et al. (2018) highlight industrial relationships and practical experience in preparing interns for the job market.

Data from this sub-theme shows that partnerships and support structures help internships become careers. TVET and SETAs prepare interns for the workforce and assist them obtain long-term careers. Research highlights the necessity for a comprehensive support system to help transition to employment.

5.5.3 Major Theme 2: Involvement of Service Partners in Supporting TVET Graduates

5.5.3.1 Sub-Theme 2.1: Role and Impact of Service Partners

This sub-theme's semi-structured interview data reveals service partners' crucial involvement in TVET graduates' success. All participants underlined the need of industry-SETA relationships to assist TVET students find employment. These partnerships provide resources, positions, and practical experience that academics cannot. Statistics show that collaborations improve employability, skills, and graduate employment. These partnerships enable continual feedback and TVET curriculum modification to satisfy industrial needs.

"Partnerships with industry have been instrumental in providing our students with the hands-on experience they need to transition smoothly into the workforce" (Participant 1).

"Without the support from SETAs, our internship programs would lack the necessary funding and structured learning experiences" (Participant 2).

"The collaboration between our college and external companies has significantly increased the employment rate of our graduates" (Participant 3).

"We have seen a marked improvement in the skill levels of our students, thanks to the practical training provided by our industry partners" (Participant 4).

"Industry partnerships are essential for keeping our curriculum relevant and ensuring our students are job-ready upon graduation" (Participant 5).

Industry-SETA relationships have various benefits, as shown by the responses. Benefits include practical training, financial aid, and increased career placements. Combining academic knowledge with experience prepares students for real-world challenges. Collaborations boost employment and skill development, boosting TVET course success.

Compared to previous research, industrial relationships improve TVET results. Allais and Wedekind (2020) that educational institutions and industry collaborate on training courses to meet labour market demands. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) emphasise co-curriculars' impact on graduate employability. These scholars believe the study's results are valid and support the idea that TVET programmes need strong collaboration. These interviews support Di Meglio et al. (2022)'s argument that industry interactions boost graduate employability. Support for literature suggests that service partners are essential to TVET programme success. These links must be maintained and reinforced to enable TVET graduates to find jobs.

5.5.3.2 Sub-Theme 2.2: Challenges in Partner Engagement

Data study under this sub-theme shows many service partner engagement difficulties. Participants cited partner selection, contribution unpredictability, and support inconsistency as major obstacles. These barriers may affect student internship quality and consistency. Data demonstrates that some partners are dedicated and help students, while others fall short, resulting in uneven student benefits. This gap may hurt internships and graduates' careers.

“Securing reliable partners who can consistently provide quality internships is a major challenge we face” (Participant 6).

“The level of support from our partners varies greatly, which can affect the quality of the internship experience for our students” (Participant 7).

“Some partners are very committed, while others do not meet their obligations, creating an imbalance in the internship opportunities available” (Participant 1).

“The inconsistency in partner contributions often leads to disparities in the training and support our students receive” (Participant 2).

“Finding partners who are willing to engage consistently and meet our standards is an ongoing struggle” (Participant 3).

Relationships are hard to maintain. These difficulties may undercut the internship program's aims, resulting in unequal student skill development and preparation. Intermittent partner engagement may influence internship financing, training quality, and student performance.

Analysis of past studies demonstrates the difficulties are not new. Silva et al. (2018) suggest partner contribution uncertainty may impair internship programme performance. Wolfgram and Ahrens (2022) examine student success and difficulties in finding reliable partners with occasional industry help. This research supports this study's concerns and highlights partner reliability and engagement.

TVET programmes have partner engagement issues, as the research found. Addressing these issues requires written agreements, regular assessments, accountability, and consistent processes in partner management. These traits may increase internship programmes' effectiveness and reliability, enabling TVET graduates to join the workforce.

5.5.4 Major Theme 3: Elements of a Structured Internship Programme for Mainstreaming Youth Transition to Employment in TVET Colleges

5.5.4.1 Sub-Theme 3.1: Key Components of Structured Internship Programs

Semi-structured interviews reveal that TVET internship courses are carefully prepared to ensure students meet academic and skill requirements before commencing. Theory classes precede internships. Participants emphasised linking students' theoretical knowledge to industrial demands. Communication, teamwork, and problem-solving are crucial job abilities, they stated. The course offers a structured orientation to assist interns acclimatise to work and building technical and soft skills.

“The students must complete all their theory modules before starting the internship. This ensures they have the necessary background knowledge to apply in practical settings.” (Participant 1)

“We focus on employability skills such as communication and teamwork, which are essential for students to thrive in a professional environment.” (Participant 2)

“An induction workshop is mandatory to orient students about workplace expectations and professional conduct.” (Participant 3)

“Students are assessed on their readiness through their participation in preparatory programs that hone their technical and soft skills.” (Participant 4)

“The completion of an employability skills program is crucial for students to ensure they can integrate seamlessly into the host organizations.” (Participant 5)

The participants’ responses cited above show internship programmes' strict academic and skill requirements. Participants' responses provide a strong foundation to prepare students for the workforce. Meet academic standards and complete thorough training programmes to develop professional abilities.

The detailed study of these outcomes shows a well-structured TVET internship programme. The need to complete theoretical courses ensures that students have a sound knowledge basis for practical work. Modern companies need technical knowledge and excellent interpersonal and problem-solving skills; thus, employability skills are prioritised. Induction and orientation help students transition from academic learning to real-world application, preparing them for internship difficulties.

Comparing these data to existing research shows that TVET universities' organised internships follow worldwide best practices. Afeti (2018) recommends organised internships that combine academic preparation and skill development for young job transitions. Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) also stress the necessity to include employability skills training in internships to improve job preparedness. These confirm the statistics, showing that TVET internship programmes' rigorous preparation is required and effective. Some literature suggests that resource constraints or insufficient industry partnerships can hinder the practical implementation of these programmes (McDonald, 2020). Thus, while the structured approach is theoretically sound, its success depends on all stakeholders' execution and support.

5.5.4.2 Sub-Theme 3.2: Monitoring and Evaluation

Respondents said TVET internship courses offer a robust framework for monitoring and analysing intern performance. The hours, learning, and activities are documented in a logbook. Most intern engagement statistics and progress can be found within this logbook. The interns are being assessed by TVET and host organisations. Intern success: reported - qualitative & quantitative.

"The logbook is a critical tool for monitoring intern activities and ensuring they are gaining the intended experience." (Participant 1)

"We conduct regular evaluations and feedback sessions to assess intern performance and provide necessary support." (Participant 2)

"Interns are required to submit progress reports periodically, which are reviewed by both the host organization and the college." (Participant 3)

"We use a combination of qualitative feedback from supervisors and quantitative measures such as hours worked, and tasks completed." (Participant 4)

"The evaluation process includes feedback from multiple stakeholders to ensure a holistic assessment of intern performance." (Participant 5)

Responses reveal the complexity of evaluating intern performance. The quarterly logbooks and examinations do intern evaluations, which offer remedial assistance promptly. This is crucial for the quality and success of your internship. Host organisation supervisors and TVET college coordinators arranged the assessment. We evaluate interns' academic and practical skills. Both qualitative and quantitative data show intern performance strengths and weaknesses.

Data is consistent with the literature on intern performance evaluation. Hora et al. (2020), for instance, recommend qualitative and quantitative intern performance assessments in effective internship schemes. Logbooks and regular feedback sessions boost internships, according to Jackson and Bridgstock (2021). Furthermore, information made available through monitoring and evaluation can be used to improve the internship programme (Samuel & Moagi, 2022; Hora, et.al., 2019). Research suggests that applying these

evaluation methods consistently is challenging, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Mabunda & Frick, 2020). TVET colleges' monitoring and evaluation plan is good, but it requires resources and stakeholder participation to flourish.

5.5.5 Major Theme 4: Indicators of Youth Mainstreaming Features in the TVET Internship Setting

5.5.5.1 Sub-Theme 4.1: Skill Development and Employability

- *Technical and Soft Skills Gained Through Internships*

Semi-structured interviews demonstrate that TVET internships develop technical and soft skills. Participants underlined the relevance of these skills in enhancing employability and preparing students for jobs. HR manager (Participant 1) stated "employability skills such as communication are crucial for students before starting an internship programme." The Deputy Principal: Academic (Participant 2) said introduction and orientation ensure students with the abilities for internships. Additionally, internships provide hands-on experience to connect academic knowledge with practical application.

“Employability skills such as communication and teamwork are essential for students before starting an internship programme” (Participant 1).

“We ensure that students undergo an induction orientation to equip them with the necessary skills before they start their internships” (Participant 2).

“The internship programmes are designed to provide practical experience, which is vital in complementing the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom” (Participant 3).

“Students gain both technical and soft skills through internships, which significantly enhance their employability” (Participant 4).

“The skills acquired during internships are critical for students’ transition into the workforce” (Participant 5).

These comments show that TVET internships build technical and soft skills. The focus on communication, cooperation, and hands-on experience implies these courses are

preparing students for the job. The organised internships, including introduction and orientation, prepare students for their areas' difficulties.

These data confirm that internships increase technical and soft skills, as shown by previous research. Silva et al. (2018) state that internships allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, improving their employability. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) emphasise the relevance of technical and soft skills in graduate employability. Participants confirmed that Ekurhuleni TVET internships follow skill development and employability best practices.

- *Employability Programs and Workshops*

The data shows that TVET internships include employability courses and seminars. These courses provide students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in the field. Participant 2 said the institution evaluates internship preparation via employability skills programmes. Participant 5 also noted that the SETA offers job preparation and induction courses to prepare students for internships.

"The college offers employability skills programs to assess students' readiness for internships" (Participant 2).

"Work readiness training and induction workshops are conducted by the SETA to prepare students for their internships" (Participant 5).

"Employability programs and workshops are essential in equipping students with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace" (Participant 6).

"We focus on providing students with both theoretical and practical skills through employability programs" (Participant 4).

"The employability programs are designed to ensure that students are well-prepared for the demands of the workplace" (Participant 3).

These findings demonstrate that employability workshops and seminars prepare students for careers. These initiatives enable students to overcome local challenges. Since they focus on readiness evaluation and introductions, these curricula appear well-structured.

Employability courses and workshops boost graduate employability compared to literature. Hora et al. (2020) found that employability workshops and seminars teach students workplace skills. Employability courses affect graduation outcomes, say Healy et al. (2022). The interviews confirm that Ekurhuleni TVET internship courses prepare students for the workforce with employability training and seminars.

5.5.5.2 Sub-Theme 4.2: Intern Retention and Success Rates

- *Metrics for Measuring Internship Success*

Semi-structured interviews reveal that TVET internships are assessed using many criteria. Participants underlined the importance of intern performance and outcomes monitoring for programme effectiveness. Participant 1 indicated the college assesses interns, whereas Participant 3 said the logbook follows their improvement. Participant 4 mentioned business progress reports and performance appraisals.

"We use evaluation tools to assess the performance of interns and ensure the effectiveness of the programme" (Participant 1).

"The logbook serves as a monitoring tool to track the progress of interns" (Participant 3).

"Hosting companies conduct performance evaluations and provide progress reports to assess the success of internships" (Participant 4).

"Various metrics, including performance evaluations and progress reports, are used to measure the success of internships" (Participant 6).

"Monitoring tools and evaluation methods are essential in tracking the effectiveness of the internship programmes" (Participant 5).

These comments imply that TVET internships are evaluated on several aspects. Evaluation tools, logbooks, progress reports, and performance assessments monitor intern outcomes. These metrics evaluate programming and recommend improvements.

Compared to prior studies, internship performance metrics are better. Effective assessment and monitoring are essential for internship programme performance, according to Iqbal et al. (2021). Marinaș et al. (2021) emphasise employing many

indicators to evaluate intern performance and results. The interviews confirm that Ekurhuleni TVET internship courses use metrics to assess achievement and improve programming effectiveness.

- *Case Studies of Successful Internships*

The data shows multiple successful internships, demonstrating TVET internship programmes' success. Participants gave instances of interns who went on to full-time work. Participant 2 reported higher qualification and company absorption rates. Participant 5 noted the achievement of interns who created companies following the training.

"The qualification rate has improved, and the absorption rate by companies has increased" (Participant 2).

"Several interns have successfully transitioned into full-time employment after completing their internships" (Participant 3).

"We have seen interns who have started their own businesses as a result of the skills gained during their internships" (Participant 5).

"The success of our interns is a testament to the effectiveness of the internship programmes" (Participant 6).

"Case studies of successful internships highlight the positive outcomes achieved through the TVET internship programmes" (Participant 4).

These comments show that TVET internship courses mainstream youth transition to work. Improved qualification rates, absorption rates, and successful entrepreneurship demonstrate the courses' benefits. These case studies show how the internships worked and how other settings may achieve comparable results.

Compared to reading, internships have proven benefits. Internships boost students' employability and prospects of landing full-time jobs, according to Di Meglio et al. (2022). Di Pietro (2022) emphasises internships' relevance in skill development and job advancement. The interviews support these views, showing that Ekurhuleni TVET

internship initiatives are helping youngsters transition to work and achieve favourable results.

5.5.6 Major Theme 5: Effective Model for Implementing TVET Internships for Mainstreaming Youth Transition into the World of Work

5.5.6.1 Sub-Theme 5.1: Best Practices in Internship Programs

The study of semi-structured interviews suggests numerous excellent practices that help TVET internship programmes mainstream teenagers into work. The key conclusion is the value of organised and sponsored internships. According to research, TVET institutions prioritise experiential training and improving graduate employment rates. To assure student preparation and onboarding, 18–24-month internships with extensive support systems like monitoring and assessment are typical. MOU-guided relationships with other organisations let students get practical experience that matches their academic degrees. An organised method is needed to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills, improving employability.

The participants' responses underscore these best practices: *"The college creates experiential training opportunities and increases the number of graduates for diplomas and employment" (Participant 1). "SETAs are responsible for funding, companies for placements, and the college for the provision of student databases" (Participant 2). "The internship program aims to provide pure work experience for academic fulfilment" (Participant 3). "Service Providers must offer quality training and practical experience aligned with students' qualifications" (Participant 4). "The program opens doors for students to be absorbed into employment and achieve their qualifications" (Participant 5).*

These passages demonstrate how organised internships boost employability. The programmes guarantee students learn industry-relevant skills and knowledge. Integrating practical training with academic degrees is recommended to prepare students for the workforce.

Further evidence shows that organised internship programmes, backed by solid institutional frameworks and business collaborations, mainstream youngsters into employment. The data emphasises the need for TVET institutions to have internship

management teams to help and supervise students. External organisations are crucial for practical training and student evaluation. This collaborative approach improves internships and gives students hands-on experience, making them more desirable to employers.

Several research has shown that organised internships improve employability. The evidence supports this. Alla-Mensah et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of technical and vocational education in giving underprivileged youngsters employable skills. Di Pietro (2022) emphasises foreign internships in skill development, supporting the study's focus on practical training and industrial linkages. Moreover, according to a study by High Fliers Research (2017), it is emphasized that individuals without prior work experience have a lower likelihood of finding employment. This highlights the significance of internships in enhancing one's employability. However, Alawamleh and Mahadin (2022) note that although internships bring essential experience, there may still be impediments to employment that need to be addressed. One of the highlighted impediments is the involvement of private sector partnerships and support for internships, which is deemed as an area in need of strengthening (Ayieko, et al., 2023). Strengthening such partnerships can ensure wide access to internships by students, increasing their work experience and chances of being employed in the sector.

5.5.6.2 Sub-Theme 5.2: Recommendations for Improvement

Semi-structured interviews also reveal TVET internship programme improvements. Participants suggested many ways to improve these programmes' youth employment outcomes. Intern assistance, stipends, and external training quality should be prioritised. Additionally, academic programmes should better correlate with business needs and have more rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures to evaluate intern performance and programme efficacy.

Quoted responses from participants illustrate these recommendations: *"Improve on supporting the placed students as well as increasing the stipend" (Participant 1). "Colleges must start specializing and not offer everything, some modules are misplaced and do not create impact" (Participant 2). "There needs to be strict recruitment of lecturers with industry experience to enhance the practical training of students" (Participant 4). "The stipend amounts must be reviewed and increased to cover the cost of living for*

students" (Participant 5). "Standardizing how the internship program is run overall so that efforts can be combined by all stakeholders" (Participant 7).

These comments indicate many internship efficacy strategies. Raising intern stipends reduces dropout rates and ensures students may fully engage in the programme without financial restraints. To ensure students obtain relevant and meaningful training, academic programmes should be specialised to meet industrial demands. Recruiting industry-experienced teachers may also improve student practical training.

A comprehensive review of these proposals shows that intern support mechanisms are essential for programme success. Financial and academic/professional assistance helps interns understand their tasks and responsibilities. Academic courses may meet industry demands and prepare students for jobs by specialising and employing professional teachers. Intern performance and programme improvements need thorough monitoring and review.

The standards reflect internship effectiveness research that emphasises support systems and industry expectations. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) claim that curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular learning boosts employability, requiring more specialist and relevant academic courses. Jeske and Linehan (2020) highlight internship mentoring and skill development, supporting the necessity for competent teachers. Stipend sufficiency may significantly impact internship programme success, according to Mseleku (2022). It is essential to consider the partnerships between TVET colleges and the private sector, as they can provide a better understanding of industry needs. This collaboration has the potential to improve internship programme and enhance the experiences of the interns (Ayieko, et.al., 2023; Makgato and Moila, 2019).

Key findings

Hypothesis testing yielded the following results:

- H1: Well-designed TVET internship programmes significantly benefit institutions and help students develop 21st-century skills ($p = 0.03$).
- H2: TVET internship experience significantly influences graduates' future educational advancement ($p = 0.04$).

- H3: Involvement of service partners is significantly effective for youth transition to employment ($p = 0.02$).
- Well-structured internship programmes and stakeholder involvement play a crucial role for effective youth mainstreaming through internships. Internship experience influences TVET graduates' educational advancement in the future.

Correlation Analysis:

- The research found strong correlations between participation in internship workshops and confidence for participation in the labour market (0.85), technical skills development and job market confidence (0.78), and soft skills development and job market confidence (0.81).
- Therefore, students' confidence to join the job market is significantly improved by participation in internship-related activities and skill development.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented both the qualitative and quantitative data and discussed them in light of previous research and relevant theories. A review of mainstreaming of youth transition to employment in Ekurhuleni through the TVET College Internship Programme was done through data analysis and theory. Semi-structured interviews with key informants and 193 survey responses provided qualitative and quantitative data for the mixed-methods study. This study showed how internship programmes affect youth career transitions.

This study explored how TVET internships assisted youth transition from school to employment. Five supplementary questions examined various components of the internship programme in the context of youth mainstreaming and employability. This research answered these issues in depth, providing a glimpse into internship programmes components and outcomes.

The study initially covered TVET college youth mainstreaming, internship, and career transition. The qualitative data suggested that young mainstreaming promotes inclusive job-preparation choices. Academic and practical knowledge are combined during internships, helping the transition to employment.

Second, the role of service partners in the transition of TVET graduates to employment was examined. TVET institutions, industries, and SETAs could work together to offer internships and resources, the research found. These agreements enhance internships' practical training, making graduates more employable.

Third, the findings pointed to organised internship programmes to mainstream young TVET college employment. Clear objectives, support mechanisms, regular monitoring and evaluation, stipends, and job preparation training are necessary. These elements provide well-organized internships that help students grow professionally.

Fourth, the study analysed TVET internship youth mainstreaming indicators. Graduate employment rates, job skill development, and industry stakeholder cooperation improved. These factors assess the internship program's workforce integration of youth.

Finally, the study revealed a viable TVET internship plan to mainstream youth into the workforce. The method requires TVET colleges, industry partners, and policymakers to cooperate. It encourages localising internships to meet student and business needs. Continuous growth based on stakeholder feedback and strategic actions improves internship efficacy.

This study highlights the relevance of well-planned and supported internship programmes in helping students transition to employment. Qualitative and quantitative statistics demonstrate what makes the Ekurhuleni TVET internship initiative effective. This research recommends improving TVET internships by identifying best practices, challenges, and growth possibilities. Policymakers, educators, and business partners striving to increase youth employability and job transitions should consider these results.

Chapter Six

Framework towards an effective internship model for youth mainstreaming and transition of youth into the workplace model

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five, the data collected through a mixed method approach was analysed and its results were interpreted to provide a sense of what the data means. It also responded to the research questions and the objectives of the study. Overall, the research results supported the vital role of the TVET internship programme in preparing and increasing opportunities for students to transition into the world of work.

This chapter starts by reflecting on the link between theory and the study findings, which will form a foundation for proposing a model for effective internships. Secondly, it draws from existing literature, study results, and findings to propose a model for an effective internship programme that facilitates the mainstreaming and transition of youth into the workplace. The model emphasizes the importance of well-organized and coordinated efforts in implementing internships. Important elements such as institutional arrangements, information and communication, training, quality mentorship, support, and strong partnerships are highlighted as ingredients that are crucial for an efficacious internship model.

6.2 Reflecting on research results and theory

The value of integrating theory with findings is that it enables the researcher to make conclusions that are meaningful and to draw theoretically informed recommendations. The purpose of this section is to relate the empirical findings of the study to theory. In particular, the theoretical framework used is expressed by the Theory of Change, Logic Model, and Transactional Partnering Model.

6.2.1 Findings and the Literature

The review of the literature done in this study highlighted several themes that are important for internships to succeed. These include the socio-economic challenges facing the youth such as unemployment, the importance of using experiential learning to

enhance employability, and the role of internships in mitigating these challenges. The significant role of internships in improving employability by providing experience in the context of workplaces was stressed by various scholars (e.g., O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018; Hora, et al., 2019; Rose, 2020)

Furthermore, the empirical findings presented in Chapter 5 corroborated the centrality of experiential learning, which not only helps students integrate their theoretical and practical learning but also significantly enhances their employability. In addition, the supportive institutional frameworks and participation of industries were emphasised in the literature, which was also evident in the findings of this study. This highlights the fact that a well-structured internship programme is highly likely to impact positively youth employment opportunities.

6.2.2 Theory of Change

Theory of Change (ToC) provided a lens to look at the key steps that are necessary to achieve the aims of the internship programme. The theory underscored the centrality of identifying necessary conditions and interventions intended to achieve the goals of a programme. In the present study, which focuses on TVET internship programmes, the theory helped to establish the causal relationship between programme inputs, activities undertaken to achieve the aims of the programme, and the programme outcomes.

Analysis of the findings:

i. **Inputs and Activities:** The main inputs in this study included policy frameworks, providing support for institutions involved in internships, and building partnerships through engaging the relevant stakeholders. In terms of the activities, the study looked at the implementation of internship programmes, the formation of partnerships with industries, and providing career guidance and other support services.

ii. **Outputs:** The findings included an increase in internship placement opportunities, improvement in skills necessary for the workplace, and enhanced employability. Internships helped students acquire practical skills and integrate theory and practice while providing work experience.

iii. **Outcomes:** Improved employability and by extension, improved youth economic participation are amongst the outcomes of an effective internship. Another finding

or outcome was that students who participated in internships are. Hypothesis testing results ($p = 0.03$) supported the postulation that well-structured TVET internship programmes are beneficial to students highly likely to find employment

The theoretical framework expressed through Theory of Change supports the above findings by underscoring the need for clear, well-structured, and well-defined internship programmes that support employability.

6.2.3 Logic Model

The Logic Model is a tool used to appreciate the relationship between available resources, actions taken, and changes or outcomes that are intended to result. It is a visualization tool that maps the flow from inputs to outcomes, providing a clear structure for evaluating programme effectiveness.

Analysis of the Findings

i. **Resources:** The resources deployed by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) through colleges and local service partners play a key role in supporting internships. The resources do not only include finances, but they also include the provision of the necessary infrastructure and policy support for internships.

ii. **Actions undertaken to implement internships:** Amongst the actions in the findings of this study are the provision of mentorship, workshops aimed at preparing students for internship, and engagement of partners.

iii. **Outputs and Outcomes:** Amongst the outputs highlighted in the study is increased confidence of students about accessing the labour market, improved skills, and improved communication, which are likely to increase higher employment rates and support transitions from education to work. The importance of the Logic Model in this study is that it assisted in pinpointing areas that need attention and additional resources or any action that could improve the effectiveness of the programme.

Amongst the findings that the Logic Model affirms are that sufficient adequate resources and planned interventions, like partnerships, are vital for realising skills development and improving employment opportunities for TVET students.

6.2.4 Transactional Partnering Model

The formation of partnerships and managing them was seen through the lens of the Transactional Partnering Model. The model emphasised the significance of collaboration between industries and colleges in the pursuit of clearly defined and shared goals.

Analysis of key Findings:

i. **The formation of Partnership:** Strong partnerships between the colleges, local industries, and service partners were found to be a key element underpinning the success of TVET internship programmes in this study. The key role of the partnership was to provide students with internship placement opportunities and training in practical skills required in the workplace.

ii. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Regular and effective communication and engagement between TVET colleges and industry partners were associated with the likelihood of success of internship programmes. The involvement of industries could provide more relevant practical experience for interns through taking part in designing and implementing the internship programme.

iii. **Sustainability:** Sustaining the partnerships was identified as pivotal for continuous collaboration and by extension provision of internship opportunities and for keeping colleges informed about the changing needs of industry.

The importance of partnerships in supporting the efficacy of TVET internships was emphasised in this study. This was corroborated by the hypothesis testing ($p = 0.02$), showing the significance of partnerships in facilitating youth transition to employment. The TPM stresses collaboration, which is articulated in the findings. This indicates that partnerships between TVET institutions, industries, and SETAs buttress employability through the practical training aspect of internships. The integration of the theoretical frameworks expressed through the Theory of Change, Logic Model, and Transactional Partnering Model with the empirical findings of the study foregrounded the vitality of TVET internship programmes that are well-structured, supported with resources, and underpinned by collaboration. The findings as detailed above affirmed the theoretical postulations that internships that are effective improve employability. It is also the assumption of the theory that youth economic participation is facilitated by internships.

Functional and purposeful partnerships between colleges and industry stakeholders are also required. Aligning theory with findings is crucial to bolstering the credibility of the study. In addition, it provides a rigorous base for making recommendations, proposing further studies, and improving the programme.

6.3 Importance of the Framework

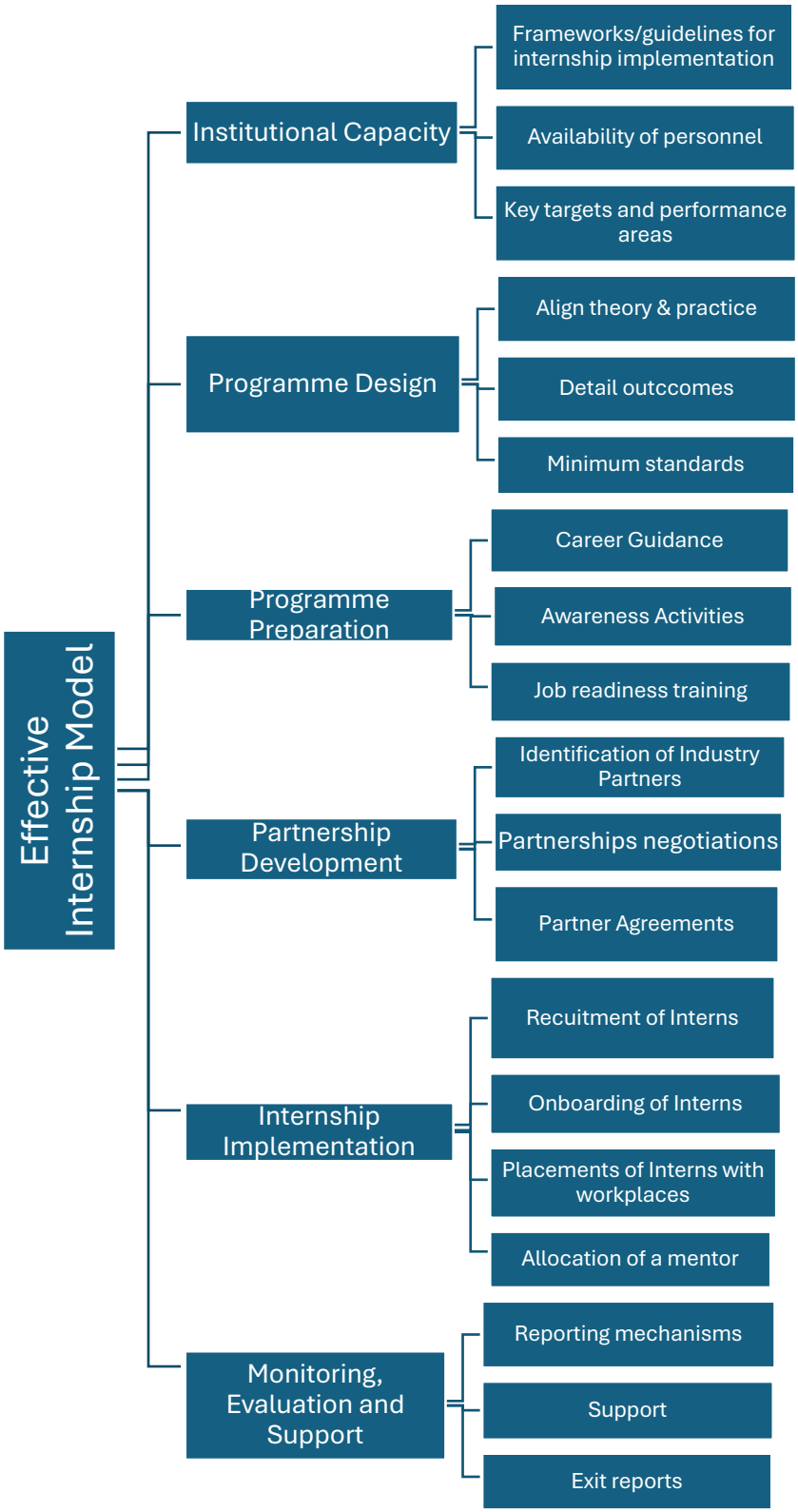
The purpose of a TVET internship programme is to offer practical skills aligned to theory learned in college and to provide workplace experience to students, with a view to increasing their chances of employability. The efficacy of an internship programme depends on its design, support mechanism, and involvement of service partners as highlighted in the study findings. The proposed model is designed as a guideline for designing and implementing a robust internship programme in the context of Ekurhuleni TVET colleges.

Furthermore, with appropriate and relevant tweaking, the use of the model could be extended to other contexts. The proposed model encompasses several crucial pillars aimed at amplifying the contributions of TVET colleges and their service partners. In addition, it also emphasises the importance of collaboration between all parties involved. This model focuses on refining the structure and implementation of internship programmes to ensure they are effective and beneficial to students, colleges, and industry. Figure 6.1 below is a diagrammatical presentation of the proposed framework/model.

The proposed framework is discussed in section 6.4 comprising the following pillars:

- Institutional Arrangements
- Programme Design
- Programme Preparation
- Partnership Development
- Internship Implementation
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Support

Figure 6.1: Proposed Model for Effective Implementation of Internship Programme



Source: Researcher's Own

6.4 Pillars of the Framework

6.4.1 Pillar I: Institutional Arrangements

Mainstreaming youth, as an important aspect of this study, involves the creation of institutions, policies, and programmes that are youth centric. Furthermore, the Commonwealth framework highlights the importance of institutional arrangements and governance in TVET colleges (Commonwealth, 2017). It is therefore imperative that efforts aimed at mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work begin with a focus on the institutions and their capacity.

In the context of TVET colleges, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), as the executive authority, sets up policies that govern the colleges. However, the internship programme is implemented through an umbrella policy, the directive of the Employment of Persons to Developmental programmes in the public service (Department of Public Service Administration, 2018). Literature points to a gap whereby internship policy at national level only focuses on the public sector, leaving the private sector out of the equation. Based on this gap, it is imperative that the colleges strengthen their local policies and programmes for the effective implementation of internships, to cater to all important stakeholders in their locality.

The second level of institutional arrangement includes college and employer-level policies that are backed by resources. The effectiveness of an internship programme requires the TVET colleges to have adequate capacities such as policies, personnel, and clearly defined programmes that will ensure students have access to internship opportunities. Secondly, institutions where the interns are placed should also have policies and procedures. Without these policies and procedures, and relevant personnel, the internship programme would not be able to robustly serve its purpose of providing experiential learning and increasing interns' employability. The study results point to the fact that as much as students are aware of internships and have attended specific workshops regarding the internship programme, there is a sizeable number of students who were not aware or have not even unsure of the internship programmes that exist. These results support the need for colleges to constantly assess their institutional arrangements to deal with gaps and to improve.

The first pillar of the model emphasises focused areas such as the TVET internship policy which is localised, the specific personnel allocated to executive the programme with clear key performance areas, and the clear internship programme that targets final-year students, and industry partners.

6.4.2 Pillar II: Programme Design

To further consolidate internships, programme design is the other important pillar. In this pillar the intentions of the programme are clearly defined, how the programme fits in the curriculum design, how the programme brings theory and practical application to achieve its aims, and the expected outcomes of the programme are outlined. The findings show the importance of aligning the learned theory with the practical application, which is central to the learning process. Without a clear roadmap represented by a well-thought-out internship design, it will be difficult to have an efficacious programme. The design helps to eliminate arbitrariness when implementing the programme. Arbitrariness could result in the programme not being aligned with its objectives.

6.4.3 Pillar III: Programme Preparation

The third pillar of the model is the preparation of the programme. This phase follows institutional arrangements that ensure that there is a clear policy in place for internship at a TVET level, the responsible personnel, and clear activities in place for internship. This pillar entails the necessary activities to implement the programme. This ensures that students are engaged and prepared to participate in the internship. Activities such as awareness programmes, career guidance, and workshops on expectations and processes to follow when applying and engaging in an internship.

The duration of the programme is an important aspect, in this instance, for the fulfilment of the qualification. For instance, students in business studies are expected to undergo 18 months of internship for them to be eligible for their National Diploma. However, results show that 25,6% and 15,3% of students respectively, have participated in the programme that is less than 18 months. This might serve as a hindrance towards achieving a qualification. Mchunu and Mutereko (2020) further state that interns who have undergone at least twelve (12) months of internships have a better chance of finding employment

after the internship. The programme preparation phase can serve as a mechanism to further clarify such benefits of a longer duration of an internship.

Allocation of stipends is another issue that might discourage interns from completing the internship programme and reaping its full benefits. This might be caused by the socio-economic conditions, which are regarded as one of the important ingredients for the success of internships (McHugh, 2017, Chan, et al., 2020). This point was further supported by the qualitative data presented in the previous chapter. This pillar becomes important to fully clarify some of these areas.

Activities such as career guidance, outreach activities, and job readiness workshops are important elements that need to be covered during this phase of the programme preparation. This will ensure that students are aware of what is expected, benefits involved, and the limitations that they need to be aware of.

6.4.4 Pillar VI: Partnership Development

The involvement of strong partners increases opportunities for students to participate in internships and improves the chances of the internship programme being successfully implemented. This assertion is supported by both the literature and the findings of this study. As much as is the responsibility of TVET colleges to ensure that students receive both theoretical and practical skills, it is however evident that TVET colleges do not have the capacity to offer relevant and practical skills to their students. The findings suggest that there is a need for a well-organized approach to partnerships with industries aimed at bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills to improve employability. The findings show that partners play a critical role. For example, SETAs are responsible for funding, while companies are mainly responsible for placements, and the colleges are mainly responsible for the administration of internships including, maintaining the internship database. This statement proves the fact that the partnership between the college, SETAs, and employers is advantageous to the effective implementation of internships. The significance of partnerships is also illustrated in the Transaction Partnering Model, developed by Sameroff & Chandler in 1975, which proposed that when two or more partners collaborate, they attain a mutually advantageous objective Sameroff and Mackenzie (2003). The importance of partnerships in the implementation of internship programmes is also acknowledged by Ayieko,

Okemwa and Muthoka (2023). However, the literature also points out that partnerships should be informed by value proposition, rather than partnership for partnership's sake (HRDC, 2014; Makgato and Moila, 2019; Fleming, et al., 2018).

To secure valuable partnerships, the college must put in place a clear programme that will attract partners to invest in the internship programme and demonstrate a mutual benefit. This pillar of the model will allow the TVET college to identify, negotiate, and formalise beneficial partner agreements that will enhance the employability of the interns. Subsequently, having partnership agreements (Memorandum of Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, Service Level Agreements, etc) empowers all stakeholders in proactively planning, forecasting, and resource allocation for the internship programme.

6.4.5 Pillar V: Internship Implementation

Once there are clear institutional arrangements, awareness of the internship programme, formalisation of partnership, the next important step is the implementation of the programme. This is when students who are in their final year are recruited and given an opportunity to participate in an internship programme. There may be several approaches towards the recruitment of interns, those might include:

- Direct allocations by a specific SETA relevant to the college due to the course offerings of the college
- General advertisements published by SETAs and Employers seeking the participation of students
- Head hunting of interns by the potential employer seeking specific students in a course or college database

The college is responsible for communicating these internship opportunities to all eligible students and assisting them in accessing such internships. The personnel for internships need to ensure that information is sourced and available and share it widely through the college database.

Once students have been recruited and placed, students must receive necessary orientation and induction that will introduce them to the world of work and clarify different expectations and the intended outcomes. Elements such as reporting timeframes, tools

of the trade, remuneration, company policies related to performance, code of conduct, etc can be clarified through the orientation. Another important component of programme implementation is to determine whether the practical skills and experiences provided to them facilitate their transition to employment. This must be clearly defined in the contracting of interns. Assigning meaningful tasks can enhance the learning experiences of interns. When clear expectations were communicated to the intern, it was more likely that the intern's learning and satisfaction with the internship would increase (Hora, et al., 2019). Results illustrate that 73% of interns agreed that improved their ability to relate theory and practice, and this can be a result of being allocated meaningful tasks.

The allocation of a quality mentor has been emphasised as an important ingredient for the success of the internship in this study. Mentorship is defined as a process where a more experienced member of the organisation (mentor) takes responsibility for and actively participates in the development of the skills and leadership abilities of a less experienced member of the organisation (Pop, Swanepoel and Barkhuizen, 2013:8). This definition highlights the importance of experience and knowledge as qualities of a mentor. The study results show that 65,3% of interns agreed that their mentors were knowledgeable, however, 10,4% disagreed. This demonstrates that it is not a given that interns are allocated quality mentors; it is therefore important that the college needs to regularly ask for feedback from interns so that such gaps can be addressed with the employers. Closing the existing gaps in mentorship for interns will play a significant role in improving their overall experience as interns. This, in turn, will greatly enhance their confidence as they transition into the professional world.

6.4.6 Pillar VI: Monitoring, Evaluation and Support

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the internship remain a very important aspect to constantly assess if the programme achieves its intended purpose and how can it be improved. M&E in a programme has many benefits, ranging from tracking of progress, identification of challenges, and provision of timeous solutions to challenges. It serves as a built-in checks and balances. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Public Service Commission (PSC) (2008: 3) defines monitoring as "A continuous function that involves systematically collecting data on specific indicators to offer management and key stakeholders of an ongoing development

intervention insights into the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, as well as the utilization of allocated funds.". And evaluation as "the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme. An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, ongoing, or completed development intervention."

Monitoring and evaluation are not only intended to ensure that the programme is implemented appropriately but also to learn from data and ideas generated from monitoring and evaluation reports so that the programme can be constantly improved. In further highlighting the importance of monitoring and evaluation of interns, participant 2 said: "We hold frequent reviews and feedback meetings to gauge intern performance and offer required assistance".

The college, together with their partners who are hosting interns must ensure that there is clear support offered when needed. There may be several challenges that interns are faced with; it is, therefore, imperative that there is a support structure in place to ensure that interns complete their programme.

The partnerships between the college and industry should aim to increase workplace placement opportunities and awareness for interns. This point is further articulated by Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) who suggested Industry partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and post-internship support to buttress a smooth transition to work. Furthermore, the findings have highlighted the significance of collaboration between colleges and external companies in increasing employability.

Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and support can ensure the effectiveness of an internship programme and its continuous improvement.

6.5 Application of the model

The model should be seen as a guiding framework as opposed to a blueprint that is cast in stone. In other words, there should be room to tweak it based on peculiarities and context or any new research evidence. To effectively implement this model, it is crucial to establish a well-planned and adequately resourced internship program that involves close collaboration between the TVET college and its industry partners. Each pillar of the model necessitates the allocation of resources by the TVET to ensure the comprehensive integration of all essential elements. This includes proactive engagement of potential

partners and students to actively participate in the program. While the model's phases are not necessarily designed to be sequential, it is imperative to embed a robust monitoring and evaluation framework throughout all pillars. This approach provides in-built checks to identify challenges and opportunities, thus enhancing the overall efficacy of the internship model.

6.6 Chapter Summary

The model outlined above, though not perfect, outlines the key ingredients and how they work together to produce an efficacious internship model for transitioning youth into employment. The model is underpinned by clearly defined institutional arrangements, programme design informed by the envisaged outcomes, well-organized partnerships, and an adequately resourced model. The resourcing of the model is necessary to support all significant aspects. An intricately designed model not only aids in the smooth transition of young individuals into the workforce but also empowers the TVET College to establish transparent institutional arrangements and cultivate mutually beneficial and enduring partnerships with the industry. When the various phases of the model are implemented collectively and diligently, there is a high likelihood of the internship program being effective and efficient in facilitating the transition of youth into the professional world.

Chapter Seven
Summary, Findings, and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, a comprehensive model for an effective internship programme for TVET colleges was proposed, drawing from the research findings discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter aims to summarize and synthesis the key findings of the study, focusing on how they responded to the study objectives. It also outlines the study's contributions to the existing body of knowledge, which is expressed by the literature review and theoretical framework. To frame areas for further research, the limitations and delimitations of the study are discussed. At the end, this section makes practical conclusions that inform the recommendations. This chapter, therefore, serves as a glue that binds together the research methodology, the study findings, the study objectives, the literature, and the theoretical framework.

7.2 Summary of Chapters

The summary of the chapters is presented in the following sections.

- *Chapter One*

Chapter One provided an overview, orientation, and background of the study. It also outlined the problem statement, the objectives, postulated hypotheses and posed research questions. The significance of the study and its contributions to the body of knowledge were discussed. The research methodology and ethical standards adhered to in the study were highlighted.

- *Chapter Two*

Chapter Two focused on the review of literature relevant to the study and proposing a theoretical framework. Important concepts and theories in TVET education, like mainstreaming, transition to work, employability, and internship were outlined and discussed in depth. To provide a scholarly foundation, the theory of change, logic model, and transactional partnership model were discussed and put forward as elements of a theoretical framework used to interpret the data.

- *Chapter Three*

provided an overview of the South African TVET colleges and the internship system, with a specific focus on the policy environment and institutional arrangements. In addition, international experiences were explored to draw relevant lessons for this study from the global TVET perspective.

- *Chapter Four*

Chapter Four presented a research methodology and the research design of the study and justified the choice of mixed method. It also provided a sampling strategy, research instruments, and data analysis tools, aligning them with the research objectives of the study.

- *Chapter Five*

Chapter Five presented and discussed the findings of the study, beginning with statistical results, and followed with qualitative results. Findings were illustrated using tables, figures, and themes derived from the data. Furthermore, the chapter linked the findings with the literature and the theoretical framework. This exercise was not only intended to locate the study in the existing body of knowledge but also to show areas of convergence and divergence between this study and the current body of knowledge.

- *Chapter Six*

Chapter Six used the findings of the study and the existing body of knowledge to propose a model for an effective internship programme at TVET College.

- *Chapter Seven*

Chapter Seven summarised the study findings, made recommendations, and outlined the contributions of the study. The chapter also discussed the limitations and delimitations of the study and proposed areas for further research.

7.3 Review of the Study Objectives

Objective 1: Theoretical exposition of the concepts; youth mainstreaming, internship, employability, and transition to employment in the context of TVET College

Objective 2: To assess the involvement of service partners for mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment in Ekurhuleni

Objective 3: To identify the elements applicable for a structured internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges

Objective 4: To analyse indicators relevant to youth mainstreaming in the TVET internship setting

Objective 5: To propose a framework that would enhance implementation of TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work.

7.4 Summary of findings

7.4.1 Objective 1: Theoretical exposition of the concepts; youth mainstreaming, internship and transition to employment in the context of TVET College.

- Scope of Youth Mainstreaming

There are diverse functions in TVET colleges for youth mainstreaming. The policy environment plays an important part in providing a clear framework that prepares youth for employment. The Department of Higher Education and Training guidelines provide a framework to shape the internship structure and its results. However, the results suggest a need for a regulatory framework, especially in the context of the private sector. Secondly, it suggests strengthening of policy for effective mainstreaming of youth into employment.

Policies are crucial in youth mainstreaming because they shape youth development and align the role of TVET colleges with national goals. SETAs integrate these regulations with industry demands, making student skills more relevant and employable. Research-driven policy formulation and continual evaluation and adaptation to suit labour market demands were underscored. The survey data support policy-driven youth mainstreaming, which is consistent with earlier studies. A coordinated policy framework by Allais and Wedekind (2020), for example, links educational outcomes to labour market demands for youth mainstreaming.

- Structure and implementation of internships

The structure and implementation of TVET college internships have a significant impact on their ability to help young people in securing employment. Based on the interviews, it was evident that there is a well-defined institutional framework for administering internships, with a focus on the roles and responsibilities of college units. Furthermore, the duration and contractual obligations of these internships play a crucial role in shaping the experiences and employability of the interns.

The significance of TVET college units in managing internship programs was highlighted by participants. HR and Business Units were frequently responsible for recruiting, placing, and supporting interns. However, there was a difference in perspective between males and females on the efficacy of the support provided by colleges. This organized approach guarantees that both interns and host organizations have explicit responsibilities and support.

- Transition to Employment

The transition from internship to employment plays a crucial role in integrating young people from TVET colleges into the workforce. Based on both quantitative and qualitative findings, it is evident that various supportive mechanisms are in place to facilitate this transition. These mechanisms involve partnering with industry stakeholders at each stage of the internship, providing quality mentors, closely monitoring and evaluating the process, and providing post-internship support to ensure preparedness for the job market. The data consistently emphasized the importance of industry partnerships in assisting interns to become employees. Establishing more of these partnerships is likely to increase opportunities for exposure to real-world experiences for the youth. Sometimes these experiential learning opportunities may lead to a job offer after the end of an internship. Monitoring and evaluation processes for the colleges and SETAs also ensure that interns meet the standards set in the internship programme, and that they are fully competent when entering the workplace.

7.4.2 Objective 2: To assess the involvement of service partners in mainstreaming youth in their policies, programmes for transition to employment in Ekurhuleni

- Role of Service Partners

The role of partnerships in the success of an internship programme cannot be overstressed. Data from results revealed service partners' crucial involvement in the

success of internship programmes. Data underlined the need for industry-SETA relationships to assist TVET students find employment. These partnerships provide resources, internship positions, and practical experience that academics cannot. Hypothesis testing shows a strong association between partnerships and the success of the internship programme. Statistics show that collaborations improve employability, skills, and graduate employment (Ndlovu and Van Wyk, 2023; Tomlinson, et al., 2017). These partnerships enable continual feedback and TVET curriculum modification to satisfy industrial needs.

Institutional-level partnerships are affirmed as an important component of successful internships (e.g. Afeti, 2018; Fei, Waheeb, and Sulaiman, 2020; Fleming, McLachlan, and Pretti, 2018), which suggests strong ties between education providers and industry stakeholders to strengthen vocational training programmes.

- Challenges in Partner Engagement

The study findings highlighted that many service partner engagements face difficulties. Participants cited partner selection, contribution unpredictability, and support inconsistency as major obstacles. These barriers may affect student internship quality and consistency. Data demonstrates that some partners are dedicated and help students, while others fall short, resulting in uneven student benefits. This gap may hurt internships and graduates' careers. These difficulties may undercut the internship program's aims, resulting in unequal student skill development and preparation. Intermittent partner engagement may influence internship financing, training quality, and student performance. Clear partnership agreements must be entered and finalised between relevant stakeholders before the internship programme commences to avoid unnecessary delays.

7.4.3 Objective 3: To identify the elements applicable for a structured internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment in TVET Colleges

- Key Component of Structured Internship

To participate in an internship, students are typically required to have completed their theoretical studies. The need to complete theoretical courses ensures that students have a sound knowledge basis for practical work. Study participants emphasised the importance of linking students’ theoretical learning to industry demands, which is also

corroborated by previous studies (e.g. Zehr, 2016; Afeti, 2018). Modern companies need technical knowledge and excellent interpersonal and problem-solving skills; thus, employability skills are prioritised. Data from the survey suggests that a great number of students were able to acquire these skills through participation in internships. Challenges in meeting this requirement can hinder the internship program's goals, leading to uneven development and readiness among students. Inconsistent participation from partners may impact internship funding, the quality of training, and student performance. Induction and orientation help students transition from academic learning to real-world application, preparing them for the internship journey.

- Duration of an internship

The data shows that many TVET internships last more than a year, demonstrating a recognition that duration could be an important ingredient for a successful internship. This prolonged period may benefit students by giving them enough time to gain professional experience and practical skills. This is consistent with a study by Mchunu and Mutereko (2020) who found that interns who did at least twelve (12) months of internship had a greater chance of finding employment after the internship. On the other hand, Hora, et.al. (2019) found that there were different views between students, colleges, and employers as to what constitutes sufficient duration of an internship. It seems a consensus is yet to be reached on what the ideal time for an internship should be, although the inclination seems to favour a longer period.

Approximately 60% of the sampled Ekurhuleni TVET College respondents said that they were in internships lasting for more than a year. This trend is possibly an indication that institutions and businesses prefer or demand lengthier internships. Longer internships may be preferred since provide reasonable time for more hands-on experience and greater professional integration. Furthermore, for one to fulfil the requirements of a TVET qualification, one must complete eighteen (18) months of internship.

- Methods of accessing an internship

As illustrated in Chapter 5, most internships are obtained via college programmes, demonstrating the importance of educational institutions in the internship placement of students. The lower percentages for personal efforts and connections may either show that students struggle to find internships independently or that the colleges are doing relatively well in placing students. The high placement rate by colleges augurs well for

students from low socio-economic backgrounds as the literature suggests that those from lower socio-economic stratum are less likely to get placement because they possess low social and cultural capital compared to students from high socio-economic backgrounds (Tomlinson, et al., 2017; Klein and Weiss, 2011). The low number of internships acquired by personal efforts and relationships provides a different perspective to Alawamleh and Mahadin's (2022) conclusions that networking and individual initiative are vital to gaining employment chances in developing countries.

- Primary aims of the internship

Most of the respondents said that they were involved in internships to gain workplace experience, supporting internships' goal of on-the-job training. Less emphasis was on academic accomplishment and income. While income was found to be important in a context like South Africa, where the prevalence of poverty is high (Mabeba, 2019), most of the students view internships as a way to gain work experience. The data seems to support the thesis that well-structured internships improve student growth, employability, and financial security – affirmed by hypothesis testing and the correlation matrix. This is also consistent with similar findings in the literature (e.g. Hora, et al., 2019; Silva, et al., 2016)

The data suggests certain fundamentals need to be in place for vocational education and training internships to be effective in line with the literature that addresses this issue – this includes amongst others reasonable time frame, increased awareness, and clarity on the primary role of internships (Tomlinson, et.al., 2017; Hora, et al., 2019). Afeti (2018) stresses the value of internships for vocational education students' hands-on experience and employability. Silva et al. (2018) note that internships improve job chances by providing real-world experience and skill development. College programmes dominate internships, supporting McGrath and Henderson's (2021) claim that institutional assistance is key to closing the education-employment divide.

7.4.4 Objective 4: To analyse indicators relevant to youth mainstreaming in the TVET internship setting

- Technical and Soft Skills

The development of both technical and soft skills plays a crucial role in mainstreaming young people into TVET internships (Ndlovu & Van Wyk, 2023; Tomlinson, et.al., 2017).

These skills are vital for enhancing employability and easing the transition from school to employment. Quantitative data showed that a sizable majority of respondents reported notable gains in soft skills after participating in an internship. The skills include amongst others problem-solving, communication, and collaboration as well as technical abilities like competency with industry-specific tools and technology. These results are consistent with qualitative views from key informants, who highlighted the vitality of the structured aspect of internship programmes intended to offer all-encompassing skill development.

- Participation and Inclusivity

The extent of engagement and diversity in the internship programmes serves as another crucial measure of effectiveness. The demographic data uncovered a broad spectrum of participation across different age groups, races, and socioeconomic statuses. However, despite the numerical data indicating a fair representation of individuals with disabilities, qualitative data suggested a contrasting viewpoint. It suggested that the status quo was not inclusive enough for people with disabilities and therefore warrants strengthening and implementing inclusive policies. This contradicts the representation of respondents with disabilities in the survey results, which revealed that 92.5% of respondents did not have a disability, while 7.5% did. This finding aligns with the prevalence of disabilities in the South African population, which coincidentally mirrors the same percentages. However, numerical representation may not necessarily imply substantive inclusion.

- Retention and success rates

Key indicators of successful youth mainstreaming internship programmes also include the retention and success rates of interns after they complete their programs. While not quantitatively tested, qualitative data strongly suggests high retention rates. For instance, insights from multiple key informants shared success stories of interns who received permanent job offers based on their outstanding performance during their internships. A well-designed internship programme has the potential to enhance retention and to effectively integrate young people into the workforce by providing them with the necessary skills and a path to long-term employment opportunities.

- Stakeholder engagement and support

SETAs, industrial partners, and educational institutions are among the stakeholders whose roles are crucial in mainstreaming youth through internship programmes. The data

showed that these stakeholders' active participation and solid collaborations are key factors in the internships' success. Data shows that TVET colleges played a vital role in placing most of the respondents in internships. On the other hand, qualitative data shows that partnerships with industry have been instrumental in providing students with work experience and practical skills.

- Continuous Monitoring and evaluation

The performance of interns during their internship training requires consistent monitoring to ensure that they gain practical skills that will enhance their employability. Evaluation of their progress will help TVET colleges and employers identify challenges and provide solutions to ensure the smooth execution of the programme. Results show that students make use of a logbook to document their learning activities. The TVET college and the host employer equally assess the progress and performance of interns.

7.4.5 Objective 5: To propose a framework that would enhance implementation of TVET internship for mainstreaming youth transition into the world of work.

- Good working conditions

The findings suggest that institutional arrangements, including good working conditions, play a critical role in the success of the internship programme. The support services provided by the colleges were also found to be crucial for internship success. However, the comparison of the responses of women and men showed differences in how they perceived the efficacy or lack thereof of the support services.

- Quality of mentorship

The literature emphasised that for internships to be efficacious, quality mentorship and mentors should be in place (e.g. Hora, et al., 2019; Mabiza, et al., 2017; Johari and Bradshaw, 2008; McHugh, 2017). The findings showed that most of the respondents had good mentorship suggesting a high likelihood of efficacy of the programme.

- Alignment of theoretical and practical skills

Literature showed the importance of being able to integrate the knowledge learned through theory with practical application. The findings suggest that the internship was efficacious in this regard as indicated by a high percentage of respondents who felt that their ability to integrate theory and practice improved after internship.

7.5 Contributions of the Study

The section is discussed in three forms, namely theoretical contributions, methodological contribution and practical contribution presented below.

- Theoretical contributions

The study contributed to enhancing theoretical understanding through a systematic review of the literature and through interrogating the key concepts applicable to internship programmes. The application of the Theory of Change, Logic Model, and Transactional Partnering Model, contributed to theoretical discourse in that it brought forth a different lens of understanding internships. The combination of the mainstreaming lens, theory, and models also brought rigour and robustness to the study. The study also highlighted the fact that internship as a discourse is linked to productivist discourses underpinned by human capital theory. The inclusion of capabilities theory mitigates the narrow lens provided by human capital theory.

- Methodological contribution

The use of mixed methods provided different angles of looking at internships. While the quantitative approach looked at trends from respondents' data, the qualitative approach provided a way of looking at complex relationships between different variables. Methodology discourse could be enriched by evaluating the use of mixed methods to study internships as opposed to applying either quantitative or qualitative approaches. Perhaps, other studies could employ this methodology as it proved to be rigorous.

- Practical contribution

The study illuminated the key ingredients that contribute to the efficacy of the internship programme. These include functional partnerships, quality mentorship, integration of theory and practice, and supportive institutional arrangements. Bringing together these elements, a model to guide the practical implementation of internship programmes was proposed. This model has the potential to assist college internship units and industries in improving the design and implementation of internships. Furthermore, the study pointed to a lack of national policy on TVET internships, so this study could spark policy debate on TVET internships.

7.6 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

7.6.1 Limitations of the study

As a cross-sectional self-reporting study, the rigour in measuring the efficacy may be weakened. It would have been more rigorous if pre-internship baseline data had been collected and compared against post-internship data. Nonetheless, the study provided rich insight into the key issues in TVET internships. While the qualitative component provided broad findings about internships, the survey responses were not explored with participants in terms of what they mean. The inclusion of a focus group could have illuminated some of the themes better.

7.6.2 Delimitations of the study

To focus the study and be mindful of the available resources, the study was delimited by geographic areas, Ekurhuleni, Gauteng. Secondly, youth who were not in TVET colleges at the time of the study were excluded as the focus was on TVET-specific internships. Furthermore, institutions that were not integral to the implementation of TVET internships, were excluded.

7.7 Areas of further research

The following are suggestions for conducting research for enhancing internships among youth in the TVET sector:

- Longitudinal study

As implied in the methodological contribution section, a longitudinal study could provide a more robust and rigorous study on the efficacy of internship, following students after completion, to assess areas like absorption in the labour market, and career progression.

- Mentors' perspective on the efficacy of internships

Another area that emerged from this study is the role of mentors. Perhaps a look at the perspectives of mentors on the efficacy of TVET internships could contribute to this area of knowledge. As the key players, mentors sit with a lot of knowledge about the learning of interns during the programme. This knowledge could play a crucial role in informing effective internships.

- The impact of socio-economic factors on the efficacy of internships

Socio-economic status, which encompasses social capital and cultural capital are hinted to have a major influence on access to internships and outcomes. A study on how these factors impact the quality of internship experience and placements could improve the understanding of internships.

- A comparative study of TVET internship models

Since there is no national model for the implementation of internships, comparing different models in different parts of the country could yield useful data to enhance the efficacy of internships.

7.8 Recommendations

- *A national policy that governs TVET internship*

Now there is no national framework to provide for norms and standards for internship in TVET colleges. This could result in uneven quality of internships, which has implications on learning and employability.

- *Strengthen institutional arrangements*

A sizable number of respondents did not have confidence in the college internship units, which suggests that their policies and procedures and their activities may not be as robust as they should be.

- Strengthen mentorship

It was established that mentorship plays an important role in internships. However, there were still many students in the study who were either not sure of the quality of mentorship or felt that the mentorship was not of quality. This suggests a need to look at the weaknesses of mentorships and find ways to mitigate them.

- Find ways to encourage more partners to come into the fold

The centrality of partnerships to the success of internships resonates throughout the study. It seems that the partnerships that are in existence currently are not enough especially as reflected by the students who still struggle to find internship placement opportunities.

7.9 Conclusion

Whilst this study is a minuscule contribution to the vast field of TVET internships, it provided useful insights to understand internship programmes better and improve them. Amongst the key findings is the importance of the institutional arrangement of the DHET, which governs TVET colleges to industries and colleges. In particular, a clear national policy is necessary to inform institutional policies. Hypothesis testing showed a strong association between a well-structured internship programme and its efficacy. At the institutional level rigorous policies and procedures are necessary and should be implemented with vigour. Secondly, the crucial role of partnership, which was not only affirmed by hypothesis testing but also by qualitative data was highlighted. Improvement and support of partnerships are therefore critical for the success of internships.

Thirdly, key elements that make for an efficacious internship programme were not only identified but also suggested for their strengthening. These elements include quality mentorship, a supportive environment for interns, duration of the internship, acquisition of soft and technical skills, and integration of theory and practical application. So, an efficacious internship is a function of multiple elements interacting in a complex way as opposed to one silver bullet. Fourthly, the findings of the study created a springboard for proposing an efficacious internship model. The model is an integration of theory, the findings of the study, lessons drawn from international experiences, and practical application of the key concepts.

Lastly, while the methodological, theoretical, and practical contributions of this study are highlighted, its limitations are also acknowledged. Proposals of further studies were made to mitigate the identified limitations.

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Annexure 'A': APPROVAL BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE AFROCENTRIC GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOCUS AREA

PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
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June 2023

YP Notsi
20933878

Research title as approved by the scientific committee of the Afrocentric Governance of Public Affairs Focus Area:

Efficacy of technical vocational education and training college internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment: A case of Ekurhuleni

Dear YP Notsi
This letter serves to confirm that your PhD research proposal has been approved by the Humanities Research Management Committee.

The ethics application is referred to the:
* Research Ethics Committee- BaSSREC: https://humanities.nwu.ac.za/basic-and-social-sciences-research-ethics-committee-bassrec
* Research Ethics Committee-HHREC:https://humanities.nwu.ac.za/human-social-sciences-research-ethics-committee-hssrec

Your contact person is Ms Chantele Bloem at Chantele.Bloem@nwu.ac.za / 018 285 2583. Please inform her as the responsible person when your ethics application has been successfully approved.

Yours Truly,

Costa Hofisi
Research Director

Annexure 'B': ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
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Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 016 103 4446
Email: Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

16 October 2023

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)** on **22/09/2023**, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Efficacy of technical vocational education and training college internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment: In Ekurhuleni.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof. L.B. Mzini

Student/Research Team: P.Y. Notsi (20933878)

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	1	0	0	4	-	2	3	-	A	7
Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date:22/09/2023 **Risk:** Low risk

Expiry date:22/09/2024

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

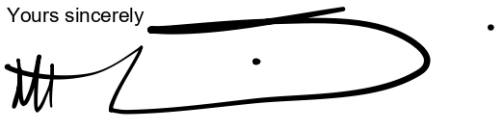
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principal investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the BaSSREC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the BaSSREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*

- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and BaSSREC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the BaSSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
    - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *BaSSREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via* BaSSREC-Admin@nwu.ac.za.

The BaSSREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the BaSSREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof E. Idemudia

Chairperson NWU Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Annexure ‘C’: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT EKURHULENI TVET COLLEGE

Private Bag X1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa 1900

Tel: +2716 310-3660
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Humanities: School of Government Studies
Enquiries: Mr Thomas Sese
Email: 22854967@nwu.ac.za

Tumi.Mzini@gmail.com

06 June 2023

The Ekurhuleni TVET College (Human Resource Department)/

RE: Permission to conduct research at the Ekurhuleni TVET College

Ms Yvonne Palesa Notsi, is a PhD student under the guidance of Professor Loraine Boitumelo Mzini, at the North-West University in the Faculty of Humanities, School of Government Studies. She requests permission to conduct a study to assess assesses the institutional arrangements relating to internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment with specific reference to Technical Vocational Education and Training College (TVET) in Ekurhuleni. The title of the study is: “Efficacy of Technical Vocational Education and Training College Internship Programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment: A Case of Ekurhuleni”.

Ms Notsi, request access to the following information: Assistance from respondents (final year students and Human Resource Unit); within the respective directorate/ unit to co-operate in completing the questionnaire and for interviews. The research conducted is mainly academic and she intends to publish the findings of the study in a professional journal and/ or at professional meeting like symposia, congresses, or other meetings of such a nature. She intends to protect the personal identity of the participants by assigning each respondent a random code number.

Yours sincerely

Prof LB “Tumi” Mzini Study leader _____

Access to the Institution approved _____

Access to the Institution not approved _____

(Kindly provide reasons if the request is not approved)

Annexure 'D': RESEARCH INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Research project title: Efficacy of Technical Vocational Education and Training College Internship Programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment: In Ekurhuleni

Dear potential participant,

My name is Ms. Palesa Yvonne Notsi (PhD candidate/student) for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University, and I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in this research. This study assesses the effectiveness of TVET internship as an integration mechanism and existing partnerships capacities to support young people's transition into the world of work.

Participation in this survey research is entirely voluntary. You may also withdraw your consent to participate at any time, and there are no consequences. The survey takes around 20 minutes of your time. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each survey will be assigned a number code. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to a greater public understanding of employee capacity building. The first question on the survey will ask you to give your consent to participate in this research, which is necessary in order to continue.

Findings and recommendations will be shared with your TVET college as the main custodian and the university where I have registered. Findings will be presented at a conference and for publication in accredited journals and conference proceedings in the field of study.

Over the next few weeks, the survey will be posted and available to answer. Announcements will be made to remind employees about the link connecting you to the survey. The link will be available for two weeks and will close on 15 November 2023. If you wish to contact me further regarding any of this process, please feel free to email me at: pnotsi40@gmail.com.

Thanks!

Annexure 'E': SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Palesa Yvonne Notsi. I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Public Management and Governance at North West University, with student number **20933878**. The title of my research is **"Efficacy of Technical Vocational Education and Training College Internship Programme for Mainstreaming Youth Transition to Employment: In Ekurhuleni."** The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of TVET internship as an integration mechanism and existing partnership capacities to support young people's transition to the world of work.

The purpose of the research is purely academic, and all the information gathered will be utilized solely for academic purposes. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and all the information will be treated as confidential, and under NO circumstances will participant's identities be revealed. You are invited to participate in the research to help me fulfill the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy requirements.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Which course do you study at TVET? ……..

Age category?

18-24 years		25-29 years		30-35 years	

Gender

Male		Female		LGBTQI+		Prefer not to say	

Race

African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White	

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes		No	

Home language?

Sesotho	
IsiZulu	
English	
IsiSwati	
Setswana	
Afrikaans	
Tshivenda	
isiXhosa	
Sepedi	
IsiNdebele	
IsiTsonga	
Other	

What would you say is your total annual household income?

Below R100 000		Between R100 001 and R350 000		Between 350 001 & R500 000		Above R500001	

SECTION B: CURRENT INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN THE JOB MARKET

How confident are you about entering the job market after graduating?

Very confident	
Not sure	
Less confident	
Other Specify:	

Have you attended any workshops or seminars on career planning or employability skills?

Yes		No	

If yes, who offered these workshops or seminars?

My college		Municipality		SETAs		NYDA		Other	

Are you aware of available internship opportunities in your field?

Yes		No		Not sure	

Are you currently participating in an internship programme?

Yes	
No	
Applied for placement	
Other Specify:	

Duration of your internship

Six months		Between seven & twelve months		More than 12 months	

How did you access the internship?

Through the college's internship programme	
Through personal efforts	
Through contacts	
Other: Specify	

If you are participating in an internship, what is it meant for?

Academic achievement		Workplace experience		To earn an income	

If not participating, what are the reasons prohibiting you from participating?	
No placement opportunity	
Not yet applied	
Other Specify:	

SECTION C: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNSHIPS

The college				
	YES		**No**	
Has a unit that is responsible students' internship	☐		☐	
Has policies and procedures for student internships	☐		☐	
Helps students find an internship placement	☐		☐	
Prepared me for the internship through a workshop	☐		☐	
Please answer the question by using the ratings below				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**
The college's internship unit inspires confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐

In my experience, the college's internship unit is efficient	☐	☐	☐	☐
The internship unit supported me throughout my internship	☐	☐	☐	☐
The college makes an effort to inform students about internship policies and procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐
The college communicated with the host company regularly	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kept in touch with me for update on progress	☐	☐	☐	☐

The host organisation				
	YES		**NO**	
Has a dedicated unit for internships	☐		☐	
Has internship policies and procedures	☐		☐	
I signed a contract that stated the terms and conditions of the internship	☐		☐	
Conducted an induction to orientate me	☐		☐	
Allocated a mentor/supervisor	☐		☐	
Provided a stipend	☐		☐	
Has mechanisms to communicate interns' concerns	☐		☐	
Please answer the question by using the ratings below				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**
The terms and conditions of the internship were explained to me	☐	☐	☐	☐
If a stipend was provide, was it sufficient	☐	☐	☐	☐
Made effort to make me feel at home	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other staff member was supportive	☐	☐	☐	☐
I did not feel discriminated compared to other staff members	☐	☐	☐	☐
The learning outcomes were clearly defined and communicated at the beginning of the internship	☐	☐	☐	☐
Practical knowledge and skills provided during the internship matched theoretical knowledge learn in college	☐	☐	☐	☐

Work allocate to me was relevant to what I studied	☐	☐	☐	☐
The mechanism for communicating students' concerns was effective	☐	☐	☐	☐

My internship mentor (answer if a mentor was allocated)				
Please answer the question by using the ratings below				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Was qualified	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledgeable about the work	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supportive	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicated effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provided feedback about my performance regularly	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helped me work on areas I'm weak in	☐	☐	☐	☐
Followed the programme as communicated to me before the start of the internship	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provided opportunity to learn new things	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members other than my mentor/supervisor were allowed to allocate me tasks in a controlled manner	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intervened positively when other staff wanted to allocate me irrelevant tasks	☐	☐	☐	☐

Since participating in the internship programme				
Please answer the question by using the ratings below				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
My problem-solving skills have improved	☐	☐	☐	☐
I understand the course theory better	☐	☐	☐	☐
My practical skills related to work has improved	☐	☐	☐	☐

Improved ability to relate theory taught at college to the real world	☐	☐	☐	☐
Developed professional competence	☐	☐	☐	☐
I'm more confident about getting a job than I was before	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have better understanding of my chosen profession	☐	☐	☐	☐
I improved the ability to work in a team	☐	☐	☐	☐
I improved my ability to communicate effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐
It helped me to decide on a career path	☐	☐	☐	☐
It helps me recognise my strengths	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was able to expand my networks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, the internship was beneficial	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you rate the need to improve the following in the internship programme you participated in				
Please answer the question by using the ratings below				
	Very High	Very	Low	Very Low
Communication between interns & the college	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication between interns and employers	☐	☐	☐	☐
Placement of students in internships	☐	☐	☐	☐
Policies and procedures (college)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Policies and procedures (Employers)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internship office's efficiency (college)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of mentor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working conditions for interns	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make the programme more relevant	☐	☐	☐	☐
Alignment of practical knowledge and skills provided during the internship & theoretical knowledge learn in college	☐	☐	☐	☐

Annexure 'F': INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS, HR OFFICIAL AT TVET COLLEGE

My name is Palesa Yvonne Notsi. I am a PHD student in the Department of Public Management and Governance at the North-West University, with student number **20933878**. The title of my research is "Efficacy of Technical Vocational Education and Training College Internship Programme for mainstreaming youth transition to Employment: A Case of Ekurhuleni." The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of TVET internship as an integration mechanism and existing partnership capacities to support young people's transition to the world of work.

The purpose of the research is purely academic, and all the information gathered will be utilized solely for academic purposes. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and all the information will be treated as confidential, and under NO circumstances will the participant's identity be revealed. You are invited to participate in the research to help me to fulfill the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

POSITION IN THE ORGANISATION	

GENDER	**Female**		**Male**		**Other**	

AGE	**25-30**		**31-35**		**35-60**	

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO HAVE A DISABILITY?	**Yes**		**No**	

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE POSITION?	**>3yrs**	**3-5yrs**	**6-10yrs**	**11-15yrs**	**16+ yrs**

SECTION B: PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

1. What policies inform the youth internship programme at the college?

2. Describe the current institutional arrangements – which structure/unit is responsible for the internship programme?
3. What informs a structured internship programme for students?
4. What is the role of the college in creating internship opportunities for students who need them for academic purposes?
5. What is the duration of an internship programme within the college?
6. Does the college focus on creating platforms to link final-year students with potential placements for internships?
7. What do external organisations need to qualify to host final-year interns?
8. Is there a partnership policy aimed at recruiting potential workplaces to absorb students for internships?
9. Does the college sponsor remuneration for the placement of students or is it the responsibility of a hosting employer?
10. What are the key factors to consider when offering internships to college students?
11. What are some of the benefits that the college has seen from offering internships to students in the past?
12. What type of skills and knowledge do you expect students to have before starting an internship programme?
13. How do you assess student's readiness to participate in the internship programme?
14. How do you onboard and train interns to ensure they have a successful experience in your organisation?
15. What are some of the common challenges you face when working with interns, and how do you address them?
16. Is there an evaluation tool to assess the performance of interns?
17. Are there mechanisms in place to support interns struggling and encourage those that are doing well?
18. Do interns have set hours they have to work in a day, week, or month?
19. Do you think an internship programme is the best way to capacitate students to be ready for the world of work and receive their full qualifications?
20. If there were improvements that could be made in the programme, what would those be?

Annexure 'G': CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

+27 84 775 7149, pearlresearch02@gmail.com 273 Hood Street, Centurion, 0183

Certificate of Editing

This serves to confirm that copy-editing and proofreading services were rendered to **P.Y. NOTSI** for a dissertation titled**: "Efficacy of technical vocational education and training college internship programme for mainstreaming youth transition to employment: In Ekurhuleni "**, with a final word count of **56 654 words** on **14/08/2024.**

*I am a member of the Professional Editors' Guild (member number **MAS009**; receipt **#326954** for the **2024/2025 financial year**) and commit to the following codes of practice (among others):*

- *I have completed the work independently and did not sub-contract it out.*
- *I kept to the agreed deadlines and/or communicated changes within reasonable time frames.*
- *I treated all work as confidential and maintained objectivity in editing.*
- *I did not accept work that could be considered unlawful, dishonest or contrary to public interest.*

I uphold the following editing standards:

- *proofreading for mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, grammar.*
- *copy-editing that includes commenting on, but not correcting, structure, organisation and logical flow of content, basic formatting (headings, page numbers), eliminating unnecessary repetition.*
- *checking citation style is correct, punctuating as needed and flagging missing or incorrect references.*
- *commenting on suspected plagiarism and missing sources.*
- *returning the document with track changes for the author to accept.*

I confirm that I have met the above standards of editing and professional ethical practice.
The content of the work edited remains that of the student.

SIGNATURE: 

FULL NAME: ARAFAT MASIMBI