Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through the workplace-based experience programme

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DECLARATION

I, VANESSA NAIDOO, hereby declare that this research study is my own original work and the product of my independent effort. It has not, in whole or in part, been submitted to any institution or examination board for the award of a degree or any other qualification.

I further declare that all sources of information and quotations used in this work have been properly acknowledged and referenced in full.

SIGNED' Naidoo ..... DATE- **26 November 2025**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the cherished memory of my late mother, Indrani Kisten, whose love, strength, and guidance continue to inspire all that I do.

To my husband, Raj Naidoo, thank you for your enduring support, patience, and belief in me throughout this academic journey. To my daughters, Denisha and Kimaya Naidoo, your love and encouragement have been a constant source of motivation and purpose.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of management in enhancing the workplace readiness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students via workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes. It recognises that, although TVET provides students with theoretical knowledge and technical skills, many struggle to transition into employment due to a lack of practical experience and inadequate soft skills. The gap between institutional training and workplace expectations poses a significant barrier to employability, particularly in South Africa, where youth unemployment remains high. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study explores the roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through WBE programmes. Data were collected through interviews with campus managers and heads of departments from selected campuses within a public TVET institution. The collected data was analysed thematically, providing a nuanced understanding of the role of management in WBE implementation, the challenges they face, and their strategies. The findings reveal that WBE enhances technical competencies as well as soft skills such as adaptability, communication, and teamwork. The roles played by management were found to be central to student preparedness, through initiatives including induction programmes, mentorship schemes, soft skills development programmes, and industry collaboration. However, limited placements, outdated resources, misalignment between the curriculum and industry, and logistical constraints were identified as potential barriers to effectiveness.

The study concludes that effective management and leadership are essential for the success of WBE, as they ensure alignment with industry needs and promote positive learning environments. Key recommendations include strengthening industry partnerships, introducing standardised pre-WBE training, updating curricula to reflect workplace demands and improving institutional infrastructure. By emphasising the important role of management, this research advances both theory and practice, offering strategies to improve WBE frameworks and prepare TVET graduates for meaningful employment.

Keywords: Management, Workplace readiness, TVET students, Workplace-based experience (WBE) programme, Work-Integrated learning (WIL), Experiential Learning (EL), Improving workplace readiness

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Research Study

1.1. Introduction

This study examines the role of management in enhancing the workplace readiness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students through workplace experience programme. According to Kitainge and Ferej (2019), TVET students face major challenges when transitioning from educational settings to professional workplaces. Although their academic training provides them with technical knowledge and skills, they often lack the hands-on experience and interpersonal skills necessary for success in the workplace. Strong partnerships between schools and employers can play a significant role in facilitating this transition (Oviawe, Uwameiye, & Uddin, 2017). Literature emphasises the crucial role that workplace-based experience programmes should play in fostering students' workplace readiness. These programmes provide students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real-life scenarios and develop soft skills such as interpersonal skills, collaboration and problem-solving abilities. Against this backdrop, it is important to explore the role of management in preparing TVET young professionals for the workplace through on-the-job learning programmes.

According to Shivoro, Shalyefu and Kadhila (2018), companies commonly recognise a foundational set of dapatable abilities as essential qualities for entering the workforce. Schreck, Weilbach and Reitsma (2020) found that, in the South African context, the top qualities most praised in graduate candidates considered to be prepared for employment were openness to new learning, proficiency in interpersonal interaction, originality of thought, teamwork capabilities and proficiency in conflict resolution. However, for a programme to be successful, management must play an active role in its development and implementation. Paterson, Keevy and Boka (2017) emphasised the importance of college managers within colleges fully committing to the Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programme to ensure its effective execution. This includes building partnerships with various economic sectors and partnering organisations, though this is not the only requirement. Management can play a vital role in shaping WBE programmes to align with the organisation’s broader business

goals. This involves identifying valuable learning opportunities for students, providing guidance and mentorship, fostering a safe and supportive environment for growth, and evaluating the programme's overall impact. This study will examine how management contributes to enhancing the job preparedness of TVET students through such experiential learning initiatives.

1.2 Key Concept Clarification

Clarifying concepts involves carefully defining and refining the core ideas and terms of the research. This process is essential for maintaining clarity and ensuring that the study remains aligned with its objectives. It also strengthens the quality of the research by making it rigorous, coherent, and relevant.

1.2.1. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges

TVET colleges are formal institutions that deliver structured educational and training programmes across a range of vocational and technical disciplines, including engineering, health sciences, business administration and information technology (UNESCO, 2021; McGrath & Powell, 2019). These programmes ensure that students are equipped with the essential competencies and practical skills required for entering the workforce or progressing in their careers, with a strong emphasis on experiential, hands-on learning (World Bank, 2021). Globally, the TVET system incorporates the education and training of the labour force in technical (hard) and interpersonal (soft) skills, facilitated by specialised institutions. Programmes broadly classified as technical training, technical education, vocational training or vocational education. A closely related concept is vocational education and training (VET), which focuses specifically on the vocational dimensions of education and skill development (Khan & Ahmed, 2019; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2016). TVET colleges also broaden access to higher education pathways after secondary school, supporting the acquisition of skills and the development of workplace-relevant attitudes and values (Gaffoor & van der Bijl, 2019). Therefore, technical colleges play a vital role in preparing students for careers in various industries (McGrath, Mulder, Papier, & Suart, 2020). However, knowledge and competencies acquired through classroom instruction alone cannot fully prepare students for the demands of the labour market (Schreuder, 2019). In order to adequately prepare TVET students for the demands of the labour market,

hands-on exposure in actual work settings is necessary (Okolie, Igwe, & Mong, 2021; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2019).

1.2.2. Management

According to Robbins and Coulter (2018), management involves the structured organisation and monitoring of employee responsibilities to ensure that organisational objectives are achieved in a strategic, efficienct and excellent excellence. This implies that effective management involves structuring, organising, guiding and overseeing resources in order to fulfil specific objectives. Strategic and proficient leadership is crucial in ensuring that a programme functions seamlessly and meets its planned objectives. Similarly, Daft (2021) describes management as the coordinated effort of engaging with and guiding others to attain organisational goals. In the context of this study, management refers to individuals in leadership and administrative roles within a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution. These individuals include Campus Managers and Heads of Departments, who are responsible for planning, organising, supervising and coordinating work-integrated learning programmes. Furthermore, Coulter (2021) defines management as the structured process of directing and harmonising the efforts of individuals and groups to accomplish organisational objectives.

Campus Manager – In the South African TVET sector, a Campus Manager is a senior management official responsible for managing college campuses. According to DHET (2013), their duties include supervising teaching and learning activities, campus administration, resource allocation, and collaboration with industry and community stakeholders.

Head of Department – In the TVET context, a Head of Department (HOD) is an academic leader who plays a crucial role in managing subject-specific teaching and learning processes. They support lecturers, ensure curriculum coverage and strengthen industry collaboration in line with programme needs (ETDP SETA, 2020).

1.2.3. Workplace readiness

Workplace readiness is defined as the extent to which TVET students are prepared to meet the professional standards and challenges of the workplace (Nurjanah & Ana, 2022). This can be achieved through various methods, such as experiential learning,

engaging with real-life workplace scenarios, and developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Okolie, Nwajiuba, Binuomote, Osuji & Igwe, 2020). Daugherty and Roberts (2020) define workplace readiness as how well TVET students are equipped with the necessary competencies, behaviours, and understanding to fulfil workplace requirements. Similarly, Schneider and Ehlman (2022) describe workplace readiness as a varied set of competencies that enable individuals to adapt and excel in professional environments. These competencies include academic fundamentals, vocational technical skills, and key employability qualities such as reasoning, communication, collaboration, and resilience (Schneider & Ehlman, 2022). Jackson and Johnson (2021) further elaborate that workplace readiness refers to the extent to which TVET students are prepared in terms of their understanding, practical abilities, and professional dispositions for functioning in occupational settings. They emphasise that it involves a combination of technical knowledge pertinent to their academic discipline and general employability skills such as analytical thinking, interpersonal collaboration, and communication in professional contexts.

1.2.4. TVET students

Kaiser and Cavaliere (2018) describe TVET students as individuals engaged in technical or vocational education and training provided by specialised institutions. These learners typically have specific career ambitions and actively seek to acquire the practical knowledge and skills required for their future professions, which highlights the importance of workplace-based learning experiences in their development. Similarly, Sinisi (2019) characterises TVET students as participants in vocational or technical programmes focused on delivering targeted, industry-relevant training. These students often have clearly defined goals and are motivated by a determination to enter the workforce with expertise and competencies necessary for their chosen fields. Martin and Colvin (2022) state that TVET students enrol in technical or vocational programmes offering specialised training and education in practical fields. They usually have career-oriented goals and aim to acquire the skills and knowledge required to succeed in their chosenvocations. Work-based learning programmes play a fundamental role in enhancing these skills and aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations.

1.2.5. Workplace-based experience (WBE) programme

These structured educational initiatives facilitate TVET students gaining practical experience in real work environments (Mathis, Jackson, & Valentine, 2019). These programmes can take various forms, such as internships, cooperative education (co-op) and apprenticeships, and are delivered by organisations including private enterprises, government agencies and non-profit institutions (Straus & Baker, 2020). According to Mathis, Jackson and Valentine (2019), WBE programmes provide students with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts, thereby improving their understanding of industry practices, perfecting their skill sets, and facilitating their transition into the workforce. Similarly, Straus and Baker (2020) describe WBE programmes as an integrative pedagogical approach that combines classroom learning with supervised work experience, enabling students to develop professional skills and gain practical expertise. Walker and Simmons (2022) further define WBE programmes, which are often referred to as internships, as formal arrangements that immerse students in workplace settings. These programmes provide opportunities for students to develop industry-specific skills, expand their professional networks, and explore career pathways through guided experiential learning.

1.2.6. Work-integrated learning (WIL)

Bridgstock, Zegwaard and Barrie (2019) define WIL as educational activities that deliberately combine workplace experience with academic learning. The work-integrated learning (WIL) model emphasises the convergence of theoretical learning and practical application within professional settings. It is designed to offer students meaningful opportunities to convert classroom-acquired knowledge and skills into authentic workplace experiences, thereby enhancing their preparedness for employment and their overall employability. Bennett, Leach and Birch (2019) define WIL as “an educational approach that integrates academic learning with authentic workplace experiences”. It involves structured opportunities for students to utilise their theoretically acquired expertise and develop relevant abilities in actual work settings.WIL plays a pivotal role in enhancing students’ employability by deepening their understanding of industry practices, advancing professional skill development and nurturing a sense of professional identity. It encompasses various of experiential formats, such as internships, cooperative education programmes, industry-based

projects and simulations, which enable students to apply their disciplinary knowledge, develop workplace-relevant skills and engage in reflective practice within authentic professional settings. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, workiintegrated learning (WIL) enables a more seamless transition from education to employment. Chalmers and Reid (2019) define it as a pedagogical approach that combines academic learning with real-world work experience in order to strengthen students' preparedness for the labour market. This model provides students with structured opportunities to undertake practical tasks, acquire industry-specific competencies and build professional networks, all under the guidance of experienced practitioners. Furthermore, WIL promotes integrating theoretical concepts with critical thinking and developing specialised workplace capabilities (Chalmers & Reid, 2019).

1.2.7. Experiential learning (EL)

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is a pedagogical framework that highlights the significance of acquiring knowledge through direct experience and reflective practice. Developed by influential educational theorists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and David Kolb, ELT emphasises the interaction between action and reflection in the learning process. According to Jarvis (2019), experiential learning involves engaging in tangible activities, critically analysing those experiences, and constructing new insights and understandings. According to Boud, Cohen, and Sampson (2014), experiential learning involves learning through first-hand experience and active engagement with real-world tasks and situations. It is characterised by the integration of theory and practice, as learners apply their knowledge and skills in authentic contexts.

1.2.8. Improving workplace readiness

Shaffer and Coyner (2019) emphasise that improving workplace readiness requires identifying the specific skills and competencies that TVET students need to succeed in professional environments. This is followed by implementing targeted strategies to address any gaps. These strategies may include specialised training programmes, mentoring relationships and various forms of reinforcement, all of which are aimed at fostering the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are essential for a successful start to a career. Similarly, Noels (2020) describes workplace readiness improvement as a process of identifying and addressing skill or experience deficiencies among TVET

students through targeted interventions. These interventions may consist of organised training, mentoring initiatives or experiential learning opportunities, which are designed to cultivate critical thinking, problem solving and communication abilities. Additionally, Wall, Bird, and Lawson (2019) assert that improving workplace readiness requires a thorough assessment of students' existing competencies and the identification of areas needing development. This process involves implementing strategies such as focused training and mentorship to ensure students acquire the requisite capabilities for a smooth transition into the workforce.

1.2. Background to the research problem

The transition from academic settings to professional environments poses major challenges for graduates (Kitainge & Ferej, 2019). Although technical colleges equip students with the foundational knowledge and core competencies necessary for entry into the workforce, many graduates to find employment due to a lack of practical experience. The study by Graham, Erasmus, Molefe and Van den Berg (2024) highlightsthis issue, noting that new graduates frequently struggle to find employment due to a lack of relevant and adequate work experience. Classroom-based instruction does not always translate into practical workplace competence, and employers While vocational education is widely supported as a strategic approach to reducing unemployment rates, its effectiveness hinges on establishing robust connections between the skills acquired by TVET graduates and the practical workplace skills sought by employers. Adams (2019) highlights that such collaborations are crucial for improving the employability of TVET graduates. Establishing a strong alignment between the competencies developed by TVET graduates during their education and the practical skills required by employers is critical for supporting a smooth transition from academic institutions to professional settings (Korber & Oesch, 2019). Collaborations between educational institutions and industry stakeholders show great promise in bridging this gap and improving workforce readiness (Oviawe & Uwameiye, 2022). According to Kitainge and Ferej (2019), work-based learning facilitates the development of practical workplace competencies and plays a pivotal role in facilitating graduates' entry into the labour market.

The advantages of workplace-based experience programmes have been extensively explored in scholarly literature. Bousquet, Lapointe and Taylor (2021) report that work-

integrated learning initiatives, including workplace-based experience programmes, have a positive influence on students' preparedness for employment and their ability to secure job opportunities. Mokgata and Raborife (2018) emphasise the increasing focus on these programmes within South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, highlighting their contribution to developing practical skills and improving employability. Such programmes allow students to apply the theoretical knowledge and skills acquired in academic settings to real-world professional contexts. Antila, Mäkelä and Vahtera (2021) observed that internships significantly contribute to students' employability and professional skill development. Similarly, Collier, Varghese and Jones (2018) identify cooperative education as another type of workplace-based experience that strengthens career readiness and critical thinking abilities. Although less commonly implemented, apprenticeships have also been revealed to improve individuals' skills and employability (Cedefop, 2022). Workplace-based experience programmes can take various forms, such as internships, co-operative education, apprenticeships, and industry-based projects. The latter is gaining ground as a valuable experiential learning model; Deasy, Smith and O'Reilly (2020) have noted its effectiveness in enhancing employability and bridging the gap between academic learning and industry practice. Such programmes have become increasingly popular in recent years, and there is growing evidence that they improve students' workplace readiness and employability.

Workplace-based experience programmes play a vital role in helping students develop the interpersonal skills that are crucial for success in professional environments. For employers, these programmes provide a valuable opportunity to identify emerging talent and build collaborative relationships with local technical colleges. According to Fernández, Høgsbro and Nielsen (2020), internships significantly enhance students' employability. They further proclaim that internships enrich job prospects, increase the likelihood of post-graduation employment, and positively influence long-term career development. Telford, Green and Warren (2018) found that cooperative education programmes strengthen students' career readiness and improve their employment outcomes. Similarly, Cedefop (2021) highlights that apprenticeships are an effective way of acquiring skills and boosting employability.

Nonetheless, for workplace experience programmes such as internships, cooperative education programmes and apprenticeships to be effective, active involvement from management is crucial throughout their development and implementation. Research indicates that students are more likely to benefit from high-quality training aligned with their career goals when management is involved in shaping these programmes (Kerka, 2018). Preece, John and Brown (2020) emphasise the importance of managerial support in transferring workplace knowledge and competencies into academic contexts. Moreover, effective management entails fostering a safe and supportive learning environment, as well as addressing safety-related concerns (Al-Samarraie & Salleh, 2021). Botha and van der Merwe (2017) argue that managerial involvement is essential for the successful execution of workplace-based experience programmes within TVET institutions. Management plays a pivotal role in providing strategic guidance and allocating resources to ensure that these programmes align with industry expectations and respond to employer needs, while also cultivating a safe and supportive learning environment for students.

1.3. Problem statement

TVET students often struggle to transition from academic environments to the workforce due to a lack of practical experience and essential competencies required for professional success. Arulampalam and Di Pietro (2021) highlight the persistent discrepacy between graduates' skills and employers'expectations. Similarly, Chowdhury (2020) highlights a growing disparity between graduate attributes and industry demands in Bangladesh. Although workplace-based experience programmes offer students beneficial opportunities to gain hands-on experience and develop relevant skills, their effectiveness is not guaranteed. Pineda-Herrero, Ciraso-Cali and Armijos-Yambay (2018) argue that both corporations and higher education institutions (HEIs) must clearly understand the professional profiles required by the labour market. However, Goulart, Liboni and Cezarino (2021) highlight a discrepancy between the prime concerns of industry stakeholders and HEIs. Furthermore, Kitainge and Ferej (2019) note that the transition from education to employment is a significant challenge for graduates. Collaborative partnerships between educational institutions and industry are necessary to support this transition, as emphasised by Oviawe, Uwameiye and Uddin (2017). However, the TVET College Times (2019) reports that

low student placement rates in firms during training continue to pose a major hurdle within South Africa's public TVET colleges.

Numerous studies emphasise the critical role of management in successfully implementing workplace experience programmes. Kram and Isabella (2020), for example, highlight the role of managers as mentors, emphasising the importance of mentorship in promoting career progression and offering emotional and social support. Similarly, Gordon and Maxim (2019) emphasise the importance of managerial involvement, offering unwavering support, effective communication and constructive feedback. These factors provide TVET students with essential guidance and resources during their experiential learning. Villalpando and García-Álvarez (2021) further explore how management can contribute to establishing meaningful mentoring relationships, supporting students' professional growth and strengthening their employability and readiness for the workforce. In addition, without management support and commitment, students may fail to develop the necessary skills or have meaningful learning opportunities, which can lead to programme failure (Lau, Siu, & Cheung, 2021). Furthermore, management involvement in identifying relevant workplace-based proficiency programmes enables the student learning outcomes to be aligned with organisational goals (Jones & Smith, 2021).

Without management support, workplace experience programmes may fail to align with organisational objectives or provide students with meaningful learning outcomes. Kim, Park and Lee (2020) found that companies with clearly defined goals for their internship programmes were more successful in achieving the desired outcomes. Effective management also involves providing valuable work experience that reflect the programme's objectives and allows students to apply their academic knowledge and skills in practical settings (Feld, Levitov & Schreier, 2020). Moreover, without sufficient support and mentorship from management, students may struggle to acquire the competencies required for success in the workforce. Niu, Wang and Feng (2020) emphasise that effective mentorship encompasses consistent feedback, clear expectations and ongoing guidance. A safe and supportive learning environment also boosts students' confidence, motivation, and readiness to take on new challenges (Shah & Omar, 2021).

Despite the recognisable importance of management in facilitating significant workplace-based experiences and supporting student development, there remains a notable scarcity of studies examining how managerial involvement contributes to the effectiveness of WBE programmes and the employability outcomes of TVET students. While various studies have examined WBE in higher education, research focusing specifically on managerial involvement in enhancing occupational preparedness and employment potential for TVET students is limited. According to Preece, John and Brown (2020), the effectiveness of WBE depends significantly on managerial support in structuring learning environments that facilitate the transfer of industry knowledge into educational settings. However, most WBE studies focus on general employability factors rather than the active involvement of management in shaping and improving these programmes for TVET students (Kerka, 2018).

Additionally, Al-Samarraie and Salleh (2021) emphasise the crucial role of managerial practices such as mentorship provision, workplace safety and structured skill development in ensuring that students develop not only technical competencies, but also the critical soft skills required in the labour market. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how TVET-specific management approaches influence these outcomes compared to other educational sectors. This gap in the literature emphasises the need for further exploration into the roles played by management in enhancing workplace readiness through WBE programmes within TVET institutions.

In understanding the role and importance of workplace-based experience within vocational education, it is imperative to consider how and why TVET WBE differs from other forms of WBE. TVET workplace-based experience (WBE) differs from other forms of WBE, such as university internships or cooperative education programmes, due to its specific focus on vocational training, practical skill development and direct industry application (Cedefop, 2021). While general internships often emphasise exposure to professional work environments, TVET WBE aims to align directly with industry needs by providing competency-based training that equips students with technical and employability skills (Fernández, Høgsbro, & Nielsen, 2020).

Furthermore, Telford, Green and Warren (2018) discovered that, while cooperative education programmes enhance career readiness for university students, they do not necessarily prioritise the acquisition of practical skills, which is a key aspect of TVET

WBE. TVET students require structured, skills-based training, including apprenticeships, simulated industry tasks and mentorship from trade professionals, rather than traditional academic faculty (World Bank, 2021).

1.4. Research Questions

1.5.1 Main research question

What are the management roles in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through a workplace-based experience programme?

1.5.2 Sub-research questions

1. What benefits may the WBE programme offer to enhance TVET students' job readiness and employability skills?
2. How can management support student's job readiness through a WBE programme?
3. What challenges does management face when developing students' workplace readiness skills during the (WBE) programme?
4. What management strategies can be developed to enhance students' workplace readiness through the (WBE) programme?

1.6. Research aim

To explore how management roles can improve the workplace readiness of TVET students through a workplace-based experience programme.

1.7. Research objectives

1. To identify the benefits of a workplace-based experience (WBE) programme that could improve the job readiness and employability skills of TVET students.
2. Explore ways in which management can support student's job readiness through a (WBE) programme.
3. Examine the challenges faced by management when developing students' workplace readiness skills during the (WBE) programme.
4. Identify strategies that can enhance the workplace readiness of TVET students through a WBE programme.

1.8. Justification of the study

In light of the growing demand for graduates who are to enter the industry, it is crucial to conduct research that focuses specifically on TVET, WBE, and the role of management in optimising these programmes. According to UNESCO-UNEVOC (2016), TVET is essential for reducing youth unemployment and bridging the skills gap in technical professions. However, without effective management practices, TVET WBEs may fail to prepare students adequately for employment, which limits their ability to transition smoothly into the workforce (van der Westhuizen, Horn, & Kriel, 2020). Additionally, Villalpando and García-Álvarez (2021) contend that workplace mentoring programmes within TVET institutions directly impact employability by fostering technical expertise and workplace adaptability. Without research into the management of TVET WBEs, institutions may lack the necessary insights to improve these programmes and ensure their alignment with industry expectations and labour market needs (Waddell & Wright, 2016).

It is essential to conduct a study on the role of management in TVET workplace-based experience programmes in order to fill the existing research gap. Unlike other WBEs, TVET WBE are highly practical and skill-oriented and are directly tied to industry needs. Effective management can improve training quality, enhance employability outcomes and ensure students gain the necessary skills for workforce integration (Yin, 2018). Conducting this study will enable policymakers and educators to develop more effective strategies to strengthen TVET programmes and better prepare students for the demands of the labour market.

Against this backdrop, the present study explores the role of management in enhancing the workplace readiness and employability of technical college students.

College management must acknowledge that work experience alone is insufficient to guarantee effective knowledge transfer for students. Such experience must be complemented by comprehensive pedagogical approaches to be truly impactful (Smith, Lucill, & Curtis, 2020). Consequently, college leadership must actively implement strategies that foster strong partnerships with industry stakeholders and business owners (Hassan & Jantan, 2021). Against this backdrop, the present study

explores the role of management in enhancing the workplace readiness and employability of technical college students.

The results of this study may help to inform the development strategies for improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes. Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Foote (2020) emphasise that mentorship and guidance from management and supervisors during these programmes equip students with vital practical skills, professional conduct, as well as providing them with access to valuable networks. Similarly, Lee and Park (2021) found that supportive environments characterised by mentorship and constructive feedback positively impact student learning and development. Akkoyunlu-Wigley, Eren and Yildirim (2020), Galloway and Bretag (2020) and O'Neill, McMahon and Patton (2018) argue that evaluating programme effectiveness is vital for identifying areas of improvement, recognising best practices and fostering continuous development. Furthermore, Bittner and Rosenthal (2019) assert that strong evaluation processes should include tracking student progress, assessing learning outcomes, and gathering feedback from students and employers alike.

1.9. Research methodology

Research methods are specific processes or methodologies used to gather, select, interpret and analyse data related to a particular subject (Neuman, 2021). In a research report, they enable the reader to assess the overall relevance and reliability of a study. Neuman (2021) states that research methods refer to specific techniques used to collect and examine data related to a given topic. The research method employed in a study enables readers to evaluate its significance and reliability (Neuman, 2021).

In exploring the role of management in nurturing career readiness among TVET students through structured work-integrated training programmes, this study will adopt a qualitative research methodology. Employing qualitative methods within this framework will help to unearth a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, viewpoints, and dispositions of students, employers, and management. This approach will help to identify best practices, challenges, and opportunities for improving these programmes. The details of the research methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.10. Chapter outline

Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study

This chapter provides an introductory overview of the study, outlining its background in order to establish the necessary context and rationale. Within this framework, the problem statement, research question and the study aims and objectives are articulated, providing a clear and comprehensive understanding of the research focus and intended direction.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter critically examines the existing literature on the role of management in improving TVET students' workplace readiness. Specifically, it reviews scholarly work related to workplace experience programmes and their contribution to bridging the gap between education and employment.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter provides an in-depth investigation of the research methodology employed in the study. It emphasises the adoption of a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm as the overarching philosophical framework. It also presents detailed accounts of the chosen research approach, research design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and procedures, data recording and transcription, data analysis and presentation. The chapter also covers the trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Data analysis and findings

This chapter presents, interprets and analyses the findings obtained from the data collected from participants using the methodological framework detailed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five: Summary of major findings, conclusions and recommendation

Building on the research questions introduced in Chapter One, this chapter concludes the discussion of the results presented in Chapter Four. It summarises the study's key findings and considers their broader implications. It also presents specific recommendations derived from these findings, discusses the limitations, and suggests areas for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the study's objective, which is to identify the key management roles that contribute to enhancing workplace readiness for TVET students through a workplace-based experience programme. This chapter presents a literature review firmly grounded in the context of (TVET). It examines the crucial role of management in bridging the gap between traditional classroom learning and the ever-evolving demands of the workforce. The also study explores the significant benefits that NC(V) workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes offer to students and employers alike. The WBE programme is designed to equip graduates with the necessary competencies to facilitate their smooth entry into the labour market.

Furthermore, Chapter 2 examines the role of management in enhancing the employability of TVET students through experiential workplace programmes. A review of the literature was conducted to seek answers to the research questions introduced in Chapter 1. These questions are as follows:

- What are the benefits of the (WBE) programme in enhancing TVET students' job readiness and employability skills?
- How can management support students' job readiness through the (WBE) programme?
- What challenges does management face in developing students' workplace readiness skills during the (WBE) programme?
- What management strategies can be developed to enhance students' workplace readiness through the (WBE) programme?

2.2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

2.2.1 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework comprises a set of concepts, principles and assumptions that provide a structured approach to understanding and interpreting a phenomenon. It serves as a lens through which researchers analyse a particular problem or question. A theoretical framework is typically informed by previous research, established theories, and other relevant literature.

Adom et al. (2018) and Grant and Osanloo (2014) proposed that the theoretical framework serves as a "blueprint" or roadmap for research. Adom et al. (2018) also referred to Imenda (2014), who emphasised that research conducted without a theoretical framework lacks clear guidance for identifying relevant literature and engaging in scholarly discourse on research findings.

2.2.1.1 Experiential Learning Theory

This research is based on the theoretical framework of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). ELT is a pedagogical approach that emphasises acquiring knowledge through hands-on experience, followed by reflective practice. This model builds upon the pioneering work of prominent educational theorists such as John Dewey (1938), Jean Piaget (1977) and David Kolb (1984).

Dewey (1938) introduced the concept of learning through experience, laying the foundation for ELT. He advocated an educational approach grounded in authentic, real-world experiences that are tailored to the unique needs and interests of learners. This perspective emphasises the significance of learning through active participation and reflective practice. According to Dewey, experiential learning involves a cyclical process of action, reflection and abstraction, in which learners meaningfully with their experiences and develop understanding through continuous reflection.

Piaget's (1977) constructivist theory of learning made a significant contribution to the development of experiential learning theory (ELT). Piaget theorised that individuals develop their understanding of the world through active engagement with their surroundings. Piaget emphasised a learner-centred approach, supporting the idea that exploration and experimentation are essential processes through which learners construct personal meaning and acquire knowledge.

Building upon the contributions of Dewey (1938) and Piaget (1977), Kolb (1984) advanced ELT by developing a four-stage learning cycle comprising concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. According to Kolb, learning occurs as individuals progress through this cycle, striking a balance between acquiring knowledge and applying it in new contexts.

Over time, a growing body of literature has focused on English Language Teaching (ELT), with researchers investigating its applications in various contexts, such as higher education and workplace training. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of ELT in diverse settings, such as higher education, professional development and vocational training (Kolb, 2014; Ramsden, 2020).

For instance, El-Adly and Al-Mekhlafi (2021) conducted a study in which they used ELT to improve the learning experience of undergraduate business management students. They found that ELT improved students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Similarly, Agha, Khan and Anwar (2020) examined the implementation of ELT in higher education in Pakistan. Their research showed that ELT-based teaching methods such as problem-based learning and case studies successfully fostered critical thinking, problem-solving and communication abilities among students.

In a South African context, Fourie, Dixon and Petersen (2019) investigated the use of English Language Teaching (ELT) in healthcare professional training. They found that ELT-based training effectively promoted the development of clinical skills and improved patient outcomes. Additionally, Chigona and Chetty (2019) investigated the application of ELT in computer programming education. They found that ELT-based teaching approaches enhanced knowledge acquisition, problem-solving and creativity among computer programming students.

2.2.2 Conceptual framework

This framework illustrates the connections between various elements and highlights the significance of effective management in developing and implementing workplace-based experience programmes. It emphasises the importance of collaboration between technical colleges and employers, and of evaluating the impact of such programmes on workplace readiness. Green, Patten and Daratha (2020) examined the meaning and use of conceptual frameworks in health behaviour research. They found that conceptual frameworks guide the development of research questions and hypotheses, provide a structure for data analysis and help to identify knowledge gaps.

This research’s framework is based on the following key components: management; workplace readiness; TVET students; workplace-based experience (WBE)

programmes; work-integrated learning (WIL); experiential learning (EL); and improving workplace readiness.

2.3. Definition and types of workplace-based experience programmes

2.3.1 Definition of a workplace-based experience programme

In the context of this study, which explores the role of management in strengthening job readiness among TVET students through industry-based experiential training, “workplace-based experience” refers to an educational programme or initiative that provides TVET students with the opportunity to gain practical work experience in an authentic setting directly related to their field of study.

Billett (2019) defines this type of programme as one that provides students with practical skills in real-world work environments and is often integrated into academic curricula to supplement classroom learning. This programme is designed to enable students to apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired in the classroom to real-world workplace scenarios. This allows them to gain valuable hands-on experience and develop practical skills that are essential for success in the workforce.

Bakhtiar and Suryadi (2020) examined the effect of WBE programmes on the employability of vocational high school graduates in Indonesia. Their study revealed that WBE programmes significantly enhanced graduates' technical competencies, preparedness for work, adaptability to professional environments and communication proficiency with peers and supervisors.

These programmes are usually managed by industry professionals who mentor and guide students, providing feedback and coaching to facilitate learning. Participating in a WBE programme enables TVET students to gain valuable insights into the professional realm, develop essential skills for their future careers and acquire the experience needed to succeed in their chosen field.

A study by Mthethwa and Vermaak (2020) examined the implementation of WBE programmes in the South African hospitality industry. The study found that these programmes improved students' employability and facilitated their transition into the workplace. However, the study also identified challenges, such as a lack of resources and industry support, that impacted the effectiveness of WBEs. Petersen and Zondi

(2020) meanwhile, investigated the impact of WBEs on the employability of students in the South African construction industry. They found that WBEs improved students' practical skills, personal development and industry knowledge. This suggests that these programmes could facilitate students' transition of students from education to employment.

2.3.2 Types of workplace-based experience programme

There are several types of programmes that TVET students can participate in to enhance their workplace readiness. According to Kaider, Hains-Wesson and Young (2017), Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a commonly used term that encompassing various forms of experiential learning in educational contexts. WIL provides students with opportunities to integrate theory and practice in various ways, including workplace-based programmes such as internships, apprenticeships and field placements.

While educational institutions may use different terms to describe their programmes and practices, they all agree that students should be able to combine classroom knowledge with practical skills acquired through hands-on experience (Maseko, 2018). This learning helps students develop the ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical expertise. This can take various forms, including service-learning, work-based learning, practicums, problem-based learning, industry-based learning, cooperative learning, work experience, applied research projects and compulsory professional practice.

Every workplace-based experience programme has its own unique benefits and challenges. The most effective programme depends on the specific needs and goals of students, the industries and academic institutions.

2.4. Historical development of workplace-based experience programmes.

These programmes have a long history, datingback to the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. During this era, Smith (2019) notes that many individuals acquired knowledge and skills through on-the-job training, working alongside skilled craftsmen or serving as apprentices. However, structured programmes offering formalised workplace-based learning experiences were not established until the 20th century (Jones, 2017).

Today these programmes continue to evolve and take on new forms. Popular examples include internship programmes, co-operative education programmes and apprenticeships. However, there has been a growing emphasis on programmes that integrate work-based learning with classroom instruction, such as work-integrated learning (WIL). These programmes are designed to provide students with a more holistic educational experience, enabling them to develop technical skills, as well as critical thinking, communication and problem-solving abilities.

2.5. Workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes and TVET students' job readiness and employability skills

The ultimate goal of WBE is to foster lasting collaboration between educational institutions and businesses to enhance the implementation of the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) curriculum and meet industry requirements (City & Guilds Institute, 2020). Therefore, WBE contributes to improved job readiness, enhanced employability and increased job satisfaction. Participants gain first-hand exposure to the workplace and build a solid contextual foundation through a structured programme spanning a few weeks. This promotes dialogue between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and companies, while boosting students' prospects for future employment (Höhns, 2018; Smith & Curtis, 2020).

WBE programmes enhance TVET students' job readiness and employability skills through several key mechanisms. Firstly, WBE programmes provide students with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical work environments, effectively bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. A study by Gumede and Hlatshwayo (2020) sheds light on the impact of experiential learning on the employability of engineering students in South Africa. The study emphasised that WBE programmes significantly contribute to students' job readiness and employability skills by linking theoretical knowledge with practical application. This hands-on experience enables students to develop and hone their technical skills, acquireindustry-specific knowledge, and grasp the practical challenges of their chosen field.

Hulsi and Aittola (2018) conducted a case study in Finland to investigate the impact of workplace-based learning on the employability of vocational students. They found that such learning significantly improved students' job readiness and employability skills,

particularly with regard to communication, teamwork, and adaptability. Similarly, Fahmi and Radzi (2021) found that WBE significantly enhanced students' employability skills and job readiness in Malaysia, particularly with regard to communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities.

Engaging in real work environments enables students to learn how to navigate workplace dynamics, collaborate with colleagues, communicate effectively, and solve problems in a professional setting. Bakhtiar and Suryadi (2020) investigated the role of WBE in enhancing the employability of vocational high school graduates in Indonesia. They found that WBE significantly improved graduates' technical skills and work readiness, as well as their ability to adapt to work environments and communicate effectively with colleagues and supervisors. Furthermore, WBE programmes often incorporate mentorship and guidance from industry experts, offering students valuable networking opportunities and role models. Mentors provide guidance, advice and support, helping students to develop a deeper understanding of their chosen career path and offering insights into industry expectations and practices.

Furthermore, WBE programmes often require students to demonstrate initiative, responsibility and professionalism; all of which are highly valued by employers. Through these programmes, students learn to meet deadlines, manage their time effectively, take ownership of their work and exhibit a professional attitude. Mahlatji and Van der Walt (2020) examined the relationship between employability skills and the integration of work experience into the curriculum at South African TVET colleges. They found that WBE programmes improved students' job readiness and employability skills by providing hands-on training, industry exposure, and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Overall, WBE programmes enhance TVET students' job readiness and employability skills by providing practical experience, fostering crucial skill development, facilitating mentorship and networking opportunities, and promoting professionalism and responsibility.

2.6. The benefits of the WBE programme for job readiness and employability skills

Workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes can significantly enhance the job readiness and employability skills of TVET college students by bridging the gap between education and industry. Several researchers have investigated these programmes and identified key advantages that contribute to students' professional development.

2.6.1 Practical experience and technical skill development

WBE programmes provide students with hands-on experience and enable them to develop technical skills that can be applied directly in the workplace. Dunne, Owen and Conway (2017) emphasise that work-based learning, including WBE, improves students' technical competencies and industry-specific knowledge, thereby enhancing their job readiness. Similarly, Meyer and Venkatram (2017) found that WBE programmes in South Africa significantly improved students' technical abilities and work ethic, both of which are essential for success in technical roles.

2.6.2 Development of employability skills

In addition to technical knowledge, WBE programmes help students to cultivate essential employability skills. For example, Choi and Sung (2020) analysed various work-based learning (WBL) programmes, such as internships and apprenticeships, and found that such experiences can significantly enhance students' employability by fostering communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. Hsieh and Clark (2018) evaluated a work-integrated learning programme at a university, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing the employability skills of TVET students and supporting their preparedness for the job market.

2.6.3 Industry exposure and work readiness

Exposure to real-world industry environments through WBE programmes eases the transition from education to the professional world. Idris and Hassan (2020) emphasised the role of work-based learning in improving TVET graduates' employability, noting that exposure to industry environments aligns students' skills with requirements and enhances job readiness. Similarly, Shaw, Neumann, Rasmussen, Howells, and Booth (2021) observed a strong positive relationship between work-

integrated learning experiences and students' work readiness, underscoring the value of WBE programmes in preparing students for future careers.

2.6.4 Integrating classroom learning and workplace experience

Combining theoretical knowledge from the classroom with practical applications in the workplace creates a holistic learning experience that prepares students for their careers. According to Choi and Sung (2020), aligning academic content with workplace practices enables students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios. Similarly, Dunne, Owen and Conway (2017) argue that this integration fosters the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills as students apply classroom theories in dynamic work environments. Hsieh and Clark (2018) emphasise that a balanced approach to classroom and workplace learning provides students with technical expertise and the adaptability required to succeed in the workforce.

2.6.5 Strategies for improving WBE programmes

While WBE programmes are highly beneficial, certain improvements can enhance their effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce. Gerhardt and Falck (2020) argue that incorporating structured reflection practices into WBE programmes can maximise learning outcomes for students. Idris and Hassan (2020) emphasise that improving communication and collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners can lead to more tailored and impactful WBE placements. Shaw et.al. (2021) suggest that introducing mentorship opportunities within WBE settings can guide students' development and provide valuable feedback for improvement. Jablonski, Baum, and Scharf (2022) emphasise that establishing feedback mechanisms and monitoring systems can help institutions refine their approaches and address students' challenges effectively.

Overall, the literature suggests that workplace-based experience programmes are vital for equipping TVET college students with the technical and soft skills needed to enter the workforce successfully. Such programmes are essential for bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements, ensuring that students are adequately prepared for the demands of today's job market.

2.7. Role of management in improving student's work readiness through WBE

TVET students often struggle to transtition from academic settings to professional environments due to a lack of hands-on experience and the soft skills critical for success in the workplace. WBE programmes offer students the opportunity to gain real-world experience and develop these skills. However, the success of these programmes largely depends on management involvement. According to Feld, Smith and Jones (2020), management can help bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace applications by providing relevant work experiences and opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Without management support, these programmes may fail to align with company objectives and may not provide students with meaningful learning opportunities, adequate support or mentorship for students, leading to missed opportunities for improvement and growth.

The purpose of this literature review is to provide supporting evidence on the importance of management involvement in the development and implementation of workplace-based experience programmes. Mncube, Mji, and Ximba (2020) found that effectively managing WBE programmes is essential to ensure students have access to meaningful learning opportunities and receive adequate support and mentorship. This involves developing strong partnerships between TVET colleges and industry partners and regularly reviewing programme outcomes to identify potential gaps and improve practices (Gerhardt & Falck, 2020).

Such programmes have become increasingly popular in recent years, and there is growing evidence of their effectiveness in enhancing students' workplace readiness and employability. However, the success of these programmes hinges on the active involvement of TVET college management throughout the development and implementation process. Kanyama, Van der Westhuizen, and Kruger (2019) found that management plays a crucial role in ensuring these programmes align with industry standards, provide students with meaningful learning opportunities and create a supportive, safe learning environment. Management can also assist in identifying potential industry partners, securing funding for the programmes and evaluating their effectiveness. Furthermore, Bohle, Lynch and Watson (2020) found that the success of WBE programmes depends on the support of top management, who can influence the organisation’s overall culture and prioritise these programmes. When

management plays an active role in developing and implementing these programmes, they become an integral part of an organisation's talent development and acquisition strategy, ultimately benefiting the organisation in the long term.

2.7.1 Importance of management involvement

Effective management involvement is crucial for the success of WBE programmes. Without management support, these programmes may fail to align with industry standards or provide meaningful learning opportunities. According to Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Foote (2020) and O'Neill, McMahon and Patton (2018), management commitment ensures that students develop the necessary skills to transition into the workforce. Management's role includes identifying relevant WBE opportunities, aligning academic objectives with workplace needs, and offering mentorship and guidance. Harris, Murphy, Reid and Mitchell (2017) emphasise the importance of aligning WBE programmes with company objectives. Without proper management engagement, students may not receive adequate support or develop the necessary skills for success in the workplace. Furthermore, a lack of programme evaluation can result in missed opportunities for improvement and growth, highlighting the importance of ongoing management involvement throughout the WBE process.

2.7.2 WBE programme coordination

Strong management leadership is required to establish and maintain partnerships with industry stakeholders when coordinating WBE programmes. Gribble and Blackmore (2018) emphasise that effective programme coordination involves providing clear guidelines, adequately preparing students and ensuring their safety and positive learning experience during placements. Mokgata and Raborife (2018) also emphasise the importance of TVET college management fostering collaboration with employers to ensure students receive hands-on experience that aligns with industry standards. Kuczera and Jeon (2020) emphasise the role of TVET college management in facilitating communication between colleges and employers, securing the necessary resources and coordinating efforts to deliver high-quality, workplace-based experiences. This coordination promotes students' job readiness by bridging the gap between the theoretical classroom learning and real-world application.

In South Africa, Mokgata and Raborife (2018) note that the growing emphasis on WBE programmes within TVET colleges requires management to align these programmes

with industry needs. Kanyama, Van der Westhuizen and Kruger (2019) further emphasise that management involvement in developing meaningful learning environments ensures students are well-prepared for workplace challenges.

2.7.3 Mentorship and support

Management plays a crucial role in supporting and mentoring students during workplace-based experience programmes. Akkoyunlu-Wigley et al. (2020) emphasise that mentorship and guidance offered by management and supervisors throughout these programmes play a critical role in equipping students with the practical skills, professional conduct and access to relevant networks they need. Similarly, Harris et al. (2017) highlight that supportive environments characterised by strong mentorship and constructive supervisor feedback positively impact students' learning experiences and developmental outcomes, helping them bridge the gap between academic learning and workforce demands.

Therefore, management musy play an active role in developing and implementating workplace-based experience programmes to improve TVET students' workplace readiness. By fostering supportive relationships, management can ensure that students acquire not only technical skills, but also essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving, which are crucial for employability.

2.7.4 Evaluation of programme effectiveness

Management must evaluate workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes to identify areas for improvement and ensure continuous development. According to Akkoyunlu-Wigley et al. (2020) and Galloway and Bretag (2020), programme evaluations help to determine whether objectives are being met, highlight best practices and ensure that student learning is aligned with industry needs. O'Neil et al. (2018) emphasise that evaluations allow management to assess the programme's impact on students' skills and employability, thereby ensuring itsits continued relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, evaluations establish accountability and provide feedback to enhance the programme's design and implementation. Smith and Yasukawa (2019) discuss the importance of structured WBE programmes that integrate workplace experience with academic curricula. They recommend regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to improve programme outcomes. Similarly, Misko, Hall and Morris (2021) emphasise that effectively managing WBE programmes

requires career counselling, mentoring, and collaboration with industry partners to ensure alignment with current workforce demands.

2.7.5 Management's role in building partnerships and securing resources

An essential aspect of management's involvement is developing strong partnerships with industry stakeholders and the securing the resources necessary for successful Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. Kanyama, Van der Westhuizen, and Kruger (2019) emphasise that management plays a crucial role in identifying potential partners and fostering collaboration. These partnerships provide students with access to meaningful workplace experiences that align with industry standards.

Bohle, Lynch and Watson (2020) emphasise the importance of top management in securing funding and influencing organisational culture to prioritise WBE programmes. By integrating WBE initiatives into the organisation's talent development strategies, management can ensure long-term benefits for both students and employers.

2.7.6 Integration of WBE into organisational and academic strategies

For WBE programmes to be successful, management must integrate them into broader organisational and academic strategies. This involves aligning programmes with industry trends, providing structured work-based experiences and supporting students' transition from education to employment. According to Misko, Hall and Morris (2021), incorporating WBE programmes into curricula fosters a seamless connection between classroom learning and workplace application. This integration enhances student engagement and ensures they are well prepared to meet workforce demands.

Furthermore, Bohle et al. (2020) argue that prioritising WBE as part of the organisation's talent development strategy benefits not only students, but also employers, as it cultivates a pipeline of skilled, work-ready graduates.

Management's role in improving students' work readiness through WBE programmes cannot be overstated. Effective management ensures that WBE programmes are aligned with industry standards, provide meaningful learning opportunities and are supported by strong partnerships and mentoring structures. By actively coordinating and evaluating these programmes, management can help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications, preparing students for successful careers and benefitting organisations in the process. Through consistent involvement

and support, TVET college management can transform WBE programmes into an integral component of vocational education and training, thereby contributing to the long-term employability of graduates.

2.8. Challenges faced by management in developing workplace readiness skills

Implementing workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes can be challenging, and research has identified various obstacles that must be overcome to ensure these programmes are effective. The challenges faced by campus management in developing students' workplace readiness skills during WBE programmes can vary depending on the institution's specific context and characteristics. Jones (2018) sheds light on these challenges, which include aligning the curriculum with industry needs, ensuring sufficient communication and collaboration between stakeholders, and providing ongoing support to students during workplace-based experiences. However, some common challenges include:

2.8.1 Partnership and placement challenges

One of the most significant challenges for management is establishing and maintaining partnerships with organisations that can provide meaningful WBE opportunities. Finding suitable placement opportunities that align with students' skills, academic goals and industry demands requires effective communication and collaboration between institutions and potential host employers. Collins, Brown and Happer (2020) highlight the difficulty of securing industry partners, particularly in areas with limited placement opportunities or in specific geographic regions. Waddell and Wright (2016) also emphasise the limited availability of placements in highly competitive industries, while Smith (2016) identifies a misalignment between students' skills and interests and the requirements of available opportunities.

Other studies, such as those by Mashiqa, Mentz and Mji (2018) and Schenker and Krücken (2019), emphasise the significance of robust partnerships between campus management and industry stakeholders. However, challenges such as limited collaboration, inadequate support structures and differing expectations between colleges and employers can hinder the effectiveness of WBEs. These studies advocate for better industry engagement, tailored placement strategies and mechanisms to ensure relevant and enriching experiences.

Harris and Ashton (2020) examine the difficulties associated with work-integrated learning (WIL) in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), considering the viewpoints of college students and instructors. They highlight concerns including misalignment between classroom and workplace learning, inadequate supervision, and the need for effective communication and collaboration between TVET college management and industry partners.

2.8.2 Curriculum integration

Integrating workplace-based experiences learning (WBEs) into academic curricula presents a significant challenge for management. This requires aligning learning outcomes with workplace objectives, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and matching academic requirements with the practical demands of WBEs. Mugabi and Mwebaza (2020) observe that designing learning activities and assessments that support both theoretical knowledge and workplace application can be complex. Kettis-Lindblad and Hassel (2019) also emphasise the difficulty of creating assessments that enable students to apply classroom learning meaningfully in workplace settings. Similarly, Govender and Maniruzzaman (2021) examine the discrepancy between objectives of academic programmes and the needs of industry, emphasising the importance of effective collaboration in addressing this issue. Likewise, Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) examine how to harmonise the practical demands of the workplace with the academic requirements of the programme.

Sehoole (2019) discusses work-integrated learning from a national policy perspective in South Africa. They touch on the challenges faced by campus management in balancing academic and workplace demands, ensuring equity and access to work-integrated learning opportunities, and establishing effective governance structures for programme implementation. A study by Maharaj and Dlungwane (2018) also explored the challenges of implementing WBEs in the hospitality industry in South Africa. The study identified issues including such a lack industry support, limited access to WBEs and inadequate training for workplace mentors. Maharaj and Dlungwane (2018) recommended that industry and educational institutions collaborate to overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, Sehlapelo and Du Plessis (2019) conducted a study examining the challenges of implementing WBEs in the engineering sector in South Africa. They

identified several issues, including a lack of industry involvement, scarce resources and inadequate student support during WBEs. The authors suggested that forming partnerships between industry and educational institutions, as well as providing adequate support for students during WBEs, could help overcome these challenges.

Additionally, Van der Westhuizen, Horn and Kriel (2020) investigated the challenges of implementing WBEs in the construction industry in South Africa. This study also identified issues such a lack of coordination between industry and educational institutions, inadequate student preparation for WBEs and limited WBE opportunities. Van der Westhuizen et al. (2020) recommended partnerships between industry and educational institutions, and adequate student preparation for WBEs, to help overcome these challenges.

2.8.3 Provision of support for (WBE) programme

Management plays a critical role in supporting workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes. However, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate mentorship insufficient funding can hinder their ability to provide effective support to students. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2017), institutions are responsible for supporting students who encounter academic difficulties during WBEs. Nevertheless, Mafa and Mokhele (2019) emphasise that some institutions place the responsibility for success on students, which can undermine the objectives of these programmes.

Studies by Billett (2019) and Cruywagen and Haupt (2018) underscore the importance of mentorship and structured support for students. These studies highlight how mentoring relationships, regular feedback, and guidance from experienced supervisors can positively influence students' communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. Nevertheless, management often struggles to secure adequate resources and establish robust mentorship structures, thereby limiting the effectiveness of these support mechanisms.

2.8.4 Quality of supervision

Another challenge faced by management is ensuring that students receive high-quality supervision during their workplace experience. Effective supervision requires host organisations to provide qualified mentors who can guide students through their

learning journey. However, many organisations lack the capacity, resources, or inclination to devote time to mentoring students.

Waddell and Wright (2016) identify a scarcity of experienced supervisors in host organisations as a key barrier to effective supervision. Similarly, Kolb (2014) highlights inconsistencies in the quality of supervision across different placements, which leads to uneven student experiences. Assessment and evaluation also present challenges. Morton and Palmer (2017) point out the difficulty of developing valid and reliable criteria with which to assess workplace readiness skills. Furthermore, Smith (2016) emphasises that institutions have limited capacity to provide timely and constructive feedback due to the large number of students participating in WBEs.

2.8.5 Monitoring and support

Ongoing monitoring and support during WBEs are critical to ensuring students' success. However, campus management often faces obstacles in maintaining regular communication with students and supervisors, addressing concerns as they arise, and providing the necessary resources for effective learning. Heikkinen, Tynjälä and Lindén (2019) discuss the resource constraints and communication challenges that can prevent effective monitoring of students during WBEs. Kolb (2014) and Kettis-Lindblad and Hassel (2019) further emphasise the lack of infrastructure and inadequate capacity for ongoing support, which can hinder students' learning and development. Addressing these challenges requires improved coordination, greater resource allocation and stronger support systems for students and supervisors alike.

2.8.6 Broader challenges in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

The challenges of implementing WBEs are compounded by the evolving demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). As industries embrace new technologies and practices, management must ensure that students are prepared to meet these demands. Jackson and Collings (2018) express concern about students' lack of applicable work experience in the context of the 4IR, which affects their employability. Chetty, Mayson and Sher (2020) argue that higher education institutions must go beyond teaching subject-specific knowledge to prepare students for dynamic job markets.

Research has identified several challenges that management encounters when implementing WBE programmes to develop workplace readiness skills. These include

limited industry partnerships, misaligned curricula, inadequate mentorship and support, supervisory issues, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation processes. Addressing these issues requires collaboration between institutions, industry partners, and policymakers to secure funding, align academic and industry objectives, and establish robust support systems for students and workplace mentors. Overcoming these challenges would enable management to significantly enhance the effectiveness of WBEs and better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce.

2.9. Management strategies for enhancing workplace readiness

Effective management strategies are vital for the success of WBE programmes in fostering students' workplace readiness. These strategies emphasise collaboration, mentorship, structured learning, curriculum integration, and the developing essential skills to prepare students for professional environments (Billett, 2019; Govender & Maniruzzaman, 2021). Collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners ensures students are exposed to relevant workplace practices (Harris & Ashton, 2020). Structured mentorship and supervision are vital for supporting students' professional growth, while curriculum integration helps bridge the gap between theory and practice (Mugabi & Mwebaza, 2020). Furthermore, developing soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving is crucial in preparing students for the evolving demands of the workplace (Jackson & Collings, 2018). This section outlines key strategies drawn from research, highlighting their importance and practical implementation.

2.9.1 Collaboration with industry partners

Collaborating with industry partners is essential to aligning Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes with the demands of the current workforce. Strong partnerships provide students with relevant learning opportunities, ensuring they are ready for the job market. Research highlights several strategies for fostering such collaboration. Huang and Wong (2019) emphasise that regular interaction with industry experts helps to ascertain the required workforce competencies, hence TVET managers should actively involve employers in designing and evaluating WBE programmes to ensure they align with industry requirements. Likewise, Turner and Wilson (2020) advocate collaborating with employers to align programme goals with

workplace expectations, thus forming long-term partnerships with organisations that share the programme's objectives is critical. Furthermore, Yorke & Knight (2020) highlight that including industry partners in the evaluation of programme effectiveness ensures that learning outcomes meet professional standards.

2.9.2 Effective mentorship and coaching

Mentorship and coaching are vital strategies for improving workplace readiness. Effective mentorship facilitates student growth by providing guidance, support and insights into workplace dynamics. According to Billett (2018) forming connections between students and experienced professionals provides opportunities for skill development and workplace navigation. Similarly, Nguyen & Lee (2021) highlight that structured feedback channels between students, mentors and supervisors encourage continuous learning and improvement. O'Connor & Parkes (2018) further stipulate that coaching helps students to address workplace challenges and develop critical leadership and collaboration skills.

2.9.3 Authentic Assessment and Feedback

Authentic assessment methods and constructive feedback are crucial for developing workplace readiness. These strategies ensure that students reflect on their performance and make informed improvements. Mei and Chen (2021) emphasise the importance of prompt, constructive feedback in helping students to identify and overcome skill deficiencies, thereby boosting their confidence. Likewise, Coll and Zegwaard (2018) emphasise that incorporating reflection and self-assessment enables students to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses and progress as highlighted by. Furthermore, McDonald and Hite (2018) stipulate that providing frameworks for self-evaluation enables students to monitor their development of leadership and management skills.

2.9.4 Comprehensive orientation and training for supervisors

Effective workplace supervision is essential for the success of WBE programmes. Training supervisors to mentor and guide students improves the learning experience. Coll and Zegwaard (2018) point out that comprehensive supervisor training programmes equip workplace mentors with the skills and best practices needed to

support students. Similarly, O'Connor and Parkes (2018) highlight that offering structured resources and clear guidelines ensures that supervisors can facilitate professional growth effectively.

2.9.5 Structured learning activities and projects

Structured activities generate opportunities for students to develop leadership and management skills through practical engagement. McDonald and Hite (2018) clearly state that assigning students roles involving decision-making and team management helps them cultivate essential leadership competencies. Similarly, Lin, Lee and Chen (2021) advocate that simulating workplace tasks that require teamwork and communication prepares students for professional collaboration. Additionally, Boud and Solomon (2016) highlight that activities that replicate workplace challenges provide students with hands-on experience that reinforces theoretical concepts.

2.9.6 Integration of theory and practice

Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is a key management strategy for preparing students for the workplace. Boud and Solomon (2016) state that designing curricula that integrate leadership concepts with workplace applications ensures their relevance and applicability. Likewise, Jackson and Johnson (2020) emphasise that encouraging students to analyse the leadership behaviours in the workplace promotes a deeper understanding and refinement of skills.

2.9.7 Ongoing assessment and feedback

Continuous assessment ensures that students' progress aligns with programme goals while nurturing development. A study by Coll and Zegwaard (2018) highlights that distinguishing transparent and specific criteria for evaluating workplace performance ensures consistency and fairness. Similarly, McDonald and Hite (2018) point out that providing actionable feedback empowers students to enhance their skills and address areas for improvement.

2.9.8 Cultivating soft skills and emotional intelligence

Soft skills and emotional intelligence are essential for workplace readiness. Management strategies that focus on these aspects can enhance interpersonal and professional competencies. Lee and Kim (2022) advocate interactive activities such as simulations and role-playing to cultivate communication, adaptability and teamwork skills. Activities that encourage self-awareness and empathy prepare students to navigate workplace dynamics effectively.

2.9.9 Technology Integration and Digital Literacy

The modern workforce demands digital proficiency. Management strategies that integrate technology into WBE programmes prepare students for tech-driven workplaces. Wang and Liu (2018) emphasise that fostering digital literacy enhances students' ability to utilise workplace technology and platforms effectively. Incorporating digital tools into the curriculum ensures that students can navigate modern workplace challenges with ease.

2.9.10 Transformational leadership and stakeholder engagement

Strong management practices in TVET institutions are key to the success of WBE programmes. Transformational leadership promotes collaboration and strategic decision-making. Harris and Johnson (2020) emphasise the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including industry partners and faculty members, in order to enhance workplace readiness. Likewise, Chadya and Johansson (2019) stipulates that encouraging innovation, communication and shared goals among stakeholders fosters a supportive environment for student growth.

Management strategies significantly impact the success of WBE programmes in fostering workplace readiness. Prioritising collaboration, mentorship, authentic assessment, soft skills development and digital literacy enables TVET institutions to equip students with the necessary skills. Implementing these strategies ensures that WBE programmes prepare students not only for immediate employment, but also for long-term economic development.

2.10. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of the literature on the role of management in enhancing the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes. The review has highlighted the theoretical basis of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and its relevance to work-integrated learning, providing a robust framework for understanding how students learn through hands-on experience in professional environments.

The chapter has explored the various definitions, types and historical developments of WBE programmes, establishung the significance of these initiatives in bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations. The literature suggests that WBE programmes play a significant role in developing job readiness and employability skills among TVET students by providing opportunities to develop technical and soft skills in real-world environments.

Furthermore, the literature emphasises the fundamental role of management in supporting and enhancing the success of WBE initiatives. Through effective coordination, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement and mentorship, management can ensure that WBE programmes are meaningfully incorporated into institutional structures and aligned with industry demands. However, the review also acknowledged several challenges management faces, including resource constraints, curriculum misalignment, insufficient partnerships and inadequate monitoring mechanisms.

To address these concerns, the literature recommends various management strategies, including encouraging industry collaboration, implementing structured mentorship programmes, integrating digital competencies and promoting continuous assessment and feedback. These strategies are essential to ensure that WBE programmes remain responsive to labour market trends and contribute to students' holistic development.

In conclusion, the literature provides compelling evidence that the success of workplace-based experience programmes, and by extension the workplace readiness of TVET students, hinges on proactive, strategic and collaborative management

practices. This sets a critical foundation for the empirical chapters that follow, which will explore how these roles, challenges, and strategies manifest in practice within the TVET context.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Research methods are the systematic processes and techniques used to collect, select, interpret and analyse data related to a specific topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In a research report, the research method provides a framework through which readers can evaluate the credibility and relevance of the study (Flick, 2022). Creswell and Creswell (2023) also emphasise that using the right research methods ensures that the information gathered is reliable and valid, enabling readers to critically evaluate the study's findings.

In exploring how management can strengthen workplace preparedness among TVET students through industry-based training, this study adopted a qualitative research methodology. Within the framework of the present investigation, qualitative research provided a deeper understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and viewpoints of students, employers, and management. This approach helped pinpoint best practices, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in these programmes.

3.1 Research paradigm/Philosophical worldview

A research paradigm is a conceptual framework comprising underlying assumptions and principles that mould the researcher's approach to conducting research. It provides a systematic approacch to addressing the research problem, directing the process of data collection and analysis, and enabling the interpretation findings. Leavy (2017) describes a paradigm as a conceptual framework that supports researchers understand how individuals interpret their world within the context of a specific field study. The chosen paradigm determines the research design, methodology, data collection instruments and analytical methods. Similarly, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argue that the research paradigm reflects the researcher's foundational worldview and influence decision-making across all phases of the research process. It shapes by which meaning is constructed from collected data and the perspectives of individuals involved in the research.

The most suitable research paradigm for studying how management roles enhance the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes is the interpretive paradigm. This approach focuses on understanding

how individuals interpret their experiences and give meaning to their social world. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) argue that using the interpretive paradigm enables researchers to view and engage with the research environment as distinct and unique.

This approach enable the researcher to take into account diverse factors based on participants' experiences, thus providing a more accurate depiction of the situation. In the context of the current study, the interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to explore how TVET students and their managers interpreted workplace-based experience programmes and how these programmes impacted students' workplace readiness. It also enabled researchers to understand managers' and students' perspectives and how they interact in the workplace.

3.2 Research design

Research design is a comprehensive plan that outlines how a study will be conducted, including the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing data (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2022). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2023), a well-designed research plan ensures that the findings are valid, reliable and aligned with the research objectives. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2021) emphasise that research design acts as a guiding framework, linking research questions to appropriate data collection and analysis strategies. By providing a coherent and systematic approach, research design facilitates the achievement of research aims while maintaining methodological integrity and rigour.

Several scholars have examined the concept of research design and its critical role in conducting rigorous research. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) argue that research design is fundamental to any research project, requiring thoughtful preparation and execution producetrustworthy and consistent results. They highlight the importance of selecting a research design that is appropriate for the research question, providing a detailed overview of quasi-experimental, correlational, survey and case study approaches. Similarly, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2023) offer an in-depth discussion on various research designs and their practical applications, including experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, grounded theory, ethnographic and case study methodologies. They emphasise the importance of aligning the chosen design

with the study's objectives, while maintaining methodological rigour and practical relevance throughout the research process.

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the role of management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes. This approach is well-suited to studies that aim to gain an in-depth understanding of participants lived experiences, beliefs and perceptions within their natural settings. According to Mohajan (2018), qualitative research prioritises investigating subjective experiences, facilitating researchers to capture the complexity and richness of human perspectives. This approach enabled the study to reveal detailed insights into the influence of management practices on the workplace readiness of TVET students.

Case studies, a qualitative research method, were used in this study. Yin (2018) states that case studies are particularly valuable when the research aims to explore real-life phenomena in depth within their natural contexts. Yin emphasises that incorporating numerous forms of evidence, such as interviews, documentation and observations, enhances the data and reinforces the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research results. This study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the role of management in enhancing TVET students' preparedness for the workforce through experiential workplace learning programmes by implementing a case study approach.

3.3 Research Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology to examine the impact of management on enhancing the job readiness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students through Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives and practices of management personnel within the selected TVET college.

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for studies seeking to understand complex social processes from the viewpoint of those involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach highlights the meanings that individuals ascribe to their experiences and provides a framework to examine how managerial roles influence the

implementation and effectiveness of WBE initiatives. As Mohajan (2018) points out, qualitative research enables the gathering of rich, contextualised data that reflects participants' beliefs, values and behaviours in real-life settings.

In this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method which ensured consistency in the questions asked while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes. This approach was well suited to the research objectives as it allowed the researcher to gain a detailed and in-depth understanding of participants' experiences of leadership practices, strategic planning and institutional challenges related to workplace readiness.

The participants in this study were management and leadership personnel, specifically Campus Managers and Heads of Units, who were directly engaged in planning, coordinating or evaluating WBE programmes. These individuals were purposively selected based on their relevant roles and professional expertise. Their perspectives were invaluable in identifying institutional strategies and decision-making processes that influence student experiences in the WBE environment.

Although various research designs are available, including quantitative and mixed methods approaches (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019), a purely qualitative approach was considered most appropriate for this investigation. The aim was not to measure variables, but to understand how management perceives, interprets and enhances workplace-based learning. This level of understanding could only be achieved through interpretive, narrative-rich data, an area in which qualitative methods excel.

Best practices in qualitative inquiry guded the research process, including methodological rigour, ethical reflexivity, and transparency in data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, following the procedure by Braun and Clarke (2021). This involved coding the data, recognising recurring patterns, and developing themes that captured the essence of managerial roles and their impact on the effectiveness of WBE programmes.

In conclusion, the use of qualitative methods enabled a holistic and contextualised examination of the research problem. The results provided valuable insights into how institutional leadership strategies influence student preparedness for the workplace, highlighting critical areas for improving WBE implementation within the TVET sector.

3.4 Population and sampling

3.4.1 Population

The population for this study consisted of management personnel who were directly involved in coordinating and implementing workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes at selected Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college. These individuals had relevant insights and practical experience related to the National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)] programme and its associated WBE components, making them well suited to contribute meaningfully to the research.

In line with the definitions provided by Shukla (2020) and Creswell and Creswell (2017), the population in this study was identified as a group of individuals who had the necessary knowledge and experience to address the research objectives. The target population consisted of eight management staff members: three Campus Managers and five Heads of Unit. These participants were chosen because of their active roles in managing, planning and evaluating WBE programmes within the institution. Their involvement in the administrative, strategic and operational aspects of the WBE programme enabled the researcher to gain comprehensive understanding into the institution's efforts to improve the workplace readiness of TVET students. The researcher either called or emailed the Campus Managers requesting their assistance in either participating and/or requesting relevant members of the management staff to volunteer to be participants in the study.

3.4.2 Sampling

To identify and recruit participants who could offer detailed, relevant accounts of their experiences and responsibilities, the study used a purposive sampling technique. As recommended by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020), this technique involves intentional selecting individuals who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied. This approach was particularly appropriate given the qualitative nature of the

research, where emphasis was placed on the depth and richness of the information rather than its representativeness.

The sampling process was guided by the principles outlined by Boros (2018) and Liamputtong (2019), who state that qualitative sampling should prioritise individuals with first-hand experience of the subject under investigation. Participants were therefore chosen based on their direct involvement in planning and managing the NC(V) and WBE programmes. Their ability to provide informed viewpoints was instrumental in achieving the study's objective of examining how management contributes to student employability through WBE initiatives.

The final sample comprised eight participants representing various hierarchical levels within the institution. The researcher contacted each participant via cellphone or emails requesting them to volunteer in the research study. Although all participants were affiliated with the same TVET college, they were recruited from different campuses, introducing variation in the context and practices of WBE implementation. This diversity in campus environments added value to the study by facilitating the identification of both common and unique management approaches across institutional settings.

Padgett (2017) and Gray (2019) further support the appropriateness of purposive sampling in this study, highlighting the importance of strategically selecting participants to achieve a holistic and contextually grounded understanding of the research problem. The sample size was sufficient to reach thematic saturation during the data analysis phase, ensuring the findings were comprehensive and reliable.

3.5 Data Collection (methods, strategies and instruments)

3.5.1 Methods/Instruments

Data for this was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were carefully designed to align with the qualitative research approach adopted. This method allowed the investigation of participants' perceptions, experiences and insights into the role of management in improving workplace readiness through workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes at a selected TVET college.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen based on the methodological recommendations of Creswell and Creswell (2018), who highlight the value of context-sensitive data collection strategies, and Denzin and Lincoln (2018), who highlight the importance of obtaining rich, in-depth descriptions within qualitative research. This data collection method enabled open and authentic expression from participants while allowing the researcher to explore emerging themes and contextual nuances through targeted probing.

The interviews were conducted using a pre-developed interview guide that included open-ended, probing and reflective questions, as advocated by Creswell (2013), Rubin and Rubin (2011), Kvale (2007) and Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013). These question types enabled deeper inquiry and allowed participants to elaborate on their views and experiences.

A total of eight interviews were conducted with management staff involved in the implementation and supervision of the NC(V) and WBE programmes. These staff members included three Campus Managers and five Heads of Unit. All interviews were conducted in person at a designated venue on college premises that was quiet and conducive to open conversation. Each session was conducted one-on-one, without any observers present, to create a relaxed and confidential atmosphere.

To guarantee accurate data capture, interviews were audio-recorded using a digital device. Notes were also taken throughout each session to supplement the recordings. This dual-recording approach, recommended by Kabir (2016), reduced the risk of data loss and enabled the researcher to revisit responses during transcription and analysis. Interviews ranged in length from 45 to 75 minutes depending on the depth of participants' responses.

All participants were invited to participate voluntarily and given an information sheet detailing the research objectives, processes and ethical considerations. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview. The voluntary nature of participation and the assurance of confidentiality fostered teust and encouraged honest and open responses.

3.5.2 Data collection strategies

The data collection strategy was systematic and well-documented, beginning with the development of a semi-structured interview protocol based on the research objectives of the study. This process was guided by the work of Rubin and Rubin (2011), Kvale (2007) and Liamputtong (2011), who underscore the importance of clear interview objectives, appropriate probing techniques and trust-building. The interviews explored several key themes, including:

- the perceived effectiveness of the WBE programme;
- management roles in facilitating student readiness for the workplace;
- institutional support and leadership strategies;
- challenges and opportunities in the implementation of WBE.

Interview questions were designed to elicit detailed, experience-based responses, while also accommodating the exploration of emerging themes in line with the adaptive nature of qualitative inquiry. Participants were encouraged to draw on specific examples and reflect on their day-to-day responsibilities in relation to the WBE programme.

The recorded interviews were later transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity the of participants' voices. Transcripts were then subjected to thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to identify patterns, meanings and shared perspectives.

Throughout the data collection process, ethical standards were upheld, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation. Upholding these principles contributed to the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of the data collected.

3.6 Data analysis

The data analysis process for this study involved systematically and rigorously examining the interview data collected from eight members of management at a selected TVET college. The aim was to identify key themes and patterns relating to management's role in improving workplace readiness through workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes. In line with the qualitative research design, thematic analysis was employed to interpret the non-numerical data.

As Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2020) suggest, this is an iterative and reflective process which compels researchers to immerse themselves in the data in order to uncover emerging insights, connections and themes. This study's analysis followed established procedures and was conducted in two key phases: coding and organisisng the data, and validation and triangulation.

3.6.1 Data coding and organisation

The analysis began with transcribing all the recorded interviews. After this, the researcher participated in an intensive familiarisation process. As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2019), each transcript was read multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the context and nuances of the participants' responses. This step was critical in developing an initial interpretation of the participants' shared lived experiences and perceptions.

Following this, initial codes were created by manually highlighting text segments that were relevant to the research questions and objectives. These initial codes captured recurring themes such as leadership support, programme coordination, stakeholder engagement and student preparedness. This inductive process allowed the codes to emerge naturally from the data rather than being predetermined.

A coding framework was then developed to classify and organise these initial codes. This framework grouped similar codes under broader themes, creating a hierarchical structure that allowed the researcher to identify overarching patterns. The main themes that emerged were the strategic and operational roles of management, the challenges of implementing WBE programmes, the support mechanisms for students and staff, and the perceptions of the programme on student readiness.

The coding framework was then applied systematically to all transcripts to ensure that relevant sections were coded correctly. Throughout this procedure, the codes were refined, merged or expanded to reflect new insights. This cyclical approach enabled the analysis to be progressively deepened while maintaining consistency between the codes and the study's objectives (Saldaña, 2021).

To facilitate the comparison and retrieval of coded data, the researcher applied a pattern format in which key quotes were systematically arranged according to themes,

sub-themes and participants. This method increased the clarity and accessibility of the data, ensuring consistency in interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.6.2 Validation and triangulation

To guarantee the credibility, trustworthiness and accuracy of the findings, the study employed validation strategies, particularly member checking, as recommended by Maxey and Lincoln (2021). Once the primary themes had been identified, the researcher shared a summary of the findings with the participants to seek their feedback. This allowed participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations and clarify any potential misrepresentations.

The member checking process was carried out through follow-up communication, either in person or via email, during which participants were invited to review summaries of their contributions and the thematic interpretations. Participants verified that the findings accurately reflected their experiences, and no significant discrepancies were reported.

In addition, triangulation was employed by comparing responses across multiple participants to ensure that emerging themes were based on shared or corroborated experiences rather than isolated views. Although the primary data source was in-depth interviews, internal consistency of the findings and the merging of views across campuses and management levels strengthened the conclusions.

The study strengthened the consistency and dependability of its results by employing these strategies, as recommended by Patton (2020) and Ravitch and Carl (2021). The validation process confirmed that the interpretations were realistic to participants' perspectives, thus enriching the study's overall quality and academic credibility.

3.7 Validity/reliability/trustworthiness

Following the conclusion of the data collection and analysis phases, specific strategies were employed to ensure the validity, trustworthiness and reliability of the findings of this qualitative study. These principles served as quality benchmarks necessary for validating the credibility of the research outcomes.

3.7.1 Validity

In this study, validity was ascertained by striving for authenticity and accuracy in capturing the experiences of participants the context in which they operate. In qualitative research, validity refers to the extent to which the findings accurately reflect the phenomenon under investigation and resonate with participants' lived experiences (Nowell, Norris, White and Moules, 2017).

To maintain validity during data analysis, the researcher took a transparent and reflexive approach. Interview transcripts were thoroughly examined and initial codes were carefully developed to remain grounded in the data. Throughout the coding and interpretation processes, the researcher engaged in reflexive journaling to help critically evaluate personal biases and assumptions, in line with Saldaña's (2021) recommendations.

Furthermore, participant validation, or "member checking", was employed to ensure that the interpretations aligned with the participants' intended meanings. The preliminary findings were shared with the participants, who confirmed their accuracy and fairness. This validation step bolstered the credibility and internal validity of the results.

3.7.2 Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness, the study adhered to the four widely recognised criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1986): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility was addressed through prolonged engagement with the data, multiple rounds of coding and theme refinement, and member checking. This ensured that the findings reflected the true perspectives of the participants.

Transferability was supported by providing a detailed description of the research context, including information about the participants, setting, and institutional dynamics. This allows future researchers and readers to assess the relevance of the findings to similar contexts.

Dependability was enhanced by providing a clearly documented audit trail of coding decisions, theme development processes,and analytic memos. This documentation made the research process transparent and traceable.

Confirmability was achieved by maintaining neutrality in interpretation and ensuring that findings were based on the participants' input rather than the researcher bias. Reflexivity and external peer debriefing also supported this criterion.

Reflexive journaling was employed throughout the data collection and analysis phases to enhance the trustwothiness of the study. Reflexivity involves critically reflecting on one's own assumptions, values and potential influence on the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By maintaining a reflexive journal, the researcher could acknowledge personal biases, be mindful of biased interpretations and record rational decisions in real time.

An example of this practice can be seen in the following journal entry, written during the data analysis phase:

"*As someone who values structured management systems, I noticed a tendency to interpret the responses of Campus Managers more positively, particularly when they described well-organised WBE coordination. I must remain cautious not to let this preference overshadow the challenges expressed by Heads of Departments. Ensuring balanced interpretation is essential for presenting an accurate picture of management's role.*"

This type of self-reflection allowed the researcher to recognise and manage personal biases, resulting in a more balanced and credible interpretation of the data. Furthermore, the journal provided transparency in the development of codes and themes, serving as an audit trail. This approach is consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) emphasis on reflexivity as a critical factor in ensuring the confirmability and dependability of qualitative research.

Implementing these strategies enabled the study to achieve a high degree of trustworthiness, ensuring the research process and results were perceived as honest, rigorous and methodologically sound (Adler, 2022; Kakar, Rasheed, Rashid and Akhter, 2023).

3.7.3 Reliability

While reliability in qualitative research differs from that in quantitative research, this study aimed to ensure consistency and coherence throughout the data collection and analysis process. According to Braun and Clarke (2020), reliability is achieved by maintaining methodological consistency and transparency in analytical procedures.

A systematic coding framework was therefore used and applied consistently across all interview transcripts. Comprehensive documentation of code definitions, thematic adjustments and analytical decisions was maintained to ensure dependability and enable external verification.

Additionally, member checking and internal peer review were utilised to verify the interpretation of data and the consistency of coding. These strategies reinforce the reliability of the research by validating that similar results could be obtained if the study were repeated under similar conditions (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

By addressing validity, trustworthiness and reliability, the research ensured that its results were methodologically precise and reflective of the participants' true experiences. These measures enhanced the study's overall quality and impact, strengthening the credibility of its conclusions regarding the role of management in improving workplace readiness through WBE programmes in TVET institutions.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Following the completion of data collection and analysis, the ethical integrity of the research process was carefully maintained at every stage to ensure the protection of participants' rights, dignity and well-being. As this was a qualitative study involving human participants, particular attention was given to issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation and mitigating potential harm.

3.8.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Prior to conducting the interviews, all participants were given detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, its objectives, the data collection procedures, and their expected role in the research. Informed consent was obtained in accordance with the ethical research standards as outlined by Arifin (2018). Consent forms were

distributed, and participants were given sufficient time to read, reflect on, and ask questions about them before signing.

In line with Guba and Lincoln (2018), efforts were made to establish trust and rapport with each participant to ensure their decision to participate was fully informed and voluntary. Participants were clearly advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences. This approach was vital in upholding the voluntary nature of participation and minimising potential power imbalances.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Throughout the research process, firm and meticulous measures were taken to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. All interview data were kept anonymous during transcription by eliminating personal identifiers and replacing them with pseudonyms. Participant information was stored securely and access was restricted to the researcher only.

Participants were guaranteed that their responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and that no identifiable information would be divulged in any publication or presentation of the results. These steps ensured that individuals' privacy and the integrity of the data were upheld.

3.8.3 Mitigation of potential harm

In recognition of the potential emotional and professional risks associated with qualitative interviews, the researcher took all reasonable steps to prevent any psychological, emotional or reputational harm. Interview questions were designed to be respectful and non-invasive, and participants were encouraged to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering.

Throughout the interview process, the researcher remained sensitive to participants' body language and emotional signals and was prepared to stop or end interviews if any signs of distress were observed. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Chlosta, Griebler, and Kastner, (2020), who emphasise the importance of recognising and alleviating risks related to coercion and unequal power dynamics in workplace-based research.

3.8.4 Transparency and accurate representation

Transparency was a crucial ethical principle that was observed throughout the research process. The methodology, data analysis procedures and interpretive decisions were clearly recorded to ensure thoroughness and accountability, in line with the recommendations of Coetzee, Cilliers and McQuaid, (2021). Participants' perspectives were recorded faithfully and without misrepresentation. Care was taken to prevent any misrepresentation or discriminatory reporting of the data.

Participant contributions were recognised appropriately, and care was taken to honour the voices and insights shared, emphasising the collaborative nature of qualitative research.

In summary, the ethical standards that directed this research were firmly grounded in the principles of respect, integrity and accountability. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the commencement of the study, and it was it was conducted in accordance with recognised ethical guidelines for qualitative research. The study maintained its responsibility to protect and honour the rights and experiences of all participants by ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, safeguarding against harm, and committing to transparency.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented an in-depth account of the qualitative research methodology employed to investigate the impact of managerial practices on the job preparedness of TVET students undertaking practical experience in real-world work settings (WBE) programmes. A qualitative research design was selected for this study due its ability to provide in-depth insights into the experiences, perceptions and practices of management staff within a selected TVET college.

The chapter began by outlining the research design and how it aligned with the study's objectives. This was followed by a detailed description of the population and sampling procedures. The research population comprised key management staff, specifically Campus Managers and Heads of Unit, who were purposively selected for their direct involvement in supervising the implementation of WBE initiatives. Their insights were necessary for generating a contextual understanding of the management strategies and challenges involved. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data

collection method, strengthened by ethical and procedural safeguards to ensurethe well-being, voluntary participation and confidentiality of participants. The systematic and ethical manner in which the data was collected fostered open dialogue and rich narrative accounts from participants.

Thematic analysis was used for data analysis, incorporating systematic coding, category development, and theme identification. Reflexivity, transparency and member checking improved the accuracy and authenticity of the results. Ethical considerations were also adopted throughout the research process. Prioritising informed consent, respect for privacy, voluntary participation and accurate representation of participants' voices further increased the integrity and transparency of the research process. Triangulation and other validation strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility and dependability of the research outcomes.

By adhering to a meticulous methodological framework, Chapter 3 established the basis for presenting and interpreting the results. This ensures that the research outcomes were based on credible, transparent, and ethically sound practices.

Chapter 4 will present the key results that emerged from the data analysis. These results will be organised into thematic categories reflecting the management perspectives, institutional practices and challenges associated with implementing WBE programmes within the TVET context. Direct quotations from participants will support each theme, offering insights into how management roles shape student workplace readiness. The chapter will also highlight recurring patterns and unique viewpoints to provide a comprehensive representation of the study's core issues and emerging implications.

Chapter Four: Data analysis, interpretation and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of datagathered on the role of management in enhancing the workplace readiness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students through Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes and discusses the findings. It offers a systematic exploration of how management contributes to preparing students for the realities and expectations of the modern workplace. The results are analysed in relation to the research questions outlined in Chapter One, focusing on college management's active involvement in supporting students' transition from education to employment.

WBE programmes offer students numerous benefits, particularly in terms of developingt employability, practical skills, and job readiness. Recent research affirms that data-driven evaluations enable institutions to assess the real-world impact of WBE by examining student outcomes in areas such as technical competencies, soft skills, and professional conduct (Jackson, 2019; Zegwaard & Coll, 2021). For example, analysing structured feedback from students and industry partners can help to assess how well students are prepared for the workplace. Furthermore, analysing such data helps to validate the positive outcomes of WBE, such as increased job placement rates and improved job performance among graduates. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data from WBE participants, enables educators and institutional leaders to gain a clearer understanding of how these programmes support students' readiness for the workforce (Patrick, Peach, & Pocknee, 2020). This evidence strengthens the case for continued investment in WBE initiatives and encourages support from policymakers and education stakeholders.

The study involved semi-structured interviews with eight participants: three campus managers (CM1–CM3) and five heads of department (HOD1–HOD5) from a selected TVET college campus. The participants were selected based on convenience and accessibility, as well as their willingness to share their insights on the role of management in promoting workplace readiness through WBE. All of the participants had relevant experience of supervising or managing aspects of the WBE programme, which made them key informants for this study.

Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted face-to-face. The interviews were recorded using mobile phones and later transcribed into text format. To ensure authenticity and enrich the data analysis, verbatim quotations from participants have been incorporated throughout this chapter. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, involving coding, categorisation, and interpretation. Four primary themes emerged, each of which is aligned with the study's research objectives and sub-questions. These themes encapsulate the keyways in which management can enhance the workplace readiness of TVET students through WBE.

The four key themes identified are:

- Benefits of WBE for job readiness
- Management's support for students' job readiness
- Challenges faced by management
- Strategies to enhance students' workplace readiness

A summary of these themes, along with the corresponding sub-themes and descriptions, is presented in Table 4.1, which provides a clear overview of the study's findings. Additionally, a thematic map is included to visually illustrate the relationships between the themes and the central research question.

Table 4. 1: Key themes, descriptions and sub-themes

THEME	DESCRIPTION	SUB-THEME
Benefits of WBE programmes on Job readiness and employability skills	Highlights how WBE enhances students' workplace preparedness and employability.	• Practical experience and technical skill development • Development of employability skills • Industry exposure and work readiness • Integration of classroom learning and workplace experience • Strategies for improving WBE programmes
Role of management in improving student work readiness through WBE	Describes how management facilitates workplace preparation for students through various initiatives.	• Importance of management involvement • WBE programme coordination • Mentorship and support • Evaluation of programme effectiveness • Management's role in building partnerships and securing resources • Integration of WBE into organisational and academic strategies
Challenges faced by management in developing workplace readiness skills	Discusses the obstacles encountered by management in the WBE process.	• Partnership and placement challenges • Curriculum integration • Provision of support for WBE programmes • Quality of supervision • Monitoring and support • Broader challenges in the context of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR)
Leadership and management strategies for enhancing workplace readiness	Presents strategies developed to improve workplace readiness outcomes.	• Collaboration with industry partners • Effective mentorship and coaching • Authentic assessment and feedback • Comprehensive orientation and training for supervisors • Structured learning activities and projects • Integration of theory and practice • Ongoing assessment and feedback • Cultivating soft skills and emotional intelligence • Technology integration and digital literacy • Transformational leadership and stakeholder engagement

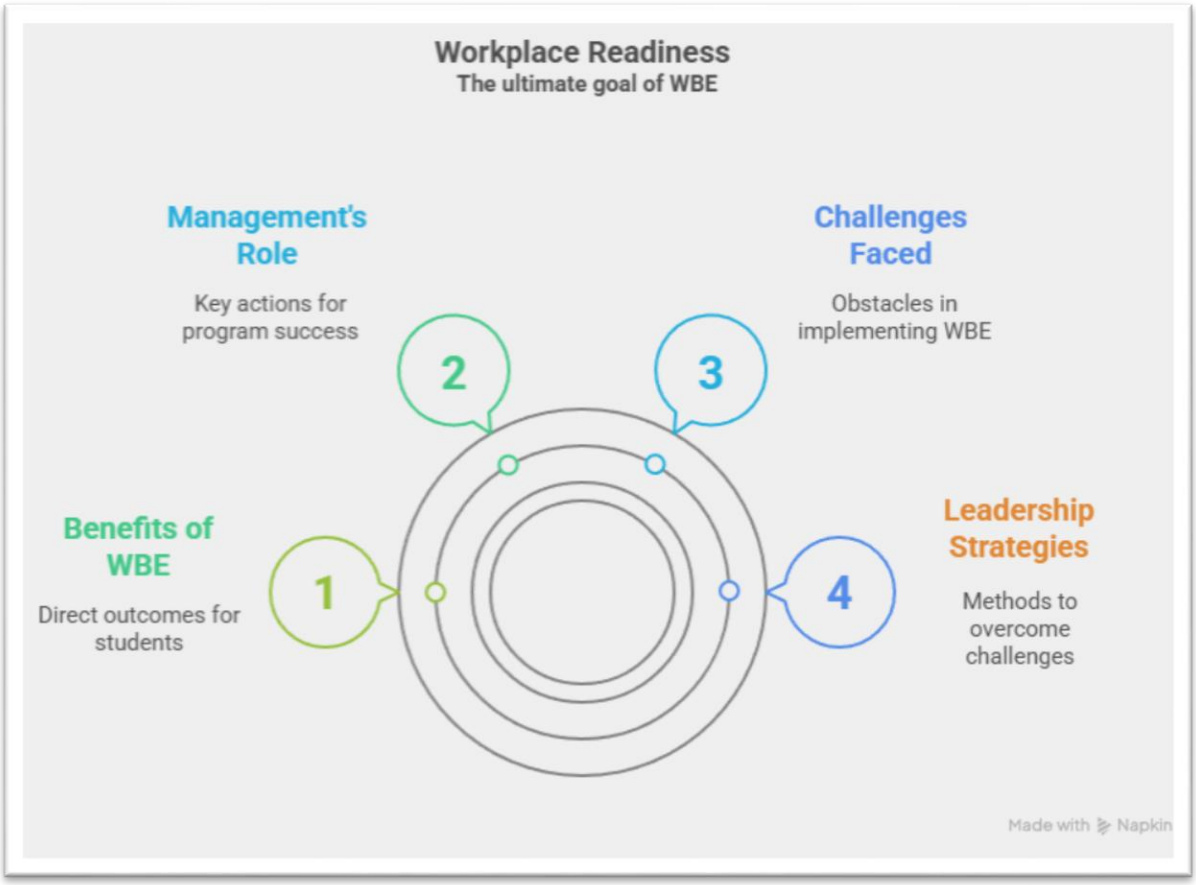


Figure 4. 1: Thematic map showing management's role in enhancing workplace readiness through WBE. Diagram created using Napkin.ai. Source: Author

This thematic map presents a conceptual framework that illustrates the role of management in Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. It highlights the interconnectedness of management involvement and the advantages and challenges of practical experience, which must be considered to enhance student preparedness for the workforce. The themes and sub-themes identified in the study each play a pivotal role in shaping effective implementation of WBE programmes that align with industry requirements and educational objectives.

Drawing from insights from Campus Managers and Heads of Department, the chapter presents a structured analysis of how management efforts contribute to bridging the gap between educational outcomes and workplace expectations. The results are interpreted in the context of existing literature to offer a critical perspective on the strategies that facilitate or hinder the success of WBE initiatives in preparing students for employment.

This analysis directly addresses the primary research question that guided this study:

What role does management play in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes?

The following sub-research questions were developed to support the investigation of this main objective:

- What benefits does the WBE programme offer that could enhance TVET students' job readiness and employability skills?
- How can management support students' job readiness through the WBE programme?
- What challenges does management face when developing students' workplace readiness skills during the WBE programme?
- What management strategies can be developed to enhance students' workplace readiness through the WBE programme?

4.2 Participant demographics

To ensure confidentiality, all participants were given pseudonyms were. The three campus managers are referred to as CM1, CM2 and CM3, and the five heads of department as HOD1, HOD2, HOD3, HOD4 and HOD5. The participants' demographic details are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4. 2 Demographic details of participants

PARTICIPANT GROUP	NUMBER	GENDER (M/F)		AGE RANGE				EXPERIENCE AS CM/HOD (YEARS)		
		MALE	**FEMALE**	**35-40**	**40-45**	**45-50**	**50-55**	**5-10**	**10-15**	**15-20**
CAMPUS MANAGER	3	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	0
HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS	5	2	3	0	4	0	0	5	0	0

Interpretation of Table 4.2:

This table presents the demographic profile of the eight study participants: three Campus Managers and five Heads of Department. Of the Campus Managers, two were male and one was female, with ages ranging from 40 to 55 years. Most had between 10 and 15 years' experience in their current roles. The group of Heads of Department consisted of two men and three women, most of whom were aged

between 40 and 45. All five HODs reported having between five and ten years of experience. This demographic composition suggests an experienced management team that can provide valuable insights into the management and implementation of WBE programmes across the selected TVET college campuses.

4.3 Benefits of WBE programme on job readiness and employability skills

This study examined how WBE programmes can improve job readiness and employability among TVET college students. The analysis revealed five key sub-themes:

1. Practical experience and technical skill development
2. Development of employability skills
3. Industry exposure and work readiness
4. Integrating classroom learning with workplace experience
5. Strategies for improving WBE programmes

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, these sub-themes highlight the pivotal role of WBE in bridging the gap between theoretical education and real-world application. The WBE programme enables students to engage in practical, hands-on learning, aligning academic knowledge with industry demands, fostering soft skills and promoting professional growth.

This section presents and discusses the results under each sub-theme, in line with the objectives of the study.

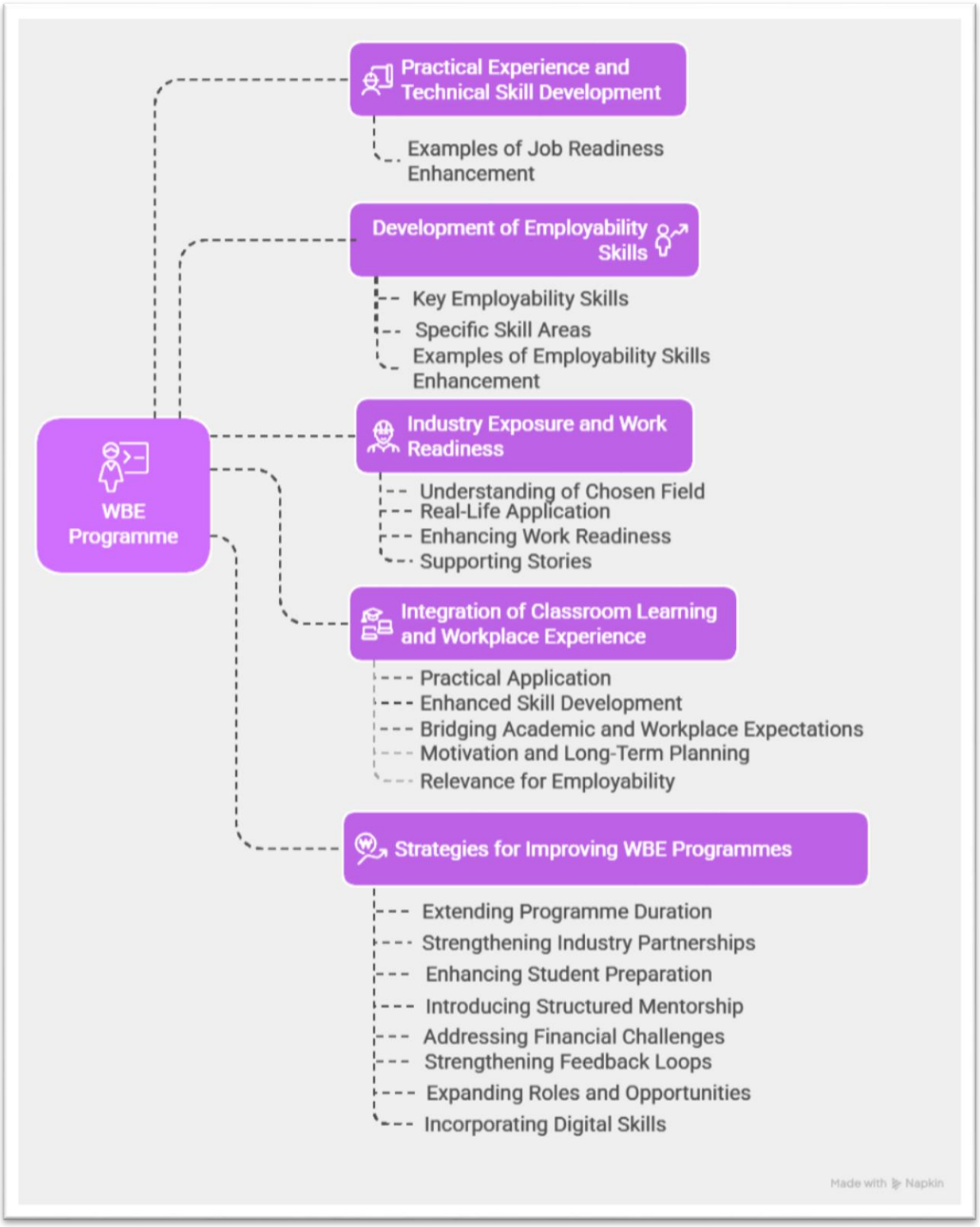


Figure 4. 2: Thematic map depicting the benefits of the WBE programme on job readiness and employability skills. This diagram was created using Napkin.ai. Source: Author

Figure 4.2 illustrates the core benefits of Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes in enhancing the job readiness and employability of TVET students. The

diagram has been designed using Napkin.ai and visually organises the interconnected outcomes into five key sub-themes:

1. Developing practical experience and technical skills
2. Development of employability skills
3. Industry exposure and enhanced work readiness
4. Integrating classroom learning with real-world workplace experience
5. Strategies for improving WBE programmes

Each sub-theme captures a specific dimension of how WBE contributes to student preparedness. These include strengthening the connection between academic knowledge and its practical application, fostering essential soft skills and encouraging professional development through active industry engagement. The figure provides a visual synthesis of how WBE initiatives support the holistic development of workplace competencies among TVET students.

The following section presents and discusses the results of the data analysis in relation to the study's objectives. This thematic structure is used to frame the interpretation of the findings.

4.3.1 Practical experience and technical skill development

Participants consistently emphasised that WBE provides a crucial bridge between theoretical classroom learning and the technical skills required in work environments. Many noted that WBE improves students' understanding of workplace expectations and helps them evaluate their readiness for specific career paths.

As CM1 explained, WBE "*gives students exposure to the work environment*" and provides "*an understanding of what is required from the student in the job market*."

Similarly, CM3 noted that "*students gain work-based experience and exposure to different industries*."

HOD3 shared this view, adding that WBE "*helps close the gap between theory and practical***,**" offering students a clearer insight into workplace operations.

Hands-on experience emerged as a central theme across all responses.

CM2 stated, "*WBE programmes provide hands-on experience, and it improves technical skills and confidence*," highlighting the transformative role of experiential learning in enabling students to apply theory to real-life situations. HOD3 reinforced this idea:

"Oh, definitely hands-on experience: Students practice the skills they learned in class within a real work environment." Similarly, HOD5 noted:

"Our students become exposed to industry tools, equipment, and processes that allow them to apply their knowledge learnt at college."

These insights reveal that WBE provides students with valuable exposure to real-world industry tools and systems, significantly improving their readiness for employment.

Students on Engineering and Related Design (ERD) programmes benefited from WBE placements. HOD5 observed that these students gained valuable workshop experience, enabling them to convert theoretical learning into practical skills.

4.3.1.1 Understanding workplace practices and culture

Beyond technical skill development, WBE familiarises students with workplace norms, expectations and communication styles. HOD4 provided key insights into how WBE placements help students to internalise workplace discipline, such as punctuality, routines and time management. Participants emphasised the importance of acquiring professional language and trade-specific jargon. One participant explained:

"In the industry, it's a very different language that is spoken. The terms and jargon used are more in keeping with the trade involved. Our students must know what to expect when they find a job."

Learning through observation and shadowing also helps students to understand professional conduct better:

"The student is able to learn by shadowing an employee and watching first-hand how it is done."

This type of exposure is particularly important in helping students transition from academic environments to structured, productivity-driven workplaces.

4.3.1.2 Practical skill application

Participants shared specific examples of students applying theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, particularly within technical fields. CM2 referred to civil engineering students using industry-specific equipment during internships:

"A student in a technical programme like Civil engineering might gain the skill to use equipment they learned about in class, by using it during an internship."

Similarly, HOD3 explained how students of Electrical Engineering applied diagnostic and wiring skills during installations, making them:

"…more attractive to employers because they've already applied the theories learned in class." According to HOD5:

"They are placed at engineering workshops where they are exposed to industry tools, equipment, and processes, allowing them to apply their knowledge and gain confidence."

These accounts emphasise how WBE enhances competence and builds confidence, preparing students for the demands of the workforce.

4.3.1.3 Pathways to employment

WBE was also described as a pathway to employment. CM3 proudly shared:

"The exciting thing is that the valuable WBE experience helped our students gain permanent employment…"

Several students obtained full-time positions at companies such as the DBE, Hesto and Clicks Group as a result of their performance during their WBE placements.

HOD4 further supported this point:

"It's so easy to see the value of WBE…look at how many students received permanent jobs with companies because of what the employer was able to observe during their WBE placement."

These responses highlight WBE as a recruitment pipeline for employers and a practical platform for students to showcase their potential, thereby enhancing their employability.

4.3.1.4 Feedback and improvement

Another key benefit identified was the structured feedback that students receive during their placements. CM1 noted:

"The student will obtain feedback from the host employer after WBE," "…and areas in which the student is lacking will need to be improved."

Such feedback mechanisms enable students to recognise their strengths and identify areas for development. It also provides TVET institutions with valuable insights to inform curriculum updates and targeted student support strategies.

Summary of findings

The findings in this category show that the benefits of WBE are multidimensional and closely linked to job readiness. The key outcomes include:

- Practical skill development through hands-on learning
- Adaptation to workplace culture, expectations and communication
- Confidence building through the real-world application of theory
- Enhanced employability via direct job placement opportunities
- Structured feedback to inform student growth and institutional improvement

These findings align with the sub-themes illustrated in Figure 4.2 and affirm the vital contribution of WBE to developing work-ready graduates. By fostering technical competence and soft skills, WBE significantly strengthens the employability of TVET students, supporting a smoother transition from education to the labour market.

4.3.2 Development of employability skills

Workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes play a pivotal role in equipping students with the essential skills needed for the workplace by immersing them in real-world work settings. Employability skills encompass the core attributes and competencies required to secure and perform well in employment, and to adapt to evolving workplace demands (Yorke, 2006). They encompass communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, adaptability and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge across diverse contexts. As Andrews and Higson (2008) argue,

employability encompasses more than just technical proficiency; it also includes soft skills that are crucial for career success.

The responses of the participants in this study strongly support the view that WBE programmes are valuable platform for cultivating these skills. Students were observed to develop practical capabilities that are often difficult to acquire through classroom instruction alone.

4.3.2.1 Key employability skills developed through WBE

Interpersonal and social skills

Participants widely agreed that WBE contributes significantly to the development of interpersonal and social skills, which are are often challenging to impart in a traditional academic setting.

CM1 remarked that such interpersonal competencies "*cannot be easily taught in a classroom*," emphasising the importance of experiential learning. Similarly, CM3 and HOD1 observed that students returned from their WBE placements "*more confident, responsible, with improved social skills*." HOD1 also noted that hospitality students, in particular, benefited from acquiring "*interpersonal skills, such as communicating with customers, while also learning basic practical skills in the kitchen*." HOD4 reinforced this view, adding that working under supervision and interacting with colleagues helped students build essential teamwork and communication skills.

Teamwork and collaboration

The ability to work collaboratively emerged as a recurring theme among participants. CM2 explained that students learned to function as part of a team "*through group projects and shared tasks during their WBE.*" HOD3 agreed, noting that srudents developed collaboration skills "*by working together with others and addressing real-world problems as part of a team*." HOD4 added that students gained valuable teamwork experience "*when they work with supervisors and co-workers in a real workplace*."

Communication skills

Several participants identified communication as a key area for improvement through WBE. CM2 stated that communication skills were improved "t*hrough shared tasks and*

group projects," while HOD3 said that students developed these abilities "*as they learn to interact effectively with supervisors, colleagues, and clients***.**" Similarly, HOD5 commented that students benefited from "*interacting with industry professionals,*" which helped them to refine their communication styles in the workplace. CM3 reinforced this, stating that students developed a better understanding of "*the importance of speaking and working together in a professional manner to conduct their duties***,**" thereby preparing them furter for the expectations of the working world.

4.3.2.2 Specific skill areas improved through WBE

Technical and vocational skills

As well as soft skills, WBE was seen to sharpen students' technical and vocational abilities. CM3 reported that "*students were able to practice their vocational skills during WBE*," offering examples such as "*improving their filing*" and "data capturing" tasks. HOD4 provided additional insight, stating that students demonstrated practical competencies such as welding and administrative skills. They noted that, "*One student even assisted a senior staff member with an Excel formula***.**" These examples highlight the successful application of classroom knowledge in real-world scenarios. HOD5 also emphasised that hands-on experience with industry-specific tools led to tangible improvements in technical proficiency.

Creative thinking and problem-solving

Critical thinking and problem-solving emerged as valuable outcomes of WBE participation. CM1 observed that WBE enabled "*students to find new solutions to problems or challenges*," while HOD3 explained that such thinking was "*developed as students tackle real-time challenges in the workplace*." HOD4 supported this observation, noting that problem-solving skills were strengthened through practical engagement "*under the guidance of a foreman or supervisor*," which also improved students' decision-making abilities.

Time management and professional work habits

The structured nature of the workplace provides fertile ground for students to develop time management skills and professional routines. According to HOD3, "*students learn to meet deadlines and produce quality work in a professional environment*." HOD5 added that adapting to real-world time constraints

prepares students to become "*better prepared for real-world challenges*." These experiences helped instil a sense of responsibility and work discipline among the students.

4.3.2.3 Examples of how WBE enhances employability skills

The benefits of WBE were evident in the concrete examples shared by participants. CM3 described how students placed at Justice Gizenga Hospital improved their filing accuracy by "*filing hard-copy data for patients*." This facilitated smoother operations by helping "*the hospital team quickly process files to direct patients to the correct departments*." HOD4 highlighted how engineering students successfully applied their welding knowledge to create tangible products such as "*burglar guard frames*." Similarly, HOD3 reflected on the development of customer service competencies among hospitality students, explaining that they enhanced their adaptability and responsiveness by "*responding to guest concerns*."

These accounts clearly demonstrate the impact of WBE in developing transferable employability skills across various disciplines. Through exposure to real-world scenarios, interpersonal engagement and collaborative practice, students gained confidence and professional competence.

These results are consistent with those of studies by Choi and Sung (2020), who argue that work-based learning significantly enhances core employment-related competencies, and by Hsieh and Clark (2018), who found that WBE positively influences workplace readiness among technical and vocational education and training (TVET) students. Collectively, the evidence presented underscores the important role of WBE in bridging the gap between academic preparation and the demands of the modern workforce, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the transition into their chosen careers.

4.3.3 Industry exposure and work readiness

Workplace-based experience (WBE) plays a vital role in bridging the divide between academic instruction and real-world practice. By immersing students in authentic industry environments, WBE enhances their understanding of workplace dynamics, encourages the practical application of theoretical knowledge and significantly boosts their readiness for professional settings. The perspectives shared by participants in

this study emphasise the multifaceted value of WBE in preparing students for the realities of employment and aligning their skills with industry expectations.

4.3.3.1 Understanding of the chosen field through industry exposure

Improved understanding of field-specific practices

Participants consistently affirmed that WBE significantly strengthens students' understanding of their vocational disciplines. As CM1 explained, many students begin their placements with littlel experience of the working world, relying on second-hand accounts "*from friends, family, or social media until they engage in practical tasks*" and begin to comprehend the realities of their field.

CM2 echoed this view, remarking that "*WBE programmes bridge the gap between theory and practice, giving them insight into industry expectations and practical applications*." This sentiment was reinforced by several Heads of Department. For example, HOD2 observed that WBE introduces students to "*the day-to-day responsibilities, technologies, and industry standards relevant to their field*." HOD3 emphasised that observing theoretical knowledge in action "*brings a clearer understanding of their chosen field. They say that WBE helps their understanding of concepts they study*."

Similarly, HOD4 reflected that moving from a simulated classroom to a live working environment enables students to apply "*skills they learned in class into real-world applications. This helps them understand their field better and prepares them for what to expect*." HOD5 added that WBE offers students valuable "*insight and understanding of the workplace, preparing them for the real world*." These findings are consistent with previous research emphasising the importance of work-integrated learning in improving vocational clarity and industry alignment (Jackson, 2015; Smith, 2012).

4.3.3.2 Real-life application of theoretical knowledge

Practical application in workplaces

Another strong theme that emerged from the participants' responses was howWBE enables students to apply academic theory to real-world contexts. For instance, CM3 described how students could apply theoretical knowledge to areas such as customer care and administration, helping them to recognise the importance of accuracy and professionalism.

Providing further examples, HOD4 stated:

"*Office Administration students prepare templates like budgets for departments, while welding students apply their workshop training to create usable products like burglar guard frames*," effectively transforming classroom skills into workplace outputs.

HOD3 added that Information Technology students gained a deeper understanding of "*the complexity of systems maintenance or cybersecurity when working in a real company, rather than just reading about it in textbooks*."

CM2 cited an instance where "*a student who struggled with industry standards excelled after applying concepts during an internship, leading to a deeper comprehension of their coursework*."

Similarly, HOD1 explained that Hospitality students "*working in real hotel settings gain confidence as they learn practical skills in Front Office, Restaurant, Bar, and Housekeeping. This allows them to better understand their studies and how they relate to the workplace.*"

These insights are consistent with existing literature, which shows that practical application of academic learning enhances both comprehension and employability (Jackson, 2015; Smith, 2012).

4.3.3.3 Enhancing work readiness

Improved confidence and motivation

Participants emphasised that, beyond skills development, WBE also strengthens students' confidence and motivation. For example, HOD1 shared the results of a three-month WBE pilot programme involving hospitality students. They noted that students who returned from a placement at a four-star hotel "*achieved the highest pass rate for the class*", which they linked to increased motivation and understanding.

CM3 recounted an inspiring example where a "*student was offered a full-time job and financial support to obtain her driver's license after demonstrating her skills and dedication*" during her placement. Similarly, HOD5 reported that "*students often express how their WBE experience changes their perspective on how they need to conduct themselves professionally and enhances their practical insight.*" Such developments meaningfully contribute to students' job readiness and future

employability, aligning with Jackson's (2016) findings on the impact of authentic workplace experiences on student self-efficacy and career motivation.

Alignment with workplace standards

Participants also highlighted that WBE introduces students to industry standards and workplace expectations. HOD2 noted that the WBE "*helps students understand the complexities of the industry and prepares them for the realities of professional work*." HOD4 observed that students begin to appreciate the professional behaviours required in their chosen fields, saying, "*they understand the professional behaviours required in their chosen fields*."

Similarly, HOD3 observed that students who have participated in WBE placements often "*transition seamlessly into full-time employment because WBE equips them with an understanding of the daily demands of their profession*." These outcomes align with the findings of Smith and Worsfold (2014), who argue that students exposed to authentic work environments demonstrate greater adaptability and alignment with industry expectations post-graduation.

4.3.3.4 Supporting stories and examples

Field-specific success stories

A variety of participant accounts illustrated the practical success of WBE placements. CM3 described how students improved "*skills like customer care, accurate financial record-keeping, and filing; one student created advertisements and data-processing documents for a host employer, improving their data capturing skills. Another student secured a job after completing her WBE.*"

HOD1 reiterated the positive outcomes of the hospitality pilot, reporting that "*after completing WBE, they understood their coursework better and achieved a high pass rate*." HOD4 shared how "*an Office Administration student learned the importance of using tables and columns when creating a budget template for her WBE placement*", which reinforced her understanding of concepts taught in class.

HOD3 mentioned that IT students often "*realise the complexity of system maintenance and cybersecurity only when they experience these processes first-hand in a*

company.” CM2 shared an example of a previously underperforming student who developed “*a deeper comprehension after applying theoretical concepts during WBE*."

The data clearly demonstrates that WBE significantly enhances students' understanding of their vocational fields, supports the real-life application of academic knowledge and improves their preparedness for the professional world. These findings align with a growing body of literature that supports the effectiveness of experiential learning. For instance, Idris and Hassan (2020) emphasise that WBE aligns student competencies with industry needs, while Shaw, Oates, and Watts (2021) affirm that authentic workplace exposure fosters job readiness. Ultimately, WBE enables students to grasp the expectations of their future careers, grow in confidence and professionalism, and develop their capabilities; all of which are critical factors to long-term success in the workforce.

4.3.4 Integration of classroom learning and workplace experience

Integrating theoretical instruction with workplace-based experience (WBE) was identified as a vital approach to preparing students for the realities of the modern work environment. Participants unanimously emphasised that combining classroom learning with practical experience enables a more comprehensive and effective educational journey. This approach enhances students’ technical proficiency, nurtures essential soft skills, strengthens motivation and supports long-term career aspirations. This section explores participant how integrated learning shapes employability and job readiness of students, based on participant insight.

4.3.4.1 Practical application of theoretical knowledge

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of applying academic concepts in authentic workplace settings to reinforce learning. CM1 observed that students often struggle to grasp abstract content until they encounter real-life applications:

“*The student is unable to visualise what they see in a textbook… until they can practically do or see the process****.”***

This sentiment reflects the value of experiential learning in improving comprehension. CM2 elaborated on this conceptdemonstrating how theoretical frameworks gain significance throughapplication in context, stating:

"A marketing student may learn about consumer behaviour in class, then apply those principles while developing a campaign at their placement."

HOD3 echoed this, by noting that academic foundations are cemented through practical implementation.

"In-class theoretical knowledge lays the foundation, while workplace experience hones these skills with real-world practice."

Providing a more technical example, HOD3 explained that mechanical engineering students only truly understand fluid dynamics when they work with hydraulic systems in operational environments. These accounts support Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning and Jackson's (2015) assertion applying theory in real-world settings is instrumental in improving students' understanding and their prospects of finding employment.

4.3.4.2 Enhanced skill development

Participants also reported that integrating classroom and workplace learning enhances both technical competencies and essential soft skills, such as communication, teamwork and adaptability. HOD2 described how students emerge from WBE placements feeling more confident and capable:

"The integration… makes them more adaptable and competent in their field."

HOD4 also noted that even short-term exposure to real workplaces can be highly valuable for development:

"WBE gives the student the opportunity to be in the real workplace for a short while."

These workplace interactions offer students the opportunity to reinforce classroom learning in a practical setting, helping them to develop more durable and transferable skills. These findings align with those of Andrews and Higson (2008), who assert that employability is underpinned by the successful merging of academic knowledge and work-related skills. Similarly, Jackson (2015) contends that work-integrated learning builds students' confidence in applying theoretical knowledge across varied workplace environments.

4.3.4.3 Bridging the gap between academic knowledge and workplace expectations

Participants emphasised that WBE plays a critical role in aligning academic instruction with real-world industry expectations. This alignment familiarises students with workplace protocols and regulatory standards and also cultivates professional behaviours and attitudes. HOD5 commented on the broader impact of this alignment:

"*Integrating theory and practice helps students understand how industry protocols and regulations are implemented****."***

HOD4 provided a compelling example from the welding programme, where resource limitations at the college prevent extensive hands-on training. However, WBE placements offer these students direct access to industry-grade tools and procedures:

"*WBE placements provide the same welding learner individualised opportunities to hone the skill in an actual workplace setting****."***

These insights resonate with the views of Smith, Ferns, Russell, and Cretchley (2014), who emphasise that structured work placements are an essential bridge between institutional instruction and industry demands, thereby facilitating students' transition into the workforce.

4.3.4.4 Motivation and long-term planning

Several participants noted connecting academic learning with real-world practice has a positive effect on students' motivation and long-term career planning. CM3 reflected on the motivational effect of WBE exposure:

"*Students become more future-focused… they start buying appropriate clothes for their jobs and arranging accommodation****."***

This behavioural shift illustrates how the real-world relevance of WBE can foster a deeper sense of purpose and engagement. CM3 also recounted the success story of an IT student who transitioned from WBE to university and then to full-time employment:

"*He was accepted at UKZN and is now employed in IT at Hesto****."***

These examples demonstrate the transformative potential of integrated learning in shaping students' career trajectories. These findings are consistent with the argument

of Choi and Sung (2020) that work-based learning enhances not only practical competencies, but also students' self-efficacy and career clarity.

4.3.4.5 Relevance of integration for employability

Finally, participants emphasised that integrated learning significantly improves employability by providing students with academic knowledge and the ability to apply it in real-world scenarios. HOD2 aptly summarised this dual benefit:

"*Students are not only equipped with academic knowledge but also the ability to implement that knowledge in their work environment****."***

This comprehensive preparation provides graduates with industry-relevant skills and confidence, facilitating a seamless transition from education to employment. These findings align with those of Hsieh and Clark (2018), who advocate integrated learning approaches that combine adaptability with technical expertise. Similarly, Dunne, Owen and Conway (2017) emphasise that engaging with real-world challenges through WBE fosters critical thinking and problem-solving, which are key attributes for career success.

In summary, integrating classroom learning with workplace experience was identified as key to preparing students for the world of work. By enabling students to apply theory in practice, develop transferable skills, understand professional standards and plan their future with confidence, WBE serves as a vital conduit between education and employment. These insights validate the essential role of integrated learning in developing a cohort of skilled, adaptable and employable TVET graduates.

4.3.5 Strategies for improving WBE programmes

Although WBE programmes play a vital role in enhancing students' employability and workplace readiness, participants in this study identified several key strategies for improving their structure, implementation and outcomes. These strategies includepedagogical, structural and systemic reforms such as extended placement periods, enhanced industry collaboration, improved student preparation, formalised mentorship, timely financial support, robust feedback systems, broader exposure to professional roles and integration of digital competencies. These findings are consistent with recent research which highlights the changing requirements of

students and employers in a dynamic and competitive labour market (Choi & Sung, 2020; Idris & Hassan, 2020).

4.3.5.1 Extending the duration of WBE programmes

One of the most frequently cited recommendations was to extend the duration of student placements in order to facilitate deeper learning and integration into the workplace environment. CM1 suggested a rotational model involving "*three months of theory followed by three months of practice*," while HOD4 criticised the brevity of current placements, noting:

"*Students often say they were just getting used to being in the workplace when it ended****."***

Many students voluntarily extended their time with host companies beyond the official placement period, reflecting both their enthusiasm and their view that the current timelines were inadequiate. A longer placement period would allow students to develop a more comprehensive understanding of workplace dynamics, foster stronger professional relationships and gain deeper insights into organisational operations.

This finding aligns with the work of Idris and Hassan (2020), who emphasise that extended workplace exposure facilitates professional adaptation and competency development, particularly in technical and vocational contexts.

4.3.5.2 Strengthening industry partnerships

Participants emphasised the importance of cultivating long-term, strategic partnerships between TVET colleges and industry stakeholders. CM2 and HOD3 emphasised the importance of maintaining a continuously aligned curriculum through "*regular input from employers*" and the implementation of "*feedback loops*" that reflect industry standards and expectations.

However, HOD5 acknowledged a significant barrier:

"*The biggest challenge presently is establishing industry partnerships and being able to place all students****."***

This highlights the ongoing difficulties in securing sufficient placement opportunities and the need for targeted industry engagement. Strengthening these partnerships

would provide students with access to authentic workplace experiences, leading to more relevant and impactful training outcomes.

This recommendation is supported by Choi and Sung (2020), who argue that long-term collaboration between industry and academia improves the relevance and quality of vocational training, enhancing graduates' employability.

4.3.5.3 Enhancing student preparation

A recurring theme in participant responses was that many students enter WBE placements inadequately prepared. CM3 proposed the creation of a "dedicated WBE office" to coordinate pre-placement training and support. As noted,

"*Students need more than a day's orientation to prepare for the workplace****."***

HOD5 also recommended a pre-placement engagement process between students and host organisations to clarify expectations and foster mutual understanding. CM3 also emphasised the importanceof training workplace mentors and supervisors, particularly in public sector institutions:

"*They must be prepared to receive and train students****."***

These recommendations align with the findings of Shaw et al. (2021), who advocate structured orientation and supervisory readiness to maximise learning during workplace-based experiences.

These views are supported by findings from Shaw et al. (2021), who highlight the importance of organised preparation and supervisory readiness in improving learning outcomes during work-based learning.

4.3.5.4 Introducing structured mentorship

Formal mentorship has emerged as a vital element for enhancing students' workplace experiences. HOD2 and HOD3 advocated the implementation of structured mentorship models that allocate students dedicated mentors who provide consistent guidance and feedback:

"*Dedicated mentors who offer ongoing guidance and feedback****."***

Such models can facilitate reflective learning, encourage career development, and promote professional confidence. Dunne, Owen and Conway (2017) emphasise that mentorship improves students' ability to contextualise and apply their learning, thereby enhancing their long-term employability prospects.

4.3.5.5 Addressing financial challenges

Financial concerns, particularly delayed student stipend payments, were identified as a key barrier to successful WBE participation. HOD5 explained:

"*Stipends paid to students tend to be a challenge… most stipends are paid later than required****."***

For many students, these stipends are essential for full participation in WBE. Delayed or inconsistent payments disproportionately affect students from low-income backgrounds and may discourage them from completing the programme. Therefore, ensuring timely and reliable financial support is critical.

These concerns are corroborated by Hsieh and Clark (2018), who emphasise that comprehensive financial and institutional support systems are essential for equitable and effective work-based education programmes.

4.3.5.6 Strengthening feedback loops

Participants advocated for more robust feedback systems to serve both student development and programme improvement. For example, HOD3 suggested integrating employer evaluations into students' academic assessments, while CM2 proposed:

"*Implementing feedback loops with employers to refine the program based on industry trends****."***

Such systems serve as a bridge between the workplace and the classroom, helping institutions to identify skill gaps and respond to labour market shifts.

Similarly, Idris and Hassan (2020) call for continuous feedback between training institutions and employers to maintain programme relevance and ensure sustained improvement.

4.3.5.7 Expanding roles and opportunities

Participants also recommended broadening the scope of student placements to expose them to a variety of roles and sectors. HOD2 and HOD3 noted that increased diversity in placements would improve students' adaptability and provide a more well-rounded understanding of their chosen industries:

"*Offering more internships in varied sectors… would maximise the impact on job readiness****."***

Such diversification promotes innovation, encourages interdisciplinary learning and equips students with transferable skills.

Shaw et al. (2021) reinforce this view, asserting that diverse workplace experiences lead to more informed career decisions and greater flexibility for students in an ever-changing job market.

4.3.5.8 Incorporating digital skills and modern practices

There was a strong emphasis on the need to integrate digital competencies and contemporary workplace practices into WBE programmes. HOD1 and HOD2 remarked:

"*Integrating digital skills training will enhance students' employability in the modern workplace****."***

As digital technologies become increasingly central to the workplace, it is essential for students to receive training in this area. Participants also endorsed blended learning models combining online instruction with face-to-face engagement to reinforce theoretical knowledge.

Summary

Improving WBE programmes requires a holistic and forward-looking approach. Key strategies identified by participants include extending placement durations, strengthening industry partnerships, and improving student preparation. Additionally, structured mentorship, reliable financial support, systematic feedback mechanisms, wider exposure to industry roles and the integration of digital competencies are all critical to ensuring that WBE programmes remain relevant, equitable and impactful.

These strategies are well supported by existing literature. Gerhardt and Falck (2020) emphasise the importance of planned reflection and feedback in improving learning outcomes. Idris and Hassan (2020) highlight the importance of sustained communication between TVET institutions and industry partners to ensure the successful delivery of programmes. Meanwhile, Shaw et al. (2021) emphasise the value of mentorship in guiding students through complex workplace environments. Jablonski, Baum and Scharf (2022), on the other hand, advocate for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to enhance programme effectiveness.

When implemented effectively, these strategies can transform WBE from a supplementary learning activity into a central, integrated component of vocational education that prepares students for real-world success.

4.4 Role of management in improving students' work readiness through WBE

The findings of this study emphasise the pivotal role that college management plays in enhancing students' preparedness for the workplace through comprehensive planning and coordinated efforts with internal and external stakeholders. Participants from curriculum management and academic leadership levels articulated a spectrum of strategic interventions aimed at bridging the gap between academic instruction and the professional demands of industry.

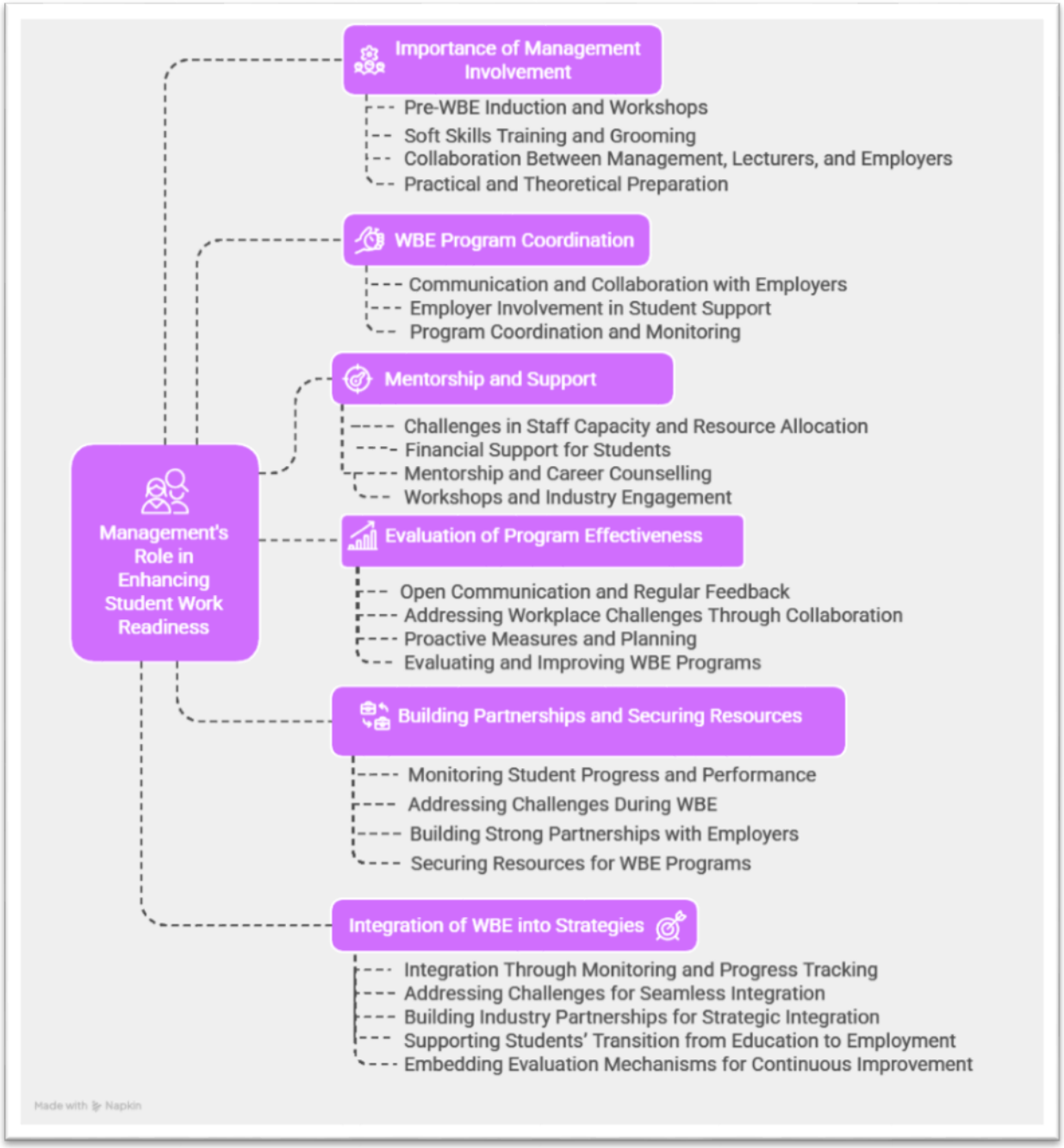


Figure 4. 3: Thematic map illustrating the role of management in enhancing student work readiness through WBE. This diagram was developed using Napkin.ai. Source: Author

Figure 4.3 illustrates the thematic framework derived from qualitative data analysis concerning management's role in promoting work readiness through Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. The figure, designed using Napkin.ai, identifies six interrelated themes that emerge from management's central function:

1) Importance of management involvement,
2) WBE programme coordination,

3) Mentorship and support,
4) Evaluation of programme effectiveness,
5) Building partnerships and securing resources, and
6) Integration of WBE into institutional strategies.

These thematic areas represent the full range of managerial responsibilities, encompassing operational logistics, strategic integration, stakeholder engagement, resource mobilisation and responsiveness to changes in the labour market in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The diagram illustrates the interconnetedness of these themes, emphasising that effective management is essential not only for programme implementation but, also for long-term student success in the workplace.

4.4.1 Importance of management involvement

Participants unanimously acknowledged that management's role extends beyond administrative oversight to include the strategic design, implementation and monitoring of preparatory activities such as student orientation, soft skills training and collaboration with lecturers and industry professionals. These interventions are intended to ensure that academic programming aligns closely aligns with workplace expectations. This corroborates the findings of Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Foote (2020), who assert that the alignment of educational and professional standards can greatly improve student engagement and performance.

4.4.1.1 Pre-WBE induction and workshops

Participants emphasised the necessity of structured induction processes that offer students early and meaningful preparation for integrating into the workplace. Rather than being a one-day formality, the induction programme was described as a comprehensive, including workshops, simulated work environments, mock interviews and interactions with employer.

CM1 explained, "*The students are exposed to a simulation room or workshop experience... Students are inducted before they attend WBE*," highlighting a proactive strategy to reduce anxiety and boost confidence.

CM2 added, "*Pre-WBE workshops and mock interviews ensure students possess essential skills before starting***,**" thereby reinforcing the importance of developing behavioural competencies alongside academic knowledge.

CM3 described an inclusive approach: "*Students receive an orientation, guideline to dressing/behaviour/etiquette, are groomed in time management skills*..." She also noted the institution's responsiveness to vulnerable student groups: "*A screening is done for medically compromised and pregnant students, who complete their WBE under strict supervision*."

Similarly, HOD2 shared: "*I ensure students are prepared by conducting pre-WBE workshops that focus on workplace expectations, soft skills, and technical knowledge*." Meanwhile HOD5 remarked: "*Students undergo a thorough induction process as well as an initial meet-and-greet with the employer*."

HOD4 expanded on this, describing how students are introduced to the placement environment: "*We also take the students to the workplace... the employer tells them briefly what will be expected*."

These responses reflect an institutional practice of preparing students through structured, context-sensitive induction programmes. This affirms Akkoyunlu-Wigley and Foote's (2020) assertion that effective induction significantly improves students' adaptability and success in professional contexts.

4.4.1.2 Soft skills training and grooming

Participants consistently emphasised the importance of soft skills training for success in the workplace. While technical knowledge is foundational, attributes such as communication, punctuality, presentation and professionalism were considered equally vital.

CM3 described how staff model professional behaviour: "*Lecturers dress up professionally throughout the year and guide students on workplace dress code*." She further noted: "*Short sessions are arranged for students to practise their workplace skills at the campus admin departments*."

HOD3 elaborated on the structured nature of this preparation: "*We conduct pre-placement workshops, job-specific training, and ensure mastery of soft and technical skills*," including mock interviews and résumé-building.

HOD5 added: "*They are given proper insight in terms of how to be professional, one's attitude, as well as punctuality*."

These insights demonstrate that soft skills are not viewed as innate, but rather as something that can be cultivated through structured training. This aligns with the argument of Chetty, Mayson, and Sher (2020) that soft skills are critical for long-term employability and student adaptability.

4.4.1.3 Collaboration between management, lecturers, and employers

The data revealed that active WBE implementation requires active collaboration between management, academic staff and industry stakeholders.

HOD1 emphasised the importance of internal coordination: "*Proper communication between CMT, lecturers, and the students is essential*," noting that this facilitates consistent messaging and efficient placement logistics.

HOD4 noted: "*We introduce the students to the employer, who tells them briefly what will be expected of them*," indicating a proactive effort to establish rapport and reduce student anxiety.

CM3 highlighted student-specific placement strategies: "*Communication with lecturers ensures that students with special circumstances... are given placements appropriate to their situation*."

These practices demonstrate a student-centred approach that prioritises equity, clear communication and stakeholder alignment. The findings support those of Harris et al. (2017), who emphasise the importance of institutional collaboration with industry in enriching WBE experiences.

4.4.1.4 Practical and theoretical preparation

Participants reported an intentional strategy of merging theoretical instruction with practical application, recognising that academic content alone is insufficient for workplace readiness.

CM1 stated: "*Students have the necessary theory and practical knowledge… The staff used are qualified in the theory and practical aspects*," highlighting a deliberate staffing approach that ensures integrated learning.

HOD3 described how simulation bridges the gap between theory-practice: "*We conduct job simulation activities where students experience work environments virtually or through role-playing.*"

HOD4 added, "*Practical lessons are timetabled every week in the workshops and simulation rooms... Our lecturers ensure that students are theoretically prepared and receive exposure*."

These findings are consistent with with the arguments of O'Neill, Huntley-Moore and Race (2018) regarding the importance of experiential learning in equipping students to face real-world professional challenges.

In conclusion, this section demonstrates that management's role in preparing students for the workplace is multifaceted, ecompassing operational coordination, staff development, and strategic alignment with employer expectations. The collective insights provided by participants corroborate the broader scholarly consensus (Akkoyunlu-Wigley & Foote, 2020; Chetty et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2017) that structured, student-centred and industry-aligned approaches are vital for successful WBE implementation and enhancing student employability outcomes.

4.4.2 WBE program coordination

Effective coordination of Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes is central to preparing students for real-world employment and is a key institutional responsibility. Participants emphasised the importance of structured collaboration with employers, providing direct support to students during placements, and continuously monitoring and evaluating programmes to ensure they meet the workforce standards and remain aligned with them. These findings are consistent with the broader literature, which emphasises the importance of strategic partnerships, responsive communication and adaptive management in creating meaningful WBE experiences (Gribble & Blackmore, 2018; Kuczera & Jeon, 2020).

4.4.2.1 Communication and collaboration with employers

Participants emphasised the pivotal role of structured communication and collaboration with employers in the effective implementation of WBE. Management representatives outlined proactive strategies for cultivating and maintaining strong relationships with industry partners, ensuring a mutual understanding of programme goals and responsibilities.

A central feature of this was the appointment of dedicated WBE officers to act as communication liaisons between institutions and host organisations. CM1 noted: "*The academic institution allocates a WBE officer to communicate with the industry before, during, and after the student exposure*." This role facilitates continuity and enables institutions to address any issues that arise during placements in real time.

Participants described using multiple channels to maintain communication, including face-to-face meetings and formal correspondence. CM2 shared: "*Regular meetings with employers facilitate alignment on expectations and provide ongoing support to students*," while CM3 explained: "*Emails are sent and face-to-face meetings are set up (WBE letter is attached). Employers are briefed on what is expected of them during these meetings.*"

The importance of documentation to this process was highlighted. HOD4 explained: "*There is also an official letter that is given to the employer detailing what the WBE programme is all about. This ensures that the student receives the support that is needed from the employer.*"

Site visits further reinforced institutional accountability and student welfare. HOD1 remarked: "*It is actually a lot of work to be done and a lot of site visits to check on working conditions and to ensure that they keep to the agreed working conditions and practical learning agreed to in the MOU*."

Several participants described strategic, pre-emptive employer engagement. HOD5 stated: "*Prior to the start of the academic year, regular visits are made by management to potential employers to establish placement opportunities for our students… During such visits, we also aim to establish industry requirements and expectations from our*

*students***.**" HOD2 added, "*I work closely with employers… ensuring they understand the support students need*."

These insights reflect a proactive, student-centred approach to WBE management. This aligns with the views of Gribble and Blackmore (2018), who emphasise the importance of strong institution-industry partnerships in equipping students with the relevant skills and workplace readiness they need.

4.4.2.2 Employer involvement in student support

Participants consistently described employers as active contributors to student development, providing mentorship, supporting skills training and assisting with workplace integration.

CM1 explained: "*The student is inducted before the WBE. This allows the institution to prepare the student***,**" while also noting: "*We communicate directly with the students during WBE and assist the students where we can*." These comments highlight the dual support offered by the institution and employer.

CM2 emphasised collaborative training initiatives: "*Co-developing training sessions and employer-led workshops to ensure students understand workplace norms*." HOD3 shared a detailed example: "*A practical example is co-developing learning plans with employers that focus on both technical and soft skills. For example, an employer in the automotive industry provided real-time feedback on students' diagnostic skills, helping them improve during the course of their WBE*."

Employer involvement also helped to overcome limitations in institutional training. HOD1 explained: "*We always have an issue when it comes to teaching the hospitality students wine serving, because the College does not have a liquor license. During WBE, the host hotel ensures that these students get the training in wine serving as part of the MOU with them*."

Long-standing partnerships based on trust facilitated this collaboration. HOD4 shared: "*We place our students in companies where it is easy to have an open communication channel… Over the years, we have gained the trust of these employers who host our students for WBE every year*."

HOD5 echoed this sentiment: "*There's always frequent engagement between the campus and employers to ensure future relations*."

Lecturers also played a role through regular site visits, ensuring that students received consistent support, as noted by CM3.

These findings corroborate the argument of Mokgata and Raborife (2018) that employer engagement enhances the relevance and effectiveness of WBE. Through structured feedback, real-time supervision and co-designed training, employers play an essential role in bridging the gap between academic preparation and workplace expectations.

4.4.2.3 Program coordination and monitoring

Effective WBE coordination requires ongoing oversight throughout the placement period. Participants emphasised the importance of continuous monitoring as a safeguard for student welfare to ensure the educational value of the placement.

CM3 stated: "*Lecturers conduct site visits before WBE and during WBE to ensure that the students are treated fairly and receive maximum workplace exposure*." HOD1 added: "*Site visits are conducted to check on working conditions and to ensure they keep to the agreed working conditions and practical learning agreed to in the MOU*."

Monitoring also included ongoing feedback from students. HOD4 explained: "*We insist on students giving us updates and communicating should they experience any problems.*" This two-way feedback process enables institutions to intervene promptly when challenges arise.

These practices align with Kuczera and Jeon (2020), who emphasise the importance of continued supervision in maintaining safe and educationally enriching environments. Active monitoring enables institutions to enforce quality assurance standards, support students and adapt placements to individual needs.

- Participants described a coordinated approach involving multiple institutional actors
- Deployment of WBE officers to liaise with employers
- Pre-placement briefings and formal documentation

- Employer collaboration on skills training and mentorship
- Structured site visits for compliance and support
- Student feedback channels for real-time issue resolution

This comprehensive strategy reflects the conclusions of Gribble and Blackmore (2018) and Mokgata and Raborife (2018), who advocate for dynamic, multi-stakeholder engagement in work-integrated learning.

In summary, WBE coordination is a dynamic, relational process, not a static administrative function. Continuous planning, communication and oversight are essential to ensure students are placed in environments that foster learning, support and professional growth. Collaborative efforts between management, lecturers and industry partners enhance the impact and quality of WBE programmes.

4.4.3 Mentorship and support

Structured mentorship and support systems are vital to the success of Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes, as they help students bridge the gap between theoretical learning and professional practice. Participants identified areas in need of reinforcement, such as staffing, financial assistance, mentorship networks, and sustained engagement with industry stakeholders. These views are strongly supported by existing literature, which emphasises the importance of mentorship, structured guidance and comprehensive support in preparing students for the workplace (Akkoyunlu-Wigley et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2017).

4.4.3.1 Challenges in staff capacity and resource allocation

Participants consistently identified staffing shortages and limited institutional resources as major constraints in delivering effective WBE programmes. These limitations hindered critical activities such as student mentorship, site monitoring, and collaboration with host employers.

CM1 concisely captured this issue: ***"****More staff to assist to do WBE visits*," highlighting the operational burden faced by academic teams. CM3 expanded on this challenge, stating: "*Lecturers handling WBE need more time to meet host employers and conduct site visits*," and recommended cross-departmental cooperation: "*Student Support and HR department need to work closely with lecturers to assist with the above*."

From a management standpoint, HOD4 proposed organisational restructuring to ease these pressures. "*Management should perhaps form a WBE committee or maybe get more staff on board to find host employers and conduct site visits*," and further added, "*More staff must be engaged very early in the year; then we can establish how we can place learners as close to home as possible so as to avoid them having to pay too much in travelling fees*."

HOD4's comments illustrate how staffing issues have broader equity implications, particularly for students from remote or disadvantaged areas. HOD5 also emphasised the importance of external collaboration: "*Regular visits from industry could also enhance students' expectations in terms of relevance and career moulding*," suggesting that industry engagement could supplement limited institutional resources.

These findings align with those of Harris et al. (2017), who argue that successful work-integrated learning depends on well-resourced mentorship and coordination systems. Without adequate human and logistical capacity, WBE programmes risk failing to meet their developmental objectives.

Therefore, a strategic focus on staffing, through dedicated appointments, cross-departmental partnerships, and early-year planning; is essential for sustainable implementation of WBE.

4.4.3.2 Financial support for students

Participants expressed significant concern about the financial strain placed on students during WBE placements, particularly with regard to transportation costs. The late and limited disbursement of stipends was frequently cited as a barrier to full participation.

HOD1 highlighted the insufficiency of current financial support: "*Money (stipend) for travelling to and from work. (Currently College only funds 5 days of transport)*." HOD4 elaborated on the timing issue: "*Students have to pay their own money to travel to the workplace, because the stipend that they receive is usually paid to them towards the end of the year, as late as in November*."

These delays are particularly detrimental for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. As HOD4 pointed out, "*We have to remember that many of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds*."

HOD5 recommended exploring alternative financial strategies: "*Alternate forms of special funding would prove to combat the issue relating to financial issues a number of our students face*."

Mokgata and Raborife (2018) echo these concerns, arguing that without adequate financial support, students from low-income backgrounds are marginalised in work-integrated learning programmes. Timely and sufficient stipends are not merely logistical considerations; they are central to equitable access and participation.

Reforming funding structures and exploring partnerships with the government or industry to support travel and accommodation costs could greatly improve the inclusivity and success of WBE programmes.

4.4.3.3 Mentorship and career counselling

Participants emphasised that structured mentorship and career guidance are critical to bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations. As well as technical instruction, students need guidance on professional conduct, career planning and interpersonal skills.

CM2 advocated for formal mentorship networks: "*Access to career counselling and mentorship programmes could further enhance readiness*," and proposed "*establishing a mentorship network that pairs students with industry professionals*." Such networks could offer valuable insights into the real world, help students make informed career decisions and expand their exposure to a variety of occupational paths.

CM3 emphasised the importance of safeguarding and support during placements: "*Assistance from HR will ensure that students are not abused in any way and receive fair treatment*," underscoring the role of institutional oversight in ensuring safe and equitable learning environments.

HOD3 adopted a broader perspective, advocating for a multi-pronged approach to professional development. "*Additional resources like mentorship programmes, career counselling, and expanded industry partnerships can further improve student preparedness*." He further noted the value of digital learning platforms: "*Access to online learning platforms that offer industry-specific certifications can also boost their employability*," and gave the example of "*LinkedIn Learning modules on workplace etiquette [which] have been useful in boosting student confidence.*"

These insights align with Akkoyunlu-Wigley et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of mentorship and soft skills in preparing students for a dynamic labour market. Incorporating digital literacy, emotional intelligence and workplace ethics into WBE initiatives could significantly enhance student employability.

Therefore, institutions should integrate mentorship and career guidance into the WBE framework as core elements of a comprehensive student development strategy rather than treating them as optional extras.

4.4.3.4 Workshops and industry engagement

Participants also emphasised the value of workshops and sustained industry interaction in enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of WBE. These initiatives were viewed as valuable tools for developing skills, boosting confidence, and preparing students for their careers.

CM3 highlighted the logistical demands on academic staff: "*Lecturers handling WBE need more time to meet host employers and conduct site visits*", indicating that meaningful industry engagement requires institutional investment in staffing and time allocation.

HOD5 proposed practical enhancements: "*As a college, we could also provide additional workshops to target industry-specific needs*," suggesting that these sessions could address existing gaps in the curriculum and familiarise students with workplace.

This perspective is consistent with that of Harris et al. (2017), who argue that industry-led workshops ensure that training remains relevant to current market demands. Co-

designed workshops enable two-way learning, with employers sharing insights and institutions adjusting training accordingly.

Participants also acknowledged the broader value of sustained industry relationships. Such partnerships build trust, open placement opportunities and ensure that curricula remain aligned with evolving needs of the workplace.

Based on recommendations from participants, the following strategic actions are proposed:

- Expand staffing to support employer engagement and mentorship.
- Institutionalise industry-specific workshops to bridge training gaps.
- Formalise feedback loops between employers and academic departments.
- Integrate digital tools and certifications to boost student adaptability.

These interventions represent a shift towards a more holistic, future-focused model of work-integrated learning. By embedding continuous professional development, real-world exposure and collaborative learning in WBE programmes, TVET institutions can better prepare students for sustained employability and personal growth.

Harris et al. (2017) argue that strategic industry engagement is essential for bridging the gap between classroom learning and labour market demands, and these results are well supported.

4.4.4 Evaluation of program effectiveness

Evaluating the effectiveness of Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes is a fundamental management responsibility. This ensures alignment with industry needs, supports student success and drives continuous programme improvement. Participants in this study consistently emphasised the importance of receiving structured feedback, forming collaborative partnerships and planning ahead to identify and resolve challenges in programme delivery. These perspectives align with those of Galloway and Bretag (2020), who argue that meaningful evaluation practices are necessary to adapt WBE to evolving workplace demands and learner profiles.

4.4.4.1 Open communication and regular feedback

Participants emphasised that open communication and regular feedback are essential for the success of WBE programmes. Engaging in consistent dialogue with host employers enables institutions to identify student challenges early on, address skills mismatches and provide timely support.

CM1 emphasised the importance of both proactive communication and physical presence, highlighting the importance of "*open communication channels*" and "*WBE visits*." This suggests that maintaining ongoing dialogue and visiting students on-site creates accountability and offers real-time insights into their experiences.

HOD1 elaborated on the significance of structured engagement, stating: "*Weekly meetings with the College coordinator and host employers*" help to identify placement-related issues. These meetings provide a formal opportunity to assess progress and ensure that experiences align with intended learning outcomes.

HOD3 expanded on this, describing how feedback contributes to the growth of both student and institutions: "*Regular feedback meetings with employers help identify any challenges students face, from adapting to workplace culture to skill mismatches*." He explained that such sessions allow for timely interventions such as counselling or targeted training, viewing feedback as a developmental rather than purely evaluative tool.

HOD4 emphasised the importance of "*good communication with our host employers*" and regular site visits. These interactions support student development and build long-term, trust-based relationships with industry partners.

Similarly, HOD5 reflected on the broader purpose of feedback: "*During WBE, we as management visit our students and engage with the employer to identify challenges that affect not only students but challenges on the employer's behalf as well*." This highlights a holistic approach to feedback that strengthens partnerships and promotes shared problem-solving.

These accounts demonstrate that regular communication and structured feedback loops are integral to effective WBE implementation, rather supplementary. They enable institutions to:

- Monitor student progress and well-being.
- Respond dynamically to employer concerns.
- Promote professional growth for students.
- Build collaborative, sustainable industry relationships.

O'Neill et al. (2018) support this approach, arguing that dynamic feedback mechanisms are crucial for adapting work-based education WBE to student learning trajectories and evolving workplace requirements.

4.4.4.2 Addressing workplace challenges through collaboration

Participants discussed how collaboration between colleges and employers can effectively resolve workplace challenges that students may face. These issues included professionalism, communication, logistics and financial constraints.

CM3 recounted an incident in which a student was removed from a school placement for wearing inappropriate attire. The college responded constructively by arranging an alternative placement and offering guidance: "*Examples of proper dressing were given to the student*." This approach transformed a disciplinary issue into a valuable learning opportunity, demonstrating mentorship and professionalism.

HOD3 shared the case of a student who struggled with teamwork at a technology firm. In response, the college initiated a targeted intervention: "*We conducted team-building workshops, which led to improved performance*." This highlights the importance of supporting the development of soft skills, such as collaboration and communication, through structured, student-centred interventions.

In another instance, HOD4 described a student who stopped attending their placement because they could not afford transport. Once the employer had alerted the college, staff discovered the underlying financial issue and provided the student with taxi fare to enable them to return. The employer agreed to accommodate the delay. This compassionate and collaborative approach protected the student's learning opportunity, reflecting a shared commitment to their success.

These narratives underscore the benefits of responsive, empathetic interventions based on open communication and mutual trust. Participants viewed employers not

merely as placement providers, but as critical partners in students' developmental journeys.

This approach aligns with that of Akkoyunlu-Wigley et al. (2020), who advocate for real-time, collaborative responses to placement challenges. Similarly, Smith and Yasukawa (2019) argue that effective Work-Based Experience (WBE) requires institutional agility and partnership-focused strategies to address issues proactively.

From the insights of the participants, it is evident that:

- Employers play a critical role in flagging and addressing challenges.
- Colleges respond supportively to preserve student progress.
- Collaborative efforts promote equity and positive learning outcomes.
- Compassionate, coordinated action strengthens all stakeholder relationships.

These examples reinforce the idea that WBE is about more than acquiring technical skills: it also fosters adaptability, professionalism and resilience through a human-centred, collaborative management approach.

4.4.4.3 Proactive measures and planning

Participants emphasised the importance of strategic, proactive planning in facilitating effective WBE implementation. This includes pre-placement screening, advance coordination with host employers and thorough preparation to ensure placements align with students' capabilities and industry expectations.

CM3 demonstrated a preventive approach to placement logistics: "*We screen students on campus. If employers require medical checks for welding students, we request advanced notice so that students do not waste a WBE day attending lengthy medicals.*" This demonstrates a clear commitment to maximising the educational value of placements through early planning and communication.

CM3 expanded on this, adding: "*We request information pertaining to dress codes, specific skills, and any other information prior to the start of the WBE so that we can match students to host employers*." This ensures that placements are both pedagogically relevant and professionally appropriate from the outset.

HOD5 emphasised the importance of maintaining open lines of communication: "*Being in touch with the employer is vital in dealing with circumstances a student might face*." This continuous engagement enables institutions to address emerging concerns promptly, thereby enhancing the reliability and quality of the placement.

Collectively, these responses suggest that successful WBE requires more than just reactive support. Instead, institutions must adopt a structured, forward-looking approach to planning that includes:

- aligning placements with student readiness and industry needs.
- ensuring compliance with workplace requirements.
- anticipating logistical and resource challenges.
- maintaining active communication throughout the placement cycle.

This proactive approach is in line with the recommendations of Misko, Hall, and Morris (2021), who advocate for tailored pre-placement strategies that align training with workplace demands. When executed effectively, this model boosts students' confidence and enhance host employers' satisfaction with the WBE process.

4.4.4.4 Evaluating and improving WBE programs

Participants emphasised the importance of ongoing evaluation as a critical strategy for improving WBE delivery. Moving beyond isolated interventions, they envisioned a system of continuous improvement grounded on structured feedback, reflection and collaborative review.

CM2 advocated for joint evaluation efforts: "*Collaborating with employers to identify common challenges students face during WBE helps tailor support*." This suggests a co-creation model in which feedback is used to refine programme design as well as outcomes.

CM2 also recommended the development of practical tools to support this process: "*Creating a resource guide based on feedback from both students and employers regarding common workplace issues.*" This forward-looking suggestion demonstrates the proactive use of evaluation data to enhance future placements and inform institutional policies.

HOD2 described the systematic collection of feedback: "*We identify challenges by collecting feedback from both students and employers, often through surveys or direct communication.*" This suggests that some institutions have incorporated evaluative practices into their operational routines as part of a broader quality assurance framework.

These insights align with the views of Galloway and Bretag (2020), who emphasise the importance of evaluation in tracking programme relevance, monitoring labour market alignment, and facilitating agile adaptation. Evaluation processes also demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and support meaningful improvements.

The data shows that institutions are pursuing a multifaceted evaluation strategy that includes:

- Continuous feedback and communication with students and employers.
- Proactive refinement of student-employer matching processes.
- Integration of feedback into planning and resource development.
- Strategic adjustments to WBE structure based on real-time insights.

These practices reflect a broader shift from reactive management to systemic, data-informed improvement. Smith and Yasukawa (2019) argue that WBE programmes must incorporate evaluation into their core processes to ensure ongoing effectiveness and responsiveness. When managed effectively, evaluation assesses student outcomes and provides critical insights into institutional performance and programme design.

Ultimately, participants conveyed a shared commitment to reflective practice, collaborative problem-solving and ongoing learning. By embracing these approaches, TVET institutions can ensure that WBE remains dynamic, inclusive and impactful, thereby preparing students to navigate the complex and ever-changing landscapes of careers.

4.4.5 Management's role in building partnerships and securing resources

This section examines the pivotal role of TVET college management in supporting Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes, specifically indeveloping of

industry partnerships and mobilising resources strategically. Participant responses reveal that management activities include monitoring student progress, resolving placement issues, strengthening relationships with employers, and securing essential institutional support. These practices collectively ensure that WBE programmes remain relevant and responsive to educational and labour market goals. These findings are consistent with literature emphasising the necessity of structured and well-supported WBE ecosystems (Bohle, Lynch & Watson, 2020; Kanyama, Mulenga, & Chola, 2019).

4.4.5.1 Monitoring student progress and performance

Participants consistently emphasised that effective monitoring is a cornerstone of successful WBE implementation. Their accounts reflect a deliberate and systematic approach tracking students' progress in terms of academic development, workplace adjustment, and psychosocial support.

CM1 explained that monitoring occurs "*during and after the WBE*," indicating that it is an ongoing process integrated into the entire student placement.

CM2 elaborated that this process includes "*performance evaluations and regular check-ins*," enabling the early identification of challenges and ensuring timely support. These activities demonstrate that monitoring is a dynamic, real-time process, not simply retrospective.

HOD3 provided additional detail, stating: "*Management tracks student progress through regular assessments and feedback from employers. Site visits and progress reports ensure that students are meeting objectives*." This quote highlights the collaborative nature of monitoring, involving both institutional staff and industry supervisors.

HOD5 emphasised the importance of mentorship in this process: "*Students are also assigned mentor lecturers who regularly check up on them*," and further explained, "*Supervisors communicate directly with the college if a solution prior to discussing with the student cannot be reached*." These statements reflect a dual-support model that facilitates prompt intervention and holistic care.

This multi-layered monitoring structure corroborates the findings of Bohle et al. (2020), who emphasised the importance of continuous feedback and employer collaboration for effective WBE delivery. The integration of mentor lecturers, employer reports and institutional oversight ensures that students receive comprehensive, personalised guidance throughout their placements.

Collectively, these insights suggest a proactive monitoring culture in which communication is open and support structures are clearly defined. Monitoring is not merely viewed as a compliance mechanism, but as a strategic mechanism tool for ensuring student success and quality.

4.4.5.2 Addressing challenges during WBE

Participants described a problem-solving approach grounded on open communication, mentorship and collaborative solutions to the challenges they encountered during their placements. The overarching theme was preserving the educational value of WBE, even in difficult situations.

CM1 outlined a typical process: "*Communication with the students and industry takes place first. If the issue is unable to be resolved, the student is removed from that industry.*" This reflects a tiered approach, whereby withdrawal is considered only as a last resort, once all other avenues for resolution have been explored.

HOD3 shared an example of a rehabilitative response: "*If an employer reports inadequate performance, we arrange for one-on-one mentorship sessions or supplementary training for the student.*" This approach highlights the institution's commitment to developing and retaining skills rather than penalising students.

HOD4 described broader coordination practices: "*Management conducts meetings with all stakeholders and ensures that minutes are taken and constructive feedback and solutions are given.*" This suggests a structured, inclusive problem-solving model that engages all parties.

These perspectives reflect the findings of Kanyama et al. (2019), who argue that trust-based, collaborative solutions are essential for maintaining the integrity of WBE. Rather than adopting an adversarial approach, management should mediate, guide and support, helping students to navigate challenges without derailing their progress.

By providing mentorship, facilitating structured communication and encouraging inclusive decision-making, TVET institutions can foster an environment where WBE challenges become opportunities for growth. This student-centred ethos enhances resilience, deepens learning and promotes long-term success.

4.4.5.3 Building strong partnerships with employers

Participants highlighted the importance of cultivating strong and sustained relationships with host employers. These partnerships form the basis for the smooth running of WBEs, providing student support and the long-term credibility of the programme.

CM3 explained: "*Employers have the contact details of all WBE coordinators*," and "*Host employers contact the WBE coordinators immediately if there are any problems*." These statements suggest a system of responsive communication that promotes the prompt resolution of workplace issues.

HOD4 elaborated on the relational aspect of these partnerships: "*Placement officers conduct a compulsory visit to the company to observe students and engage with employers*." This practice strengthens institutional visibility and ensures that employers feel supported and heard.

HOD5 highlighted the benefits of sustained communication: "*Being in constant communication with employers ensures that challenges are addressed promptly.*" Regular interaction helps to align employer expectations with student capabilities and institutional goals.

From an administrative standpoint, HOD1 recommended: "*A coordinator should design an Excel spreadsheet to easily capture data and monitor progress*." This demonstrates the value of digital tools in streamlining communication and ensuring real-time tracking.

Together, these strategies reveal a layered partnership model characterised by trust, accessibility and operational efficiency. They also support Kanyama et al.'s (2019) assertion that fostering dynamic industry relationships is essential for sustaining the relevance and quality of WBE. Through structured engagement and consistent follow-

up, institutions can co-create meaningful learning environments that benefit all stakeholders.

4.4.5.4 Securing resources for WBE programs

Participants acknowledged that securing human and institutional resources is central to the success and sustainability of WBE initiatives. The management's role in mobilising and allocating these resources was recognised as a strategic function that directly supports student development.

HOD3 explained: "*Site visits and progress reports ensure that students are meeting objectives. Any issues raised are addressed through follow-up coaching or extra guidance.*" This reflects an adaptive resourcing strategy in which interventions are tailored to students' needs.

HOD5 emphasised the importance of integrated support systems: "*The college also has student support services who play a role in engaging with employers to deal with more sensitive issues.*" This indicates a holistic support structure that encompasses emotional, academic and professional development.

These perspectives demonstrate that management's responsibilities regarding resources extend well beyond logistics. By aligning staff capacity, student services and employer relations, institutions can provide a safety net that enables students to thrive in complex workplace environments.

These findings are consistent with those of Bohle, Lynch and Watson (2020), who argue that institutional investment in student-centred support is a prerequisite for effective WBE. Similarly, Kanyama et al. (2019) emphasise that successful programmes require alignment between institutional resources and industry expectations.

In summary, participants identified four core elements of strategic resource mobilisation:

- Structured monitoring with integrated mentorship and coaching.
- Cross-functional support involving student welfare teams.
- Resource allocation that anticipates diverse student needs.

- Leadership-driven strategies that embed WBE in institutional priorities.

By investing in these areas, management turns WBE from a logistical exercise into a transformative educational experience. This deliberate, well-coordinated approach ensures that students are equipped with not only technical skills, but also the guidance, resilience and institutional backing necessary for long-term success.

4.4.6 Integration of WBE into organisational and academic strategies

Successful integration of WBE into a college's academic and organisational framework ensures that placements are meaningful and aligned with educational goals and labour market needs. Participant responses revealed that this integration is not incidental, but rather the result of management's deliberate efforts to embed WBE through structured monitoring, adaptive support, strong industry partnerships and robust evaluation mechanisms.

4.4.6.1 Integration through monitoring and progress tracking

Participants consistently emphasised that WBE is most effective when systematically monitored and aligned with institutional teaching and learning objectives. Rather than viewing WBE as an isolated activity, respondents emphasised the importance of structured feedback loops that connect workplace experiences to academic development.

CM1 stated: "*Progress of the student is done during and after the WBE*," indicating that monitoring is a continuous process throughout the placement cycle.

HOD1 emphasised the importance of employer participation, stating that "*Host employers should provide a bi-weekly progress report.*" This routine reporting enables academic staff to stay engaged with and responsive to students' needs.

Further institutional oversight was described by HOD4, who explained: "*Placement officers conduct a compulsory visit to observe students,*" underscoring the importance of on-site verification and mentoring.

HOD3 added a dual-stream approach: "*Weekly reports from students and monthly employer evaluations*" are essential for aligning academic objectives with actual workplace tasks.

Together, these practices reflect an integrated monitoring model in which student reflections, employer feedback and institutional oversight converge to create a responsive learning environment. This aligns with the argument of Smith and Yasukawa (2019) that structured, regular assessments are vital for aligning academic content with workplace demands.

4.4.6.2 Addressing challenges for seamless integration

Participants recognised that student challenges are inevitable but emphasised that they should be viewed as opportunities for targeted support, rather than barriers as to success.

CM2 described this adaptive approach: "*Addressing concerns through additional training or modifying placements as necessary*." This flexibility ensures that placements remain relevant and developmentally appropriate.

HOD3 echoed this sentiment, explaining: "*If an employer reports inadequate performance, we arrange for one-on-one mentorship sessions or supplementary training*." The goal is to support students facing difficulty, not penalise them.

HOD4 provided an institutional example of collaborative problem-solving: "*Management conducted meetings with all stakeholders to ensure that problems were resolved constructively*." This highlights the value of coordinated responses that include both internal and external partners.

These approaches demonstrate a learner-centred philosophy, which is consistent with the views of Misko, Hall, and Morris (2021) who advocate for flexibility and responsiveness in WBE systems. The ability to adapt placements and provide real-time support fosters a resilient learning environment in which student growth is prioritised.

4.4.6.3 Building industry partnerships for strategic integration

Participants reinforced the idea that strong, ongoing partnerships with employers are central to embedding WBE into institutional frameworks. These partnerships extend beyond merely providing placements; they also influence curriculum relevance, communication protocols, and feedback mechanisms.

CM3 emphasised the importance of accessibility: "*Employers have the contact details of all WBE coordinators to ensure smooth communication*." This enables immediate responsiveness to issues as they arise.

HOD5 noted: "*Being in constant communication with employers ensures that challenges are addressed promptly*," reflecting a collaborative, real-time engagement model.

HOD2 addressed formal monitoring processes: "*Management monitors students through regular progress reports from employers and students*." This dual-stream reporting system provides a balanced view of student performance.

These practices illustrate the value of co-designed WBE initiatives, as advocated by Kanyama, Van der Westhuizen and Kruger (2019), who emphasise the necessity of industry input to ensure programme relevance. When employers act as co-creators rather than just hosts, the learning environment becomes more dynamic, authentic and employment oriented.

4.4.6.4 Supporting students' transition from education to employment

Participants described the important role of management in facilitating the transition from academic settings to the workplace, emphasising the need for practical, emotional and logistical support.

For example, HOD4 shared the following real-world challenge: "*A student struggled with transportation costs and was unable to attend WBE, but management worked with employers to find a solution.*" This demonstrates an inclusive and proactive approach to supporting students.

HOD3 focused on interpersonal skills, stating: "*Common issues like teamwork struggles are addressed through supplementary training or mentorship*." These targeted interventions help students adjust socially and professionally.

CM2 reinforced this flexible mindset: "*Modifying placements or providing additional training when challenges arise*" ensures that WBE remains a growth-oriented experience.

This supportive infrastructure is consistent with the views of Bohle, Lynch and Watson (2020), who argue that successful WBE requires academic and psychosocial scaffolding. By addressing students' real-life challenges, institutions can empower them to engage fully with, and benefit from, their workplace learning.

4.4.6.5 Embedding evaluation mechanisms for continuous iImprovement

The importance of formal evaluation mechanisms was a recurring theme among participants. These systems were not just seen as accountability tools, but as drivers of continuous programme enhancement.

CM1 noted: "*Minutes of engagement are kept, and communication with students and industry takes place first*," illustrating the importance of transparent and traceable interaction.

HOD1 recommended practical tools: "*Excel spreadsheets to capture and monitor student progress",* reflecting a data-driven approach to tracking and decision-making.

HOD3 reiterated the role of regular feedback: "*Weekly reports from students and monthly employer evaluations*" are central to maintaining quality and relevance.

HOD4 pointed to early intervention strategies: "*Induction programs clearly outline expectations and reduce the likelihood of issues arising during WBE*." These pre-emptive measures enhance readiness and reduce risk.

These insights align with those of Akkoyunlu-Wigley, Eren and Yildirim (2020), as well as O'Neill, Tobin and Convery (2018), who emphasise that built-in evaluation systems facilitate adaptability in response to changes in the industry and educational standards.

In summary, the following six functions emerged as critical to effective WBE integration:

- Systematic monitoring through regular reports, site visits, and direct observation.
- Proactive student support via mentorship, training and logistical assistance.
- Strategic industry partnerships grounded in communication and co-design.
- Resource allocation tailored to student and programme needs.

- Continuous evaluation driven by structured feedback and data analysis.
- Structured programming, including induction sessions and formal agreements such as MOUs.

By embedding these functions into their operational and academic strategies, institutions can ensure that WBE becomes a core component of student development rather than a peripheral one. The result is a more integrated, responsive and impactful approach to preparing students for the workforce.

4.5 Challenges faced by management in developing workplace readiness skills

The effective development of these skills through workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes is critical in facilitating students' successful transition into the workforce. However, college management faces several challenges that compromise the effectiveness and inclusivity of these programmes. This section explores the key themes highlighted in Figure 4.4, including issues related to forming partnership and placing students, aligning the curriculum, providing institutional support, ensuring quality supervision, monitoring programmes, and overcoming broader systemic barriers tied to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

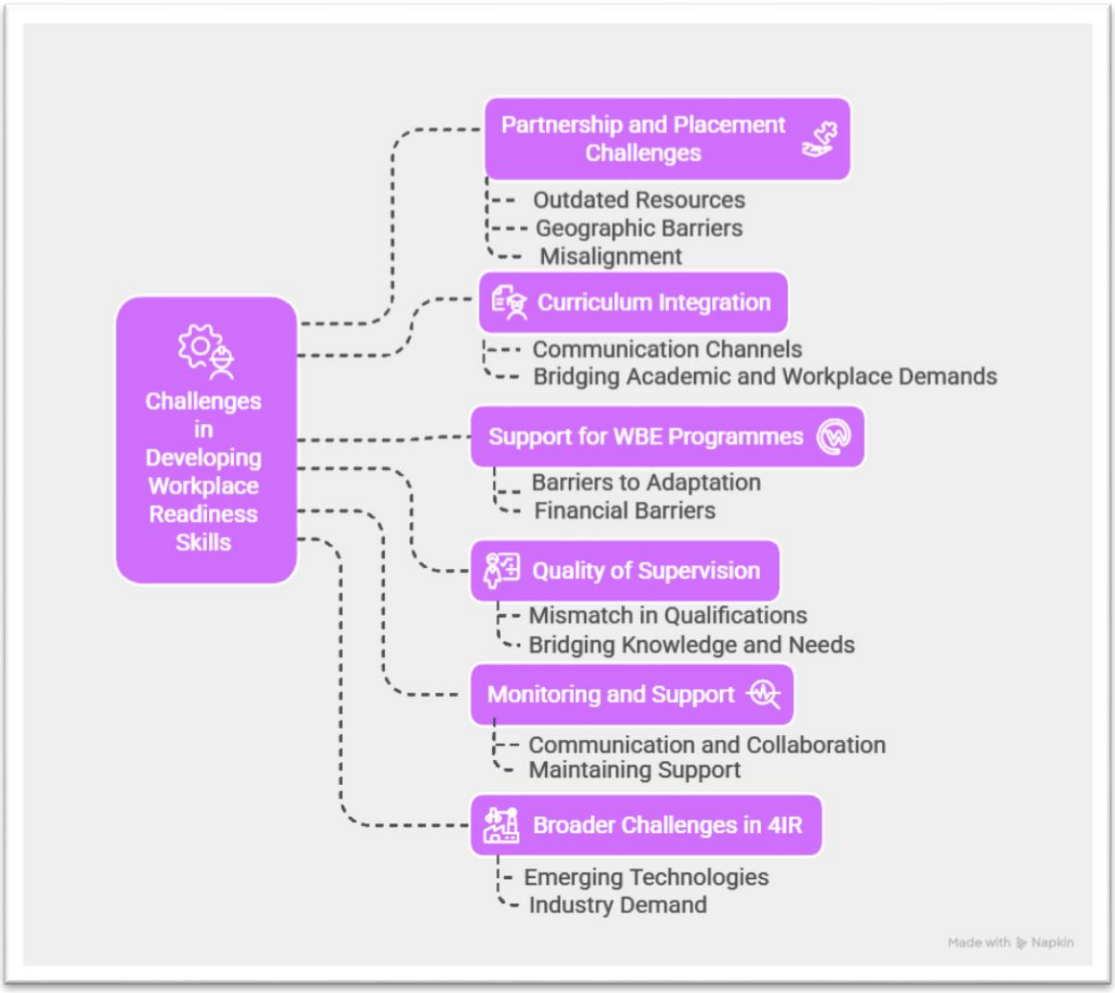


Figure 4. 4: Thematic representation of challenges faced by management in developing workplace readiness skills. This diagram was developed using Napkin.ai Source: Author

Figure 4.4 visually organises the challenges identified by participants into six interrelated categories:

1. Partnership and placement challenges,
2. Curriculum integration,
3. Support for WBE programmes,
4. Quality of supervision,
5. Monitoring and support
6. Broader challenges in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

These categories reflect a range of complex and interconnected concernc, including outdated institutional resources, limited communication with industry, financial barriers, gaps in supervision, and technological disruptions associated with the Fourth

Industrial Revolution (4IR). As the figure shows, these challenges are systemic and interconnected and must be addressed holistically in order to develop responsive, future-ready WBE programmes.

4.5.1 Partnership and placement challenges

The effective implementation of workplace-based experience (WBE) largely depends on the institution's capacity to cultivate strong partnerships and arrange suitable industry placements for students. Despite these intentions, a number of recurring obstacles continue to undermine these efforts. As reflected in participant accounts and supported by existing literature, management frequently grapples with challenges such as outdated institutional infrastructure, geographic and financial limitations, misalignment between the curriculum and industry expectations, inadequate student preparedness and restricted engagement from industry partners. Together, these challenges hinder the institution's ability to fully prepare students for the demands of today's workplace.

4.5.1.1 Outdated institutional resources and equipment

Participants commonly raised concerns about the disconnect between institutional resources and current industry technology.

CM1 observed, "*The equipment/tools or software that students are exposed to in the academic institution are outdated*," attributing this issue to "*a lack of funds*." HOD1 provided a concrete example from the culinary field: "*When our students go to WBE, they are immediately exposed to modern kitchen equipment, and it is usually a challenge for them to get used to it.*"

HOD4 added, "*The curriculum hasn't changed since 2007, but industry is continuously changing, and students feel overwhelmed when they encounter new technology*."

These reflections highlight the significant skills mismatch resulting from outdated infrastructure and stagnant curricula. Mashiqa, Mentz and Mji (2018) also argue that training environments that are not aligned with current industry standards hinder the development of relevant, transferable skills.

Participants recommended several solutions, including introduction short courses to teachl students about current technologies (as proposed by HOD2), and seeking partnerships or shared facilities with industry to address equipment shortages. These strategies aim to align TVET offerings more closely with workplace realities.

4.5.1.2 Geographic and financial barriers to placement

Participants also raised concerns about the unequal financial and geographic burden of WBE, particularly for students from rural or low-income backgrounds.

CM3 noted, "*Students are required to cover the cost of travel to their host employers as well as the cost of meals*." HOD4 highlighted delayed stipends as a compounding factor: "*Lack of funding for stipends to be paid on time*."

These barriers disproportionately affect disadvantaged students, limiting their access to meaningful placements. Collins, Brown and Happer (2020) affirm that socio-economic inequalities reduce the effectiveness and inclusivity of WBE programmes.

Recommended interventions included increasing partnerships with local employers to reduce travel costs, ensuring stipends are paid on time, and advocating for bursaries or sponsorships to cover essential placement-related expenses.

4.5.1.3 Misalignment between academic training and industry needs

Participants raised a significant issue: the misalignment between TVET curricula and the evolving needs of industry.

CM2 explained, "*Industry-specific skills may not align with academic training, requiring tailored interventions*." HOD5 added that, "*Students are not completely familiar with all industry practices and tools used.*" HOD3 emphasised the importance of regular curriculum review: "*One challenge is ensuring that curriculum aligns with rapidly changing industry demands*."

Harris and Ashton (2020) argue that, unless institutions align their teaching with contemporary workforce expectations, workplace-based experience (WBE) becomes a superficial exercise rather than a transformative learning experience.

Proposed strategies include:

- formal curriculum review processes involving industry stakeholders.
- the introduction of short courses or elective modules on emerging trends.
- using employer feedback to refine educational content.

4.5.1.4 Student preparedness and confidence

Participants frequently reported that students lacked technical and soft skills when entering WBE placements.

CM3 stated, "*Students are not experienced enough to work on their own, and staff often don't have time to train students*." HOD5 noted, "*Students are often less confident and lack both hard and soft skills*."

This dual deficit of foundational knowledge and interpersonal skills affects student performance and confidence. Smith (2016) emphasises the importance of soft skills training and pre-placement preparation in addressing this issue.

Participants recommended structured induction programmes, mentorship from academic staff and regular collaboration with host employers to better prepare and support students.

4.5.1.5 Limited industry engagement and placement opportunities

The scarcity of industry partners was repeatedly cited as an obstacle to the effective implementation of WBE.

The Head of Department (HOD4) explained that "*Lack of collaboration with industry leads to fewer opportunities for students to learn on updated equipment*." CM3 warned, "*Students may be assigned menial tasks during placements.*"

Waddell and Wright (2016) argue that long-term partnerships are necessary for securing quality placements. Without such partnerships, students may be unable to secure placements or may be placed in roles with limited developmental value.

Proposed solutions included establishing formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with industry, providing placement guidelines, and broadening the scope of placement opportunities beyond traditional sectors.

4.5.1.6 Implications for stakeholders:

The cumulative evidence suggests that the implementation of WBE depends on a multi-stakeholder approach:

For institutions:

There is an urgent need for infrastructure upgrades, curriculum renewal and strategic industry partnerships. Institutions must become more agile in responding to technological shifts and workforce demands.

For students:

Students need targeted support to develop their hard and soft skills, as well as financial assistance to participate in placements. Holistic preparation before and during WBE is essential.

For employers:

Industry partners must provide relevant tasks and mentorship to students to ensure that placements are educational rather than menial. Collaborating with academic staff can improve learning outcomes and foster sustained partnerships.

Collins, Brown and Happer (2020) emphasise, bridging the gap between education and employment requires collaboration, adequate resources and mutual accountability. Only through coordinated efforts can WBE achieve its goal of developing confident, competent and employable graduates in the context of a rapidly evolving labour market.

4.5.2 Curriculum integration

Integrating Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) into the academic curriculum is a multifaceted process that demands alignment between institutional planning, industry

requirements and student preparedness. Participants reported several ongoing challenges in this integration process, including inconsistent communication, curriculum misalignment and difficulties coordinating stakeholders. These challenges are consistent literature emphasising the importance of ongoing collaboration, adaptive planning and effective feedback systems in WBE implementation (Govender & Maniruzzaman, 2021; Mugabi & Mwebaza, 2020; Sehlapelo & Du Plessis, 2019).

4.5.2.1 Communication channels and platforms

Participants highlighted the central role of effective communication in the successful implemention of WBE programmes. They expressed the need for structured and reliable systems to facilitate coordination between college management, academic staff, students, and industry partners.

CM1 stated, "*I request the minutes of the engagements via the WBE officers, Industry, and students*," reflecting a formal, documented approach to communication and record-keeping. CM2 added, "*Regular meetings and digital platforms enhance coordination among all stakeholders*," illustrating the reliance on technology to bridge communication gaps.

Similarly, HOD3 said that "*Effective communication... is maintained through regular check-ins, dedicated points of contact, and clear feedback channels like online portals and regular review meetings*." These insights highlight tthe growing importance of of digital tools, such as messaging platforms, shared portals and virtual check-ins, in facilitating a coordinated WBE process.

From a managerial perspective, HOD5 stated, "*My duty as a manager would be to facilitate the entire process from coordination of meetings between staff mentors, students involved, and industry representatives.*" This suggests that leadership plays an active role in shaping and sustaining communication frameworks.

Despite the availability of communication tools, participants acknowledged the persistence of inconsistencies. Challenges relating to the use of different platforms, irregular communication intervals and delayed feedback were frequently cited. Mugabi and Mwebaza (2020) support these concerns, noting a lack of structured communication undermines WBE implementation. Van der Westhuizen et al. (2020)

further stress the importance of feedback mechanisms for supporting continuous improvement.

Overall, participants viewed digital platforms and scheduled meetings as useful, but emphasised that their effectiveness depends on consistent application, leadership oversight and mutual responsiveness across all stakeholders. Standardising and strengthening communication protocols could enhance alignment and collaboration throughout the WBE process.

4.5.2.2 Bridging the gap between academic and workplace demands

Participants often highlighted a discrepancy between academic curricula and workplace realities. Their responses revealed a sustained effort to bridge this gap through structured engagement, feedback mechanisms and initiatives to prepare students.

HOD4 explained, "*I set up meetings before, during, and after the WBE session. I also request regular updates from lecturers who engage with students during their placement.*" This multi-phase strategy reflects an approach aimed at sustaining communication and adjusting support as students navigate their workplace experiences.

Similarly, CM3 shared that, "*Regular briefing sessions are held before WBE, during WBE, and after WBE. Management works closely with Student Support and the SRC to brief students and prepare them for WBE.*" This collaborative approach emphasises the importance of integrating emotional and professional preparedness into the placement process.

HOD3 added, "*Regular review meetings and feedback channels ensure alignment between academic goals and workplace expectations*," emphasising the importance of a systematic approach to ensuring the relevance of the curriculum.

However, despite these efforts, participants acknowledged that academic programmes often lag behind fast-paced industry changes, which limits the effectiveness of WBE. Govender and Maniruzzaman (2021) emphasise the importance of continuous feedback and structured preparation to improve students'

readiness. Similarly, Sehoole (2019) advocates for industry-informed curriculum design to close the education-employment gap.

While structural misalignment persists, participant responses suggest that management is implementing adaptive strategies to mitigate its impact. Sustained collaboration between institutions and industry is essential to ensure that WBE programmes remain responsive and relevant.

4.5.2.3 Feedback mechanisms and problem resolution

Feedback emerged as a critical theme in participants' responses, particularly regarding monitoring student progress and resolving issues during WBE placements.

CM2 described a digital solution: "*Utilising a shared online portal for real-time updates and feedback among students, employers, and faculty*." This approach offers transparency and encourages collaborative responses to student needs.

HOD3 provided an example of real-time resolution: "*An example is using WhatsApp groups or Slack channels… This immediate communication proved critical in resolving an issue when a student misunderstood their project scope*." Using informal yet agile communication tools reflect a pragmatic response to the dynamic nature of placement environments.

HOD4 emphasised the value of in-person engagement: "*During site visits, all stakeholders meet and discuss the learners' progress or lack of progress*." These visits provide deeper context for student performance and serve as touchpoints for intervention.

Participants supported a hybrid feedback model blending digital and face-to-face communication. This approach is consistent with the argument of Maharaj and Dlungwane (2018) that consistent feedback improves programme quality. Sehlapelo and Du Plessis (2019) also link structured feedback to improved student outcomes.

Overall, participants regarded feedback systems as essential for monitoring, supporting student development and resolving challenges. Effective feedback loops reinforce accountability, adaptability and learning within the WBE framework.

4.5.2.4 Coordination challenges between stakeholders

Effective WBE implementation requires synchronised efforts from all stakeholders. However, participants identified significant coordination challenges that compromise programme quality.

HOD5 remarked, "*I ensure that I receive feedback timeously from all stakeholders. A collaborative approach would ensure the student receives a maximum learning experience.*" This highlights the problem of delayed communication, which can hinder oversight and compromise the student learning journey.

CM3 noted internal coordination efforts: "*Management works closely with Student Support and the SRC to brief students and prepare them for WBE*." While this is indicative of institutional collaboration, it also points to potential gaps in broader engagement with industry partners.

Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) caution that fragmented stakeholder coordination reduces industry participation and weakens WBE outcomes. Similarly, Sehlapelo and Du Plessis (2019) argue that collaboration is essential for responsive, high-impact WBE programmes.

The responses of participants suggest a need for clearer stakeholder roles, consistent engagement structures and improved cross-sector collaboration. Without improved coordination, students risk receiving inconsistent support and fragmented learning experiences.

4.5.2.5 Implications for stakeholders:

Participant insights revealed several implications for the successful integration of WBE into the academic curriculum.

For institutions:

Robust communication systems, structured site visits and feedback loops are essential. Institutional agility, including regular curriculum reviews and digital infrastructure, supports alignment with evolving industry demands (Mugabi & Mwebaza, 2020).

For employers:

Industry partners must be actively involved in placement planning, curriculum co-design and feedback processes. Govender and Maniruzzaman (2021) argue that this kind of collaboration makes student training more relevant and effective.

For students:

Student preparedness should encompass more than just technical skills, also covering emotional and interpersonal readiness. Participants highlighted workshops, mentoring and briefing sessions as effective tools for improving student adaptation and performance.

These insights reinforce the importance of coordinated multi-stakeholder engagement. Although challenges in aligning academic and workplace expectations persist, participants suggest that institutions are making meaningful efforts to bridge these divides. A collaborative, feedback-rich approach remains central to the success of WBE programmes in the South African TVET sector.

4.5.3 Provision of support for WBE programmes

The role of institutional management in supporting students during their Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) is pivotal in bridging the gap between academic instruction and workplace readiness. Participants across various roles consistently highlighted the multifaceted challenges that students face when transitioning into real-world settings. These challenges extend beyond technical competence to include behavioural, emotional and socio-economic difficulties. The data revealed four primary areas in which support is required: adaptation to workplace culture, overcoming financial and personal obstacles, access to mentorship and undergoing structured preparatory interventions.

4.5.3.1 Barriers faced by students in idapting to real-world work scenarios

Participants reported that many students encounter significant difficulties when adjusting to the workplace. These challenges are less related to academic knowledge and more related to behavioural and interpersonal shortcomings. Frequent, issues

included low confidence, poor time management, difficulty communicating professionally and disengagement from workplace norms.

HOD2 observed that, "*Common problems include lack of confidence and time management. We provide one-on-one coaching and soft skills training to help students adjust,*" while HOD3 added that, "*Common challenges include adjusting to professional communication standards and managing workloads*."

CM2 also noted that, "*Students often face anxiety and a lack of professionalism*."

Reflecting on more serious behavioural concerns, HOD5 remarked, "*Judging from some of the feedback over the years, I noticed some basic challenges such as students' lack of interest, behavioural issues, and punctuality*." CM3 recalled instances where intervention was necessary: "*Students are either pulled out of the WBE if there is a safety hazard and reassigned to the College, or students are counselled and return to the workplace.*"

These observations suggest that technical training alone is not enough to ensure success in the workplace. Instead, institutions must recognise that being ready for the workplace requires a combination of cognitive, emotional and social competencies. This aligns with Billett's (2019) assertion that being ready for the workplace involves navigating social norms, professional expectations and high-pressure environments. Similarly, Cruywagen and Haupt (2018) argue that soft skills are often underdeveloped in curricula despite their importance in long-term career success.

Taken together, the data suggest the need for a holistic institutional approach, embedding behavioural competencies, pre-placement workshops and sustained mentorship into the WBE process to help students transition confidently into the world of work.

4.5.3.2 Support strategies for overcoming barriers

Participants shared several institutional strategies designed to address the complex challenges students face during WBE placements. These strategies ranged from soft skills workshops to hands-on technical support and simulation training, illustrating a clear shift towards structured, pre-emptive support.

CM2 explained that the college provides targeted training prior to placements, noting that they, "*offer workshops on workplace etiquette and time management skills before WBE starts*."

CM1 highlighted technical readiness as another concern, stating: "*Students are not familiar with the equipment/tools or software. Lack of knowledge is still being addressed.*"

Some campuses have implemented more holistic support models. HOD4 described a comprehensive system that addresses both technical and socio-economic gaps: "*Lack of sufficient practical experience, communication, timekeeping, and financial setbacks are addressed through training in simulation rooms, workshops, and mentorship*."

HOD3 added that practical exposure through observation is also encouraged "*We have introduced communication workshops and job shadowing to observe professionals*."

These initiatives reflect a growing commitment to experiential learning. Mafa and Mokhele (2019) found that structured preparatory training increases adaptability and confidence. Similarly, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2017) recommends formal induction processes and simulation-based learning as essential for WBE success.

The emphasis on simulation, job shadowing and pre-placement training confirms that bridging the gap between academia and the workplace requires more than just reforming the curriculum; it demands immersive, student-centred preparation that is rooted in real-world expectations.

4.5.3.3 Financial and personal barriers

Beyond behavioural and academic challenges, financial hardship emerged as a consistent and critical barrier to successful participation in the WBE programme. Participants emphasised that many students struggle to meet basic logistical needs, particularly with regard to transport, communication and sustenance. This significantly limits their ability to participate fully in placements.

HOD4 succinctly stated that "*financial setbacks*" are a common challenge, while HOD5 noted the broader implications: "*The majority of students in the community struggle with communication and financial issues*."

These barriers limit students' physical access to workplaces and affect their psychological readiness. Financial stress can affect concentration, attendance and long-term commitment, thereby undermining the programme's overall effectiveness.

These findings are consistent with those of Mafa and Mokhele (2019), who argue that financial constraints disproportionately affect students from disadvantaged backgrounds, restricting their access to quality WBE placements. The costs associated with transport, meals, and appropriate work attire are often underestimated, yet they play a crucial role in student participation.

While some campuses may offer support, participant insights suggest that broader institutional responses are needed to increase access and equity in WBE, such as stipends, meal vouchers, or employer partnerships to reduce travel distance.

In summary, the persistence of financial hardship as a barrier highlights the need for responsive, context-aware institutional policies that address the lived realities TVET student.

4.5.3.4 Mentorship and feedback mechanisms

Participants strongly emphasised the importance of mentorship and ongoing feedback throughout the WBE process. These mechanisms are seen as tools not only for academic support, but also for emotional and professional development.

HOD2 shared that the institution provides personalised support: "*We provide one-on-one coaching and soft skills training to help students adjust*."

HOD5 elaborated on the impact of mentoring relationships: "*Mentoring relationships, regular feedback, and guidance from experienced supervisors positively influence students' communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills*."

HOD4 emphasised the role of academic mentors in monitoring and supporting progress: "*Mentor lecturers go on site visits and learn how students adapt to the real world of work*."

These comments reinforce the idea that mentorship is a structured, intentional practice that improves students' integration into the workplace. Cruywagen and Haupt (2018) argue that effective mentorship supports the development of workplace competencies which are hard to teach through classroom-based learning alone. Billett (2019) adds that supportive mentoring relationships accelerate learning and foster personal reflection.

Participants consistently identified mentorship and feedback as being foundational to student success, as they provide reassurance, corrective guidance and the developmental scaffolding to help students transition into unfamiliar work environments with confidence.

4.5.3.5 Implications for stakeholders

Participant emphasised the need for sustained, coordinated support from three key stakeholder groups: institutions, employers and students.

For Institutions, the call is clear: comprehensive preparation and support must be embedded in the academic programme. As HOD4 shared, challenges such as "*lack of sufficient practical experience, communication, timekeeping, and financial setbacks are addressed through training in simulation rooms, workshops, and mentorship*." CM2 also emphasised the importance of preparing students for soft skills, stating that they are provided with training in "*workplace etiquette and time management skills before WBE starts"*.

Participants stressed the value of mentorship and direct feedback during placements for employers. HOD5 observed that, "*mentoring relationships, regular feedback, and guidance from experienced supervisors positively influence students' communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills*." These insights suggest that host employers play a vital role in reinforcing the professional competencies that students begin to develop at college.

Students also benefited significantly from tailored support. As HOD2 explained, "*We provide one-on-one coaching and soft skills training to help students adjust*," illustrating how mentorship and coaching can foster self-confidence and adaptability in the workplace.

The findings reaffirm that structured, intentional support is critical to the success of WBE. Whether through soft skills training, mentorship or financial assistance, support systems must reflect the complex realities students face when transitioning into professional settings. Without such support, the core objectives of WBE; to facilitate workplace readiness and social transformation, may remain unfulfilled.

These results are consistent with the existing literature on this topic. Billett (2019), Mafa and Mokhele (2019) and the DHET (2017) all advocate for stakeholder-aligned strategies that recognise the transformative potential of WBE in vocational education. Institutions that adopt such collaborative models can prepare students to not only meet industry standards, but also to thrive in an ever-changing labour market.

4.5.4 Quality of supervision

High-quality supervision is essential for the success Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes, providing a critical link between academic instruction and practical application in the workplace. Effective supervision, provided by both institutional staff and host employers, introduces students to real-world work environments and guides them through the process of applying their academic knowledge in practice. A recurring challenge identified by participants in this study was the mismatch between students' theoretical preparation and the practical skills required by industry. To address this, management has implemented a variety of strategies, including curriculum adjustments, tailored supervision, employer partnerships, and supplementary training interventions.

4.5.4.1 Addressing the mismatch between academic qualifications and workplace demands

Several participants highlighted that one of the core supervisory challenges in WBE programmes is the misalignment between the academic curriculum and the practical demands of the workplace. This misalignment can hinder students' ability to contribute

effectively during placements and diminish the value of the experience. Nonetheless, participants also revealed various institutional responses designed to mitigate this issue.

CM2 highlighted a proactive and iterative strategy, noting:

"*Continuous curriculum evaluation and employer feedback help align academic qualifications with workplace demands****."***

This approach demonstrates a commitment to responsive curriculum design based on evolving industry expectations. HOD5 also emphasised the importance of identifying gaps early on to ensure a meaningful WBE experience:

"*As management, we need to ensure that we identify these gaps prior, to ensure that our students gain a complete and comprehensive learning experience****."***

In institutions where mismatches are less frequent, proactive communication strategies appear to be effective. For example, CM3 explained:

"*We have not experienced the above problem to date. We provide employers with detailed briefs on the skills and theoretical knowledge students possess prior to placement****."***

This indicates a preventative strategy that helps set accurate expectations with host employers from the outset.

Other participants described institutional responses to existing gaps. For example, HOD2 explained how targeted support is offered once skill deficiencies have been identified:

"*We bridge gaps by offering supplementary training sessions that focus on specific skills that the workplace demands but are not covered in academic programs."*

In a similar vein, HOD3 added:

"*We tailor individual learning plans and provide extra learning resources. We also work closely with employers to create assignments that help bridge the gap.****"***

Matching students to appropriate workplaces was also cited as a strategy to prevent such mismatches from arising. As HOD4 explained:

"We seldom have a mismatch because we find suitable host employers in the relevant fields for the students to be placed at for their WBE."

These practices demonstrate an institutional response that is both multi-pronged and focused on prevention and real-time adaptation. Key strategies identified include:

- Curriculum alignment through employer feedback (CM2, HOD5).
- Pre-placement communication of student competencies (CM3).
- Supplementary training and resource provision (HOD2, HOD3).
- Careful matching of students to appropriate host employers (HOD4).

These findings are consistent with those of Cruywagen and Haupt (2018), who argue that continuous employer feedback and industry collaboration are essential to maintaining curriculum relevance. Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory further reinforces this approach by emphasising the importance of connecting theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts.

4.5.4.2 Strategies for bridging the gap between academic knowledge and workplace needs

Participants elaborated on how their institutions intervene when mismatches do occur, often using practical, adaptive approaches to support students through their placements.

HOD3 shared a specific intervention to support a student who was finding things difficult:

"A mechanical engineering student struggled with newer technologies in the workplace. We organized supplementary training sessions in CAD software, which aligned their academic knowledge with industry expectations."

This example shows how targeted training can help students to overcome technical challenges and adapt to modern workplace tools.

CM2 discussed how to enhance the curriculum through real-world relevance:

"Integrating real-world case studies into the curriculum helps bridge gaps."

This approach helps students to better contextualise academic concepts within practical work scenarios.

Reassignment of students was another strategy employed by institutions to ensure alignment. CM3 stated:

"We would reassign the student to a more suitable workplace,"

While HOD4 confirmed:

"Should a mismatch occur; we have learners placed with a different host employer."

This flexibility enables institutions to respond dynamically to placement challenges, ensuring that students are placed in environments that support their development.

HOD5 summarised the institutional mindset effectively:

"The key is to identify these gaps early. That approach for me works best to avoid such situations."

This proactive identification and flexible intervention highlight a commitment to personalised support and continuous improvement. This aligns with the findings of Smith (2016), who advocates for responsive supervision and targeted interventions in WBE to improve student outcomes. Waddell and Wright (2016) also emphasise the importance of providing adaptable, structured learning opportunities to meet students' evolving needs during workplace placements.

4.5.4.3 The role of supervision in addressing mismatches

In WBE supervision is not just administrative oversight; it also facilitates mentoring, provides feedback and ensures continuous alignment between academic preparation and workplace realities. Several participants emphasised the importance of collaborative supervision practices involving both academic staff and workplace mentors.

HOD2 explained that supervisory efforts often include upskilling initiatives:

"We provide supplementary training sessions that focus on specific skills."

HOD3 highlighted how supervisors collaborate with employers to develop assignments that reinforce learning:

"We work closely with employers to create assignments that help bridge the gap."

This level of collaboration ensures that students actively apply what they learn in a relevant and guided manner.

HOD5 linked high-quality supervision to industry partnerships:

"*Establishing partnerships and regular communication with industry is of utmost importance****."***

Meanwhile, CM3 reiterated the significance of setting clear expectations through documentation and engagement with employers.

"*We provide employers with detailed briefs on the skills and theoretical knowledge students possess prior to placement****."***

Strategic placement decisions are also part of the supervisory process, as noted by HOD4:

"*We find suitable host employers in the relevant fields for the students to be placed at****."***

These practices ensure that students learn in the right environments and are supported by supervisors who understand academic and workplace demands.

Literature supports these findings. However, Waddell and Wright (2016) caution that inadequate mentorship from host employers can weaken the effectiveness of WBE, and this issue can be mitigated through structured supervisory frameworks and sustained institutional involvement.

In summary, participants described a range of supervisory practices designed to bridge the gap between academic instruction and industry expectations. These include early gap detection, revision of curriculum, provision of additional training, reassignment of students, collaboration with employers, and making informed placement decisions. When effectively managed, supervision acts as a strategic tool to guide students towards competence and confidence in real-world settings.

These findings are consistent with broader research. For example, Kolb (2014) emphasise the importance of experiential learning in connecting theory with practice, and Cruywagen and Haupt (2018) advocate for continuous employer engagement. Smith (2016) and Waddell and Wright (2016) also highlight the importance of adaptable and responsive supervision in promoting workplace readiness.

For TVET institutions, investing in strong supervisory systems is essential for student success in WBE programmes. Through high-quality supervision, institutions can facilitate a seamless and empowering transition from classroom to career.

4.5.5 Monitoring and support

Effective monitoring and support mechanisms are essential for equipping students with the skills they need to be ready for the workplace during their Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. A key insight from participant feedback is the crucial role that communication and collaboration play in overcoming challenges and ensuring programme success. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasises the importance of structured support, clear communication and regular oversight in successful work-integrated learning (Billett, 2019; Cruywagen & Haupt, 2018).

4.5.5.1 Role of communication and collaboration in overcoming challenges

Participants unanimously acknowledged that effective communication and collaboration are foundational to the success of WBE initiatives. Many of the difficulties experienced during placements, such as misaligned expectations, disengagement, and workplace conflict, were often traced back to lapses in communication. Conversely, consistent and open dialogue between stakeholders was widely recognised as an effective means of resolving challenges and fostering productive partnerships.

CM1 succinctly identified the core issue: "*Lack of communication is one of the main reasons for challenges*."

CM2 elaborated on the benefits of active engagement, noting: "*Effective communication fosters a supportive environment and addresses issues proactively*."

CM3 emphasised the importance of an inclusive approach: "*Communication and collaboration between management, lecturers, students, and host employers is crucial to the success of WBE*."

The Heads of Department echoed these sentiments. HOD1 noted that, "*Effective communication leads to fewer problems for the host employers and keeps them interested in being a partner*," while HOD2 emphasised the importance of clarity of

expectations: "*Effective communication fosters a clear understanding of expectations between all parties and helps quickly resolve issues*."

HOD3 reinforced this, stating, "*Effective communication and collaboration between college staff, employers, and students are essential for overcoming challenges*."

HOD4 added: "*Clear and proper communication will work well. It will definitely result in successful implementation and overcoming challenges*."

Summing up the collective perspective, HOD5 concluded: "*It is the most important aspect to consider when it comes to WBE.*"

Three key dimensions of communication emerged from the participant responses as crucial for overcoming WBE-related challenges:

- Proactive communication: this facilitates the early identification of issues and enables timely interventions, thereby promoting a supportive learning environment.
- Stakeholder alignment: it ensures that all involved parties; students, lecturers, employers and institutional managers, understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Sustained employer engagement: Maintains long-term partnerships through consistent communication to foster trust and shared ownership.

These insights are corroborated by existing research. For example, Heikkinen, Tynjälä, and Lindén (2019) identify poor communication as a common barrier to successful WBE implementation. Similarly, Kolb (2014) and Kettis-Lindblad and Hassel (2019) highlight the significance of structured communication systems forsustaining collaboration and ensuring the continuity of student support.

4.5.5.2 Impact of communication and collaboration on WBE success

Participants noted that, beyond addressing challenges, communication and collaboration serve as proactive drivers of positive outcomes in WBE placements. Their experiences provided concrete examples of how structured communication practices resolved issues and enhanced the educational value of WBE.

CM1 remarked on the role of communication in establishing shared accountability: "*Communication with the industry, student, and WBE officer leads to an understanding of each party's roles/duties. This allows each part to have a full understanding of what is required from them*."

CM2 illustrated a successful resolution: "*A collaborative meeting led to the resolution of a student's workplace conflict, enhancing their learning experience*."

CM3 offered an example of inclusive support: "*Open communication has allowed the college to identify students who are medically/physically compromised and to find the most suitable host employer for them*."

The HODs shared similar success stories. For example, HOD3 shared that, "*Collaborating with an engineering firm and the college helped resolve a training issue, leading to adjustments in how the course was taught to better align with industry needs*."

HOD4 added, "*Open communication with the employer led him to call me regarding the absence of a student who was experiencing financial difficulty, which allowed us to assist the student*."

HOD5 emphasised: "*Communication is essential in ensuring processes run smoothly and the desired outcomes are achieved*."

These narratives reveal three impactful ways in which communication can enhance WBE outcomes:

- Conflict resolution and continuity: Enabling early intervention in workplace conflicts preserves the integrity of the learning experience.
- Holistic student support: Facilitates institutional awareness of students' personal challenges, enabling appropriate and timely assistance.
- Curriculum relevance: Academic content is kept aligned with industry expectations through employer feedback.

These practices are reinforced by Heikkinen, Tynjälä, and Lindén (2019), who argue that ongoing communication is essential for monitoring progress, identifying barriers and implementing timely responses in WBE.

4.5.5.3 Challenges in maintaining communication and monitoring support

While the benefits of communication and collaboration are widely recognised, participants also alluded to the challenges in sustaining these efforts. These limitations were evident in their accounts and are supported by the literature, even if they were not always explicitly articulated.

Resource constraints

Although not explicitly mentioned, the narratives of participants suggest that limited staffing and financial resources hinder sustained engagement. Coordinating multiple stakeholders and providing tailored support requires considerable institutional capacity. As Heikkinen et al. (2019) have noted, limited resources often constrain institutions' ability to monitor student progress and intervene effectively.

Supervisor capacity at host sites

A recurring theme was the limited time and training available to industry supervisors. CM3 previously observed that "*staff often don't have time to train students*," underscoring the need for better-equipped mentors. Without structured mentorship, opportunities for meaningful communication and feedback may be lost.

Infrastructure and communication systems

Although participants did not explicitly cite technological limitations, HOD4's reliance on site visits implies gaps in real-time communication infrastructure, "*Mentor lecturers go on site visits and learn how students adapt to the real world of work".* Kolb (2014) and Kettis-Lindblad and Hassel (2019) argue that a lack of digital tools inhibits timely responses and effective collaboration.

Strategic interventions for improvement

To address these barriers, institutions should consider the following interventions:

- Digital infrastructure: Implement mobile apps, dashboards and real-time communication tools to streamline oversight and enhance responsiveness.
- Dedicated WBE coordination staff: Allocate staff specifically for WBE management to ensure consistent engagement and reduce the burden on academic teams.
- Training for workplace supervisors: Provide supervisors with the necessary tools and knowledge to deliver effective mentorship and structured feedback.

As the literature supports, addressing these systemic limitations is crucial to strengthening the effectiveness and sustainability of WBE programmes.

In conclusion, the findings illustrate that effective communication and collaboration are central to the success of WBE, not supplementary components. As CM1 reflected, "*Communication with the industry, student, and WBE officer leads to an understanding of each party's roles/duties*." The benefits of open dialogue are manifold, from conflict resolution and tailored student support to curriculum alignment.

However, to realise these benefits fully, institutions must overcome structural challenges such as shortages of resources, limited supervisor capacity, and inadequate communication infrastructure. Investing in robust support mechanisms and technological solutions will enable TVET institutions to maintain consistent communication and monitoring throughout the WBE process.

Ultimately, enhancing these frameworks optimise WBE outcomes and significantly improve students' workplace readiness. Without reliable and responsive support systems, even the most capable students may struggle to navigate real-world challenges. Therefore, strategic improvements in communication and support are essential to bridging the gap between education and employment and securing long-term employability.

4.5.6 Broader challenges in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

The 4IR has introduced unprecedented changes across global industries, significantly impacting the role of management within TVET institutions. As digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation and robotics and data analytics reshape the nature of work, TVET institutions are under increasing pressure to adapt their

curricula and pedagogical approaches to meet the challenging needs of industry. Participants in this study shared their perspectives on how these transformative changes influence student preparation for the workplace. Themes such as curriculum responsiveness, industry collaboration and supplementary training emerged, reflecting both the challenges faced and the strategic responses adopted. These findings are supported by Schwab (2016) and the World Economic Forum (2020), who emphasise the need for educational systems to keep pace with technological advances.

4.5.6.1 Emerging technologies and the need for relevant skills

Participants repeatedly raised the concern that students have limited exposure to 4IR technologies prior to entering the workplace. This lack of technological familiarity poses significant challenges for learners and educators alike.

CM1 expressed optimism about sector-wide changes, stating: "*I'm happy to say the TVET sector is moving towards Occupational programmes.*" This reflects a broader institutional shift towards more practice-oriented learning pathways that are aligned with the needs of modern workplaces.

CM2 highlighted efforts to maintain curricular relevance: "*Continuous curriculum evaluation and employer feedback help align academic qualifications with workplace demands*." Such proactive approaches enable institutions to respond to technological developments by involving industry partners in feedback mechanisms.

CM3 described an institutional strategy to prepare employers for student capabilities: "*We provide employers with detailed briefs on the skills and theoretical knowledge students possess prior to placement*." This approach acknowledges students' existing competencies and ensures that work assignments expand their exposure to advanced technologies.

Leadership also plays a crucial motivational role. For example, HOD1 commented, "*As a manager I need to keep motivating the students and help them to see the bigger picture*," highlighting the importance of cultivating student awareness of future employment trends.

In order to address specific technological skill gaps, HOD2 stated, "*We bridge gaps by offering supplementary training sessions that focus on specific skills that the workplace*

demands but are not covered in academic programmes." Meanwhile HOD5 emphasised the importance of early intervention: "*The key is to identify these gaps early. That approach for me works best to avoid such situations*."

These responses from participants align with the argument of Jackson and Collings (2018) that limited hands-on experience with modern technologies impairs graduates' employability. Consequently, TVET institutions must supplement traditional theoretical instruction with practice-based learning models that are technologically relevant.

4.5.6.2 Industry demand for dynamic and flexible skillsets

Modern workplaces demand graduates who are adaptable and versatile, and who have the skills to navigate rapidly evolving job roles. Participants acknowledged this challenge and described strategies to ensure that students develop dynamic skill sets that align with Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) expectations.

CM1 discussed occupational programmes as a promising solution: "*When it is introduced, the occupational programmes will address the issue as there is a partnership with industry, student, and academic institution during full occupational qualification*."

CM2 advocated for curricular reform through experiential learning: "*We as management should consider integrating real-world case studies into the curriculum to bridge gaps*."

On a practical level, CM3 demonstrated behavioural preparation: "*We provide examples of lunch breaks and request that students practice eating according to schedules before going for WBE*." This reinforces technical competencies, professional habits, and time management.

HOD3 discussed employer-integrated learning: "*We work closely with employers to create assignments that help bridge the gap*." HOD4 elaborated on simulation-based training: "*Our students are inducted before attending WBE... we also ensure that they are trained in simulation rooms and workshops*."

These approaches align with the views of Chetty, Mayson and Sher (2020), who emphasise the importance of higher education in equipping students with not only subject knowledge, but also the adaptability required to navigate fluid employment

landscapes. Integrated learning models, scenario-based assignments and behaviour training were all highlighted as effective strategies for addressing the complexities of 4IR readiness.

4.5.6.3 Inadequate Infrastructure and Resource Constraints

Despite efforts to prepare students for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), many Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges operate under significant infrastructural and resource limitations. These limitations often prevent the full implementation of cutting-edge technology, modern facilities, and staff upskilling.

Participants reflected on how institutions can manage these constraints through proactive planning and collaboration. HOD5 commented, "*I feel the key is to identify these gaps early. That approach for me works best to avoid such situations*." This proactive stance enables better resource allocation and timely intervention.

HOD3 underscored the importance of collaboration with employers: "*We work closely with employers to create assignments that help bridge the gap*." These partnerships provide students with real-world experience and access to technologies that are easily accessible in a college setting.

CM2 reiterated the importance of adaptable curricula: "*Continuous curriculum evaluation and employer feedback help align academic qualifications with workplace demands*."

These findings echo those of Heikkinen, Tynjälä, and Lindén (2019), who identified underfunding, outdated infrastructure and limited faculty development as key barriers to modernising TVET education. Although management's use of adaptive strategies and industry partnerships is commendable, they cannot fully substitute the systemic investment required to meet Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) expectations.

4.5.6.4 Adapting to future job roles and career uncertainty

Given the dynamic nature of the 4IR workplace, many job roles that students are currently being prepared for may evolve or become obsolete. This means that TVET institutions need to shift their focus from rigid technical training towards equipping students with transferable, future-proof skills.

Participants recognised the growing importance of soft skills. CM2 proposed: "*It may be a good idea to offer workshops on workplace etiquette and time management skills before WBE starts*."

CM3 highlighted existing deficits: "*Students struggle with professional communication and time management, which are essential in the modern workplace*."

HOD4 described current institutional initiatives: "*We provide students with pre-WBE training on soft skills, such as communication and conflict resolution*." These programmes aim to enhance students' interpersonal capabilities and adaptability.

These participant perspectives are consistent with those of Jackson and Collings (2018), who emphasise the importance of comprehensive employability training, and Chetty, Mayson and Sher (2020), who advocate for cognitive and emotional agility in preparation for future work environments.

In conclusion, the responses demonstrate management's awareness of, and ability to respond to, the challenges posed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Initiatives such as supplementary training, real-world case integration, collaboration with employers, and development of soft skills are indicative of a forward-thinking approach. However, to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness, these strategies must be continually evaluated and supported by systemic reforms. Preparing students for the future of work in a 4IR context therefore requires a holistic, collaborative approach that blends technical training with interpersonal development, institutional adaptability and sustained industry engagement.

4.6 Leadership and management strategies for enhancing workplace readiness

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), leadership and management in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions play a pivotal role in preparing students for the demands of the modern workplace. As the labour market continues to shift towards greater technological integration and dynamic skill sets, management teams must adopt leadership adaptive and forward-thinking leadership strategies.

This section presents the key strategic themes that emerged from the qualitative data, as illustrated in Figure 4.5. These strategies reflect the diverse approaches adopted

by TVET leaders to improve workplace students' workplace readiness through the effective implementation of Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. The thematic findings span across areas such as industry collaboration, mentorship, curriculum alignment, technology integration and soft skills development. Notably, the leadership approaches emphasised by participants also highlight the importance of tranformational leadership and stakeholder engagement in the successful delivery of WBE programmes.

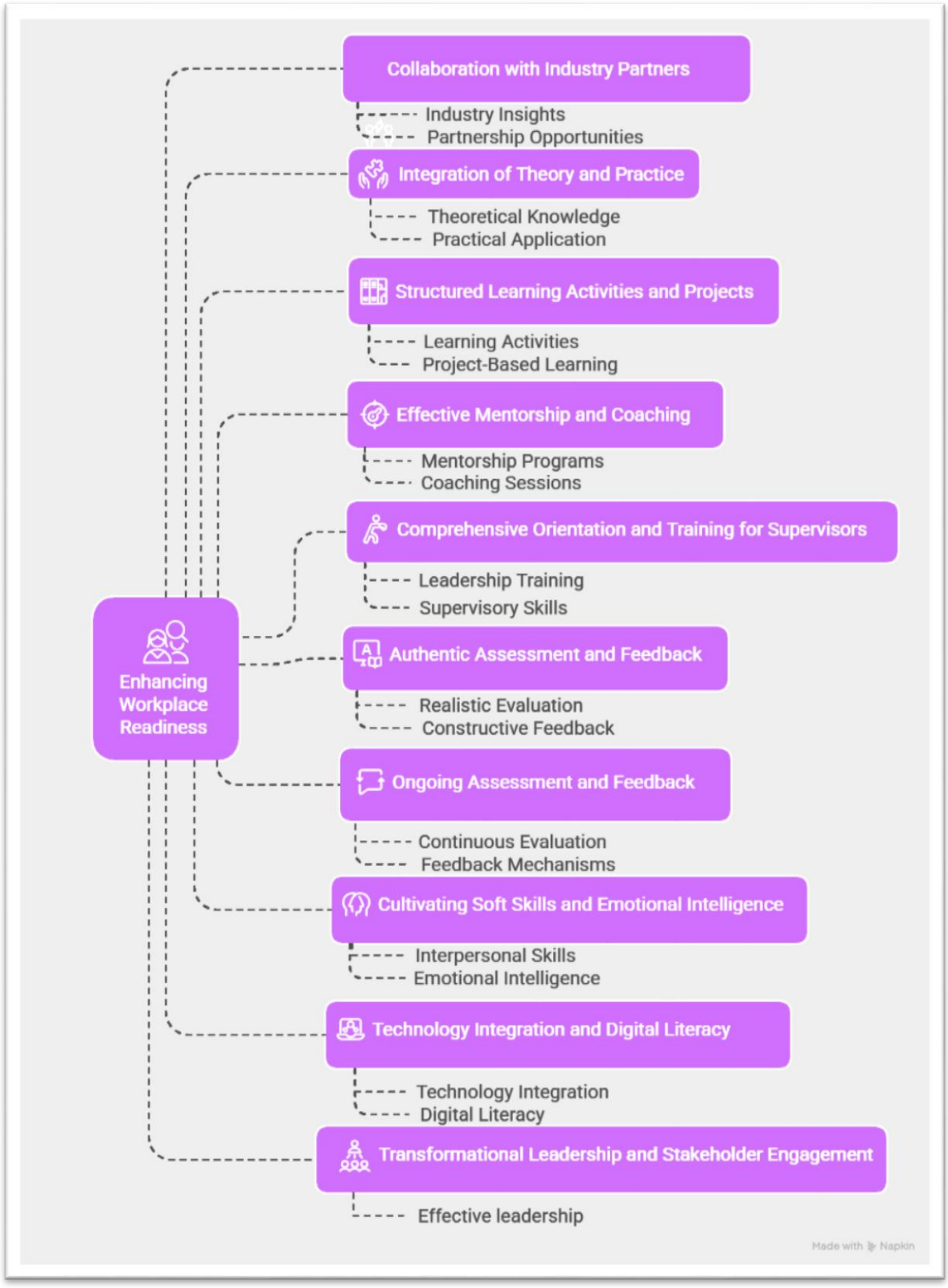


Figure 4. 5: Thematic representation of management strategies for enhancing workplace readiness. This figure was developed using Napkin.ai. Source: Author

Figure 4.5 provides a visual summary of the leadership and management strategies that were identified through qualitative thematic analysis as being essential for

improving workplace readiness in WBE programmes. Developed using Napkin.ai, the model presents ten interrelated strategic focus areas that contribute to a holistic framework for strengthening student employability through effective management practices.

At the centre of the diagram lies the core objective: Enhancing Workplace Readiness. Radiating from this are the following ten interlinked strategic pillars:

1. Collaboration with industry partners
2. Integration of theory and practice
3. Structured learning activities and projects
4. Effective mentorship and coaching
5. Comprehensive orientation and training for supervisors
6. Authentic assessment and feedback
7. Ongoing assessment and feedback
8. Cultivating soft skills and emotional intelligence
9. Technology integration and digital literacy
10. Transformational leadership and stakeholder engagement

These themes reflect critical area of focus for institutional leaders aiming to align technical and vocational education and training (TVET) with the real-world demands of the workplace. Participants emphasised the importance of consistent communication with employers, structured learning outcomes, relevance to the workplace, and emotional preparedness. They also identified the importance of authentic workplace experience and transformative leadership in navigating rapid changes in industry expectations.

Together, these strategies demonstrate that enhancing workplace readiness requires a synergistic, institution-wide approach integrating curriculum design, staff capacity-building and employer collaboration, rather than isolated interventions. Crucially, transformational leadership is the overarching force that guides these efforts, providing the visionary and adaptive leadership required to respond to rapid technological and social changes that are shaping the modern workforce.

The strategies outlined in this section offer a comprehensive roadmap for leadership in TVET institutions committed to delivering high-impact WBE programmes. By

embedding these strategic elements into institutional practice, management can bridge the gap between education and employment more effectively, preparing students for their first job and for long-term success in an increasingly complex and digitised world of work.

4.6.1 Collaboration with industry partners

Participants consistently identified collaboration with industry partners as a key pillar for the success of workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes. Their responses revealed a shared understanding that efforts to prepare students for employment would be incomplete without active, ongoing engagement with the world of work.

CM2 emphasised the dual benefits of such partnerships, stating:

"*Management can focus on creating partnerships with industries and integrating feedback into curriculum development****."***

This highlights a critical point: industry collaboration should extend beyond merely facilitating placements, functioning instead as a dynamic feedback mechanism that maintains the relevance of the curriculum. Industry input is therefore instrumental in shaping educational content to reflect real-world demands.

Similarly, HOD2 advocated for proactive institutional engagement with local businesses, commenting,

"*We must also establish partnerships with local businesses to ensure curriculum alignment with industry needs and facilitate internships and job placements****."***

This response underscores the importance of localised collaboration and reinforces the notion that industry alignment must be based on the economic realities of the college's local community.

Expanding on institutional responsibilities, HOD4 pointed out the collective nature of identifying placements:

*"In order to place students, we must get all lecturing staff involved in identifying host employers****."***

This approach suggests that the success of WBEs is not solely dependent on top-down management decisions but rather relies heavily on active participation of academic staff who are directly engaged with students and their developmental needs.

Taking a more interpersonal spproach, HOD5 shared,

"*A simple strategy of having good relationships with industries in the area works well for me. Establishing these partnerships form the grounding for WBE programs****."***

This statement highlights how personal networks and interpersonal trust often can underpin sustainable collaboration where formal structures are limited.

Collectively, these insights underscore the strategic necessity of formalised, reciprocal partnerships with industry. Although successful collaborations with companies such SAPPI and Gledhow Sugar Mill have demonstrated positive outcomes, these remain limited in scope and require expansion across a broader range of sectors to have a more widespread impact. These findings are consistent with those of Chetty, Mayson and Sher (2020), who argue that aligning the curriculum with rapidly evolving industry standards, particularly in the context of 4IR, is essential for maintaining relevance. Similarly, Huang and Wong (2019) and Yorke and Knight (2020) emphasise employer the importance of employer participation in programme development and evaluation to ensure that educational offerings meet labour market needs.

Participants were unequivocal that collaboration with industry is fundamental to the effective design, implementation and continuous evolution of WBE programmes, and not optional. Building and sustaining these partnerships requires deliberate, institution-wide efforts anchored in open communication, shared goals and mutual accountability.

4.6.2 Integration of theory and practice

The integration of theoretical knowledge with practical workplace application was a prominent theme in participant responses. Many emphasised the importance of aligning curriculum content with industry requirements to enhance employability and relevance of learning.

CM1 affirmed the robustness of current efforts, stating:

“The occupational programmes curriculum is aligned with employer’s needs.”

This indicates a conscious institutional effort to ensure that classroom learning mirrors skills and competencies expected in the workplace, reflecting a positive response to the need for flexible curriculum planning.

Supporting this, HOD3 cited a specific example of successful collaboration:

“Collaboration with SAPPI led to introducing industry awareness, making students more competitive for jobs.”

This shows how targeted partnerships can enrich curricula by exposing students to real-world industry expectations and making them more competitive in the job market.

However, not all feedback was positive. CM3 raised a concern, noting:

“Some programmes are outdated,”

This highlights the ongoing need for curriculum review and reform to prevent disconnection from rapidly evolving industry standards and technological advances.

Participants highlighted a dual reality: although there is some alignment between curricula and industry, it is often uneven and reliant on individual partnerships or departmental initiatives. This underscores the necessity for a systematic, institution-wide approach integrating theory and practice, rather than isolated or ad hoc efforts. These views align with those of Jackson and Johnson (2020), who advocate for embedding industry relevance in academic content to deepen student engagement and improve learning outcomes. Similarly, Boud and Solomon (2016) recommend experiential learning strategies such as workplace simulations, project-based tasks and reflective assignments as being critical for bridging the divide between academia and practice.

While there are examples of effective curriculum-industry alignment, the participants emphasised the urgent need for consistent and deliberate integration of theory and practice across all programmes. Addressing curriculum obsolescence and expanding industry-informed learning opportunities will be vital in equipping students with the

sound theoretical foundation and practical skills necessary for success in the workplace.

4.6.3 Structured learning activities and projects

Participants consistently emphasised the importance of incorporating structured, real-world learning activities into curricula in order to better prepare students for the complexities of modern workplaces. Activities such as case studies, simulations and collaborative projects were recognised as powerful tools forbridging the gap between theory and practice.

HOD2 strongly advocated this approach, stating:

“I feel projects or case studies must be developed that involve real-world industry challenges, allowing campuses to work directly with industry professionals in the curriculum.”

This response highlights the importance of providing students with experiential learning opportunities that immerse them in current industry issues and encourage interaction with professionals. Such experiences deepen technical knowledge and foster essential soft skills such as leadership, adaptability, and teamwork.

Further supporting this, CM3 explained,

“Lecturers have participated in WIL, which is subject-specific.”

This observation suggests a twofold benefit: students gain from structured activities, while lecturers with work-integrated learning (WIL) experience are better equipped to design tasks that are authentic and relevant to their subject, and that reflect workplace realities. The connection between educators and industry enhances the credibility and instructional quality of classroom learning.

These structured learning strategies provide a range of benefits. When thoughtfully integrated, they simulate workplace scenarios, encourage collaborative problem-solving and boost students’ confidence in applying their knowledge in practice. This aligns with the views of McDonald and Hite (2018), who argue that project-based learning nurtures autonomy, initiative, and workplace skills. Similarly, Lin, Lee and

Chen (2021) emphasise the importance of industry-linked learning activities in preparing students for the demands of the Fourth Insustrial Revolution (4IR).

In essence, participant feedback stresses that embedding purposeful, practice-based projects into curricula is essential, not supplementary, for developing the technical, cognitive, and interpersonal skills necessary for students to thrive in dynamic professional environments.

4.6.4 Effective mentorship and coaching

Participants consistently emphasised the important role that academic staff play in preparing students for the workplace, not only as educators, but also as mentors who guide students through the transition from the classroom to industry. Their responses emphasise the urgent need to strengthen mentorship capacity through targeted training and workplace exposure.

CM1 emphasised the importance of equipping educators with mentoring skills relevant to their disciplines, stating:

"*Training of staff*," particularly "*staff who are subject-specialized*," is essential for effective student preparation.

This aligns with the understanding that mentors must be technically proficient and familiar with industry standards.

HOD2 expanded on the need for structured support, asserting:

"It's important to organise workshops and training sessions focused on effective mentoring techniques…"

This viewpoint emphasises that mentorship should be a formal academic responsibility, supported by ongoing professional development rather than an informal or secondary task.

Reinforcing this, HOD4 noted:

"The WIL training focuses on the skills that the lecturer needs to impart to the students."

This demonstrates a attempt to align lecturer development with the competencies necessary for effectively guiding students through workplace-based learning (WBL).

CM3 provided additional insight, emphasising importance of firsthand industry exposure:

"…so that lecturers are exposed to industrial requirements before students are and can provide guidance…"

This suggests that lecturers with direct WIL experience are better prepared to mentor students by providing practical, informed advice.

Together, these responses illustrate that effective mentorship and coaching require formal training, institutional support and continuous engagement with industry practice. This view aligns with Billett (2018), who advocates for mentorship as a deliberate and well-supported process is essential to learner development. Similarly, O'Connor and Parkes (2018) maintain that trained mentors can significantly boost student confidence, adaptability and workplace readiness.

Participants' reflections confirm that preparing academic staff to be competent mentors is integral to the success of WBE programmes. Strengthening mentorship capacity ensures that students receive the necessary academic and emotional support needed to integrate theory with practice and flourish in their professional lives.

4.6.5 Comprehensive orientation and training for supervisors

Participants emphasised that the effectiveness of workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes hinges on supervisors receiving proper orientation and training, including those within the institution and in host industries. The success of student placements often hinges on the preparedness and engagement of those responsible for guiding and evaluating students.

CM3 emphasised the importance of building communication and familiarity among stakeholders, stating:

"Host employers should be introduced to all staff involved with work placement."

This approach fosters relationship-building and promotes alignment between the college's expectations and workplace practices, ensuring that all parties clearly understand their respective roles in supporting the student.

From the institutional perspective, HOD4 emphasised the importance of providing formal training for academic staff who supervise or liaise with host employers

"Management must also recommend staff to go on WIL training…"

This response highlights the need for structured capacity-building initiatives toequip supervisors with the knowledge and tools rnecessary to provide meaningful guidance and mentorship.

Such orientation and training should extend beyond technical content, promoting a shared understanding of programme objectives, student developmental needs, assessment criteria, and effective mentorship practices. Well-prepared supervisors are thus better positioned to offer consistent support, evaluate progress objectively, and provide constructively intervention when challenges arise.

This interpretation aligns with the views of Coll and Zegwaard (2018), who contend that effective supervision is pivotal in achieving successful WBE outcomes. They emphasise the importance of supervisors' ability to coach students through unfamiliar workplace contexts and provide meaningful assessments in bridging the gap between academic learning and professional practice.

Participants affirmed that supervisor training, whether for lecturers or host employers, is a strategic imperative, not a supplementary activity. TVET institutions must therefore invest in comprehensive orientation and training frameworks that empower both internal and external supervisors to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

4.6.6 Authentic assessment and feedback

Participants emphasised the crucial role of structured, authentic assessment and feedback mechanisms in enhancing the effectiveness of WBE. These mechanisms track student progress and serve as tools for reflection, problem-solving and the reinforcing workplace skills.

CM3 emphasised the importance of reflective documentation for monitoring development, stating:

“Students keep a logbook detailing their experience… WBE coordinators conduct site visits to host employers.”

This dual approach, which combines student self-reporting with coordinator oversight, ensures that learning is processed both internally and externally allowing for triangulated, well-rounded feedback.

HOD2 built on this by recommending more technologically advanced feedback systems and suggesting the need to:

“Create online platforms for feedback submissions”, and to hold *“Feedback sessions where students can discuss their experiences”.*

These interventions facilitate timely communication and provide structured spaces in which students can voice any difficulties they are experiencing, reflect on their learning and receive guidance.

Echoing this sentiment, HOD3 highlighted a digital innovation:

“The introduction of a WBE feedback portal… where students could submit concerns and receive feedback.”

Such platforms provide accessible and consistent channels of communication among students, lecturers and employers, helping to resolve issues promptly and enhance engagement.

HOD4 outlined the more formal assessment components:

“Students are also required to keep an attendance register and give a written report.”

These requirements promote accountability and ensure the experiential learning component is properly documented and assessed.

Collectively, these responses show shift in the institution towards a variety of authentic assessment tools, ranging from logbooks and attendance registers to digital portals

and live feedback sessions. These tools facilitate the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of student performance during WBE.

This approach is consistent with the views of Mei and Chen (2021) and Coll and Zegwaard (2018), who emphasise that meaningful assessment and timely feedback are critical in transforming workplace exposure into effective learning. They emphasise that authentic assessment mechanisms confirm student engagement, foster reflective practice, reinforce professional accountability, and build self-confidence.

In summary, participants suggest that integrated, reflective and responsive assessment systems are crucial for the success of WBEs. Such systems enable students to internalise learning, recognise areas for improvement and ultimately become better prepared for full-time employment.

4.6.7 Ongoing assessment and feedback

As well as authentic assessment tools, participants emphasised the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation throughout the WBE process. This ensures that students remain engaged and supported and are on track to achieve key learning outcomes.

CM3 described the institutional practice of proactive, in-person oversight:

"We ensure that WBE coordinators conduct site visits…"

These visits provide vital insights into student progress and enable direct engagement with host employers to resolve any issues that arise. This type of monitoring enhances programme responsiveness and enables timely interventions.

HOD5 emphasised the value of continuous feedback during and after placements, explaining:

"Feedback is given during placements… and after the placements to outline learning experiences…"

This dual-phase approach ensures that students are supported throughout their placements and encouraged to reflect on and consolidate their learning afterwards,

creating a comprehensive feedback loop that promotes personal and professional development.

Participants agree that monitoring should be continuous and structured, rather than a one-off event. Regular site visits and feedback sessions promote accountability, strengthen relationships between students and and employers, and encourage deeper reflection on practical experiences.

This perspective aligns with the argument of McDonald and Hite (2018) that transparent and ongoing monitoring mechanisms are essential for reinforcing accountability and improving the effectiveness of workplace learning. Such systems enable institutions to track progress in real time, ensuring a structured, supportive and goal-aligned learning environment.

Participants agreed that ongoing assessment and monitoring are vital pedagogical tools supporting student growth, learning continuity, and programme success, not mere administrative tasks. Such practices foster an adaptive, responsive WBE framework in which students receive consistent evaluation and support throughout their workplace experience.

4.6.8 Cultivating soft skills and emotional intelligence

Alongside technical training, participants strongly emphasised the importance of cultivating soft skills and emotional intelligence in preparing students holistically for the demands of the workplace. The consensus was clear: while hard skills may secure employment, it is soft skills that sustain long-term career success.

HOD2 emphasised the importance of incorporating interpersonal development into institutional programming, stating:

“Offer workshops focused on soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, essential for workplace success.”

This reflects the widespread acknowledgement that employability depends not only on technical proficiency, but also on the ability to interact effectively, adapt and collaborate within diverse environments.

CM1 echoed this sentiment, drawing attention to emotional aspects of workplace readiness.

"*Training focused on student wellbeing*" and "*communication skills*" was seen as essential for helping students manage the stress and complexity of real-world environments.

These views reinforce the idea that students require support in managing workplace dynamics, navigating conflict and developing emotional self-regulation. Participants viewed this as a crucial component of WBE preparation, equipping students with the emotional agility and interpersonal competence required for professional success.

This aligns with the views of Lee and Kim (2022), who advocate experiential learning strategies such as simulations, peer collaboration, and role-playing to foster emotional intelligence, empathy and adaptability. These skills are particularly important in industries that value resilience and relational acumen as well as technical competence.

Participants' responses demonstrate a growing institutional awareness that soft skills training is central to employability, rather than peripheral development. By providing structured opportunities for emotional and interpersonal development, TVET institutions can better prepare students to become technically proficient, emotionally intelligent and socially aware professionals.

4.6.9 Technology integration and digital literacy

Participants underscored the growing importance of students developing digital literacy and technological adaptability in the context of rapid advances driven by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Campus managers and heads of department both expressed concern that, without digital readiness, students risk being unprepared for modern, technology-intensive workplaces.

HOD2 recommended proactive institutional initiatives, calling for training:

"Focused on emerging workplace skills and instructional strategies,"

HOD2 emphasised that students and educators alike must keep pace with evolving digital tools and platforms. This suggests that traditional teaching approaches no longer meet the demands of a digitally advanced labour market.

Similarly, CM2 stressed the necessity of aligning curricula with “Industry-specific developments”, where digital competencies are not just advantageous, but essential. This reflects a broader shift in employer expectations, which require familiarity with digital platforms, data management, virtual collaboration and sector-specific software.

Participants recognised that digital integration must be embedded across instructional delivery, curriculum design and WBE implementation, rather than being an isolated process. Providing students with the skills to navigate digital environments through activites such as simulations, online collaboration and industry-relevant applications enhances their adaptability and employability in a digitised economy.

This aligns with the views of Wang and Liu (2018), who assert that digital literacy is essential for effective participation in modern economies. They recommend integrating digital tools throughout learning the learning process to develop competent, confident and critical users of technology in the workplace.

In summary, participants called for a deliberate, systemic approach to integrating technology integration, teaching digital skills through practical, relevant, industry-aligned learning. This will ensure that graduates are prepared for digitally transformed workplaces will not be left behind by rapid technological change.

4.6.10 Transformational leadership and stakeholder engagement

Participants strongly emphasised that effective, engaged leadership is central to the success of WBE programmes. Their responses suggest that leadership in TVET institutions involves more than just administration; it also encompasses actively shaping partnerships, co-creating relevant programmes and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

CM2 stressed the importance of continuous communication with industry, recommending:

“Regular industry advisory board meetings to inform program enhancements”.

This reflects a forward-looking leadership style that maintains the relevance of the curriculum and aligns institutional programmes with the demands of the evolving labour market. Such interactions create mutually beneficial relationships, with industry input directly shaping educational practices.

Similarly, HOD3 emphasised collaborative decision-making in curriculum development, stating:

"An educational committee… has helped fine-tune the program."

This emphasises the importance of engaging internal and external stakeholders in the continuous evaluation and improvement of the curriculum.

HOD4 described leadership efforts that extend beyond formal structures:

"Management keeps our links with our local industry firmly in place by visiting the workplace, conducting meetings…"

This relational leadership approach maintains the colleges's institutional presence in the industry, strengthening trust and accountability between the college and host employers.

Together, these insights depict transformational leadership characterised by active engagement, visionary direction and collaborative problem-solving. Chadya and Johansson (2019) describe transformational leaders as individuals who motivate through others shared goals, innovation and adaptability; qualities that are clearly reflected in the participants' accounts. Harris and Johnson (2020) add that such leadership fosters institutional flexibility, stakeholder engagement, and continuous programme improvement.

These findings reveal the critical role of leadership in mobilising stakeholders, co-developing curricula and sustaining partnerships. When leaders consistently and authentically engage through advisory boards, committees and site visits, they build mutual respect, trust and shared ownership of WBE outcomes. This shared responsibility strengthens alignment between education and employment, thereby ensuring that WBE remains relevant, sustainable and impactful.

4.7 Conclusion

The findings presented in this section highlight the important part that strategic leadership and proactive management play in equipping TVET students with the skills they need to navigate the complexities of the modern workplace. Participants consistently identified a set of critical strategies as foundational to the success of workplace-based experience (WBE) programmes, including meaningful collaboration with industry partners, the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application, structured learning projects and robust mentorship frameworks.

Importantly, the data revealed that workplace readiness extends well beyond mere curriculum alignment. Instead, it requires agile, forward-thinking leadership that embraces innovation, prioritises stakeholder engagement and fosters a culture of continuous development. Participants emphasised the importance of cultivating academic mentors, providing structured orientations for workplace supervisors, and incorporating authentic assessment and feedback mechanisms. Together, these efforts enhance students' self-efficacy, adaptability and overall employability.

Further, the integration of soft skills, digital literacy and emotional intelligence was repeatedly identified as crucial for developing well-rounded graduates who can navigate the rapidly evolving demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Combined with structured training plans and digital tools for monitoring and feedback, these competencies ensure holistic development that aligns with the needs of both learners and employers alike.

Notably, the study also highlighted the positive impact of transformational leadership. Regular engagement with industry, strong inter-sectoral collaboration and active involvement from institutional leaders were identified as crucial for developing robust and responsive WBE programmes. These practices create an environment in which students can thrive, and institutions can adapt to changing labour market landscapes.

In alignment with existing literature, the study confirms that TVET leadership must transition from administrative oversight to a visionary, partnership-driven governance model (Billett, 2018; Chadya & Johansson, 2019; Mei & Chen, 2021). Only through such comprehensive, inclusive and strategic approaches can TVET institutions effectively bridge the gap between academic training and real-world employability.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the study's key findings. These findings are based on a qualitative investigation into how management in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions can prepare students for the workplace through Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. The chapter begins with a summary of the major results, which are structured around four core thematic areas: (1) the benefits of WBE programmes for job readiness and employability skills; (2) the management's role in preparing students for the workplace; (3) the challenges management faces in implementing effective WBE; and (4) management strategies to support student readiness. The chapter concludes by offering practical recommendations, discussing its contributions to literature and practice, identifying its limitations, and suggesting avenues for future research. Ultimately, this chapter bridges the gap between theoretical understanding and practical future insights in the TVET sector.

5.2 Overview of the problem statement

TVET students often face significant challenges when transitioning from academic environments to the workplace. One major reason for this is their limited exposure to practical, real-world experience during their studies. While Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) is intended to reduce this gap by offering authentic work environments for developing skills, its effectiveness can vary considerably. Success does not dependent on student involvement, but also on structured planning, supervision and sustained involvement from institutional management.

Research shows that institutional management plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of WBE programmes. Without strategic management, careful coordination and collaborative partnerships with industry, these initiatives risk becoming disconnected from real-world demands. Inadequate management involvement can also lead to inconsistent student preparation, weak employer relationships, and a disconnect between the skills taught and those required in the workplace. Therefore,

this study focused on understanding how management can meaningfully contribute to the effectiveness of WBE in preparing students for employment.

5.3 Restatement of the research objectives

In response to the challenges outlined in the problem statement, the study aimed to explore how management can enhance workplace readiness among TVET students through WBE initiatives. The research objectives were as follows:

1. To investigate the benefits of WBE programmes in enhancing the job readiness and employability skills of TVET students.
2. Examine how management supports students in preparing for the workplace through WBE initiatives.
3. Explore the key challenges faced by management in implementing WBE.
4. Identify effective management strategies that can strengthen the implementation and outcomes of WBE.

5.4 Overview of the research methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of stakeholders, including students, institutional managers and employers. This approach was instrumental in capturing the complexities of WBE implementation, highlighting best practices, identifying barriers and uncovering strategic interventions. Data were collected through interviews and analysed thematically to draw meaningful insights aligned with the research objectives.

5.5 Summary of the major results

5.5.1 Benefits of WBE programmes on job readiness and employability skills

The study confirms that Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes considerably improve the job readiness and employability of TVET college students. Participants consistently emphasised that WBE programmes bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements by providing students with practical experience in workplace settings. This hands-on experience was considered essential for strengthening technical skills and building confidence, as students were could

apply their theoretical knowledge directly to real-world tasks using industry-standard tools, equipment and processes.

Beyond technical development, the results showed that WBE programmes promote the growth of essential employability skills, including communication, teamwork, adaptability and problem-solving. These soft skills, which are often difficult to teach in traditional classrooms, were acquired naturally through collaboration with colleagues, interactions with supervisors and engagement in professional environments. Participants also emphasised that exposure to workplace culture and practices instills discipline, punctuality and professional conduct, further supporting students' readiness for the world of work.

Another important benefit was WBE's role in providing industry exposure employment opportunities. Many students obtained a clearer understanding of their chosen fields and secured permanent jobs as a result of their performance during placements. Employers viewed WBE as an effective recruitment channel, and students appreciated the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities in real-life situations.

The integration of classroom learning with workplace experience was also a recurring theme. WBE helped students understand the relevance of their studies, reinforcing theoretical concepts and motivating them to pursue long-term career goals. Finally, the study found that structured feedback from employers helped students recognise areas for improvement, and empowered institutions to refine their curricula to better align with industry needs.

Overall, the results confirm that WBE provides a comprehensive range of benefits combining technical skill development, soft skill acquisition, industry exposure and reflective learning. These contributions significantly strengthen students' employability and facilitate them a smoother transition from education to the labour market.

5.5.2 Management's role in enhancing student work readiness

The results of this study emphasise the pivotal role of management in preparing students for the workplace through Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes. Management's involvement was found to extend beyond administrative functions into strategic planning, coordination and alignment of institutional and

industry expectations. Participants emphasised that management plays a central role in ensuring that WBE programmes are well-structured, student-centred and industry-relevant.

A key identified function was programme coordination, in which managers foster collaboration with employers, oversee placement logistics and maintain consistent communication to ensure student welfare and learning are upheld. The importance of mentorship and support was emphasised, with management facilitating guidance, professional modelling and career counselling to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Management's role in providing soft skills training, induction workshops and professional development was also considered fundamental in preparing students for the behavioural and cultural demands of the workplace.

The results also revealed that management is responsible for evaluating WBE programmes, ensuring that continuous feedback from students and employers informs improvements and maintains programme quality. Participants also emphasised the importance of building partnerships and securing resources, stating that effective collaboration with industry partners and proactive resourcing are essential for creating sustainable, impactful WBE opportunities. Finally, integrating WBE into academic and organisational strategies was considered essential for embedding work readiness into the broader curriculum and ensuring long-term alignment with labour market demands.

Overall, the study concludes that effective leadership, strategic coordination and supportive engagement from management are essential for the success of WBE programmes. By aligning institutional practices with industry needs, providing comprehensive student support and fostering collaborative partnerships, management ensures that TVET graduates are better prepared for the the challenges of the modern workplace.

5.5.3 Challenges faced by management

The study revealed that, while management plays a central role in advancing students' workplace readiness through WBE programmes, they encounter a range of systemic and operational challenges that prevent them from achieving the best possible outcomes. Participants highlighted that one of the most persistent difficulties is the

limited availability of industry placements, with colleges often struggling to secure sufficient opportunities for all students. This shortage restricts access and undermines equity, leaving some students deprived of meaningful workplace exposure.

Another challenge relates to outdated institutional resources and training facilities, that do not accurately reflect the technologies and practices employed in modern industries. Participants emphasised that this creates a mismatch between what students learn at college and what is expected in the workplace, limiting their ability to adapt effortlessly during placements. Similarly, misalignment between academic curricula and industry demands was cited as a barrier, with employers sometimes expressing dissatisfaction that students' skills are not fully aligned with workplace requirements.

Financial and logistical barriers further intensify these issues. Delayed stipend payments, transport difficulties and geographical limitations were said to affect students' ability to participate fully in placements. At the same time, student preparedness was identified as a concern, as some learners enter WBE without the necessary soft skills, professionalism, or awareness of workplace expectations.

Finally, participants identified inadequate engagement from industry partners as a recurring obstacle. Employers are not always willing or able to invest time and resources in mentoring students, which reduces the education value of placements. Taken together, these challenges highlight the complex environment in which management operates. Despite their best efforts, structural, financial and systemic barriers often limit the effectiveness of WBE in fostering workplace readiness.

5.5.4 Management strategies

Despite the challenges faced, the results show that management has developed various strategies to improve WBE programmes and enhance students' workplace readiness. A key strategy identified was to strengthen partnerships with industry. By cultivating relationships with employers and maintaining open lines of communication, managers were able to secure more relevant placements and align institutional training with industry expectations. These partnerships were also considered vital for maintaining programme credibility and creating long-term opportunities for students.

Participants emphasised the significance of pre-placement preparation. Management introduced induction programmes, orientation sessions and student workshops to familiarise learners with workplace culture, professional behaviour and employer expectations. These initiatives aimed to reduce the adjustment period and help students maximise the value of their placements.

Another important strategy was the introduction of structured mentorship and supervision within WBE. Assigning mentors or supervisors to students provided consistent guidance, feedback and role modelling, ensuring that placements were educational and supportive. Similarly, management emphasised the importance of feedback loops, integrating employer evaluations and student reflections into programme reviews to inform continuous improvement.

The results also revealed that extending the duration of placements and diversifying placement opportunities were important strategies for deeper learning. Participants argued that longer placements allow students to become more integrated into workplace routines, while more varied placements broaden their exposure to different roles and industries. Additionally, incorporating digital competencies and modern workplace practices intothe design of WBE was recognised as crucial for equipping students with the skills needed in an ever-changing labour market.

Overall, these strategies demonstrate management's proactive role in ensuring the success of WBEs. By addressing student readiness, strengthening industry linkages and embedding reflective practices, management ensures that WBE bridges the gap between classroom and the workplace, positioning TVET graduates as adaptable, confident and employable professionals.

5.6 Conclusions of major results

This study provides strong evidence that Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes are a critical in improving the workplace readiness and employability of TVET students. The conclusions are presented in alignment with the four key themes.

5.6.1 Benefits of WBE programmes on job readiness and employability skills

The research confirms that WBE programmes provide multidimensional benefits for students by combining technical skill development with the acquisition of core

employability skills. Through hands-on learning, exposure to workplace culture and structured feedback from employers, students were able to bridge the gap between theory and practice, boost their confidence and demonstrate professional behaviours. These benefits boost job readiness and create pathways to sustainable employment opportunities.

5.6.2 Management's role in enhancing student work readiness

The results highlight the critical role of management in preparing students for the workplace. Management interventions such as pre-WBE inductions, soft skills training, mentorship and collaboration with industry partners were found to directly and positively impact on student outcomes. The active involvement of institutional managers was essential for aligning WBE initiatives with academic objectives and industry expectations.

5.6.3 Challenges faced by management

The study highlighted the persistent challenges that manaegement encountered whentrying to implement WBE effectively. These included limited placement opportunities, outdated institutional infrastructure, financial and logistical constraints, and a mismatch between curricula and industry needs. These barriers not only limited student access to quality placements but also threatened the reliability and sustainability of WBE delivery. Therefore, addressing these systemic and institutional limitations is a prerequisite for improving the impact of WBE.

5.6.4 Management strategies

The research acknowledged that robust strategic management practices are crucial for overcoming these challenges and enhancing WBE outcomes. Critical steps towards enhancing programme effectiveness were identified as strategies such as building long-term industry partnerships, implementing structured mentorship programmes, securing reliable funding, extending placement durations, and integrating digital skills into training. Visionary leadership that prioritises collaboration, innovation and responsiveness was identified as pivotal in equipping students to meet the demands of the labour market.

In conclusion, this study confirms that, while WBE programmes are vital for bridging the education-to-employment gap, their effectiveness depends heavily on the quality of management within TVET institutions. Addressing systemic barriers and adopting progressive strategies can significantly improve student preparedness foster employability, contributing to the reduction of the skills mismatch that continues to challenge youth employment in South Africa.

5.7 Recommendations of the study

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness of WBE programmes in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students: These recommendations are presented according to the four major themes that emerged from the research.

5.7.1 Benefits of WBE programmes on job readiness and employability skills

The study revealed that WBE programmes meaningfully contribute to students' development of practical skills and employability. Based on these results, it is recommended that access to WBE programmes be extended to all TVET programmes, ensuring that students in diverse fields benefit from practical workplace exposure. Furthermore, feedback systems between employers, students and colleges should be formalised to continuously refine WBE delivery and ensure alignment with workplace expectations. Mechanisms, linking WBE participation with post-placement employment opportunities should also be strengthened to enhance students' transition into the labour market and position as a recognised recruitment pipeline for industry.

5.7.2 Management's role in enhancing student work readiness

The results suggest that management plays a vital role in preparing students for success in the workplace. It is therefore recommended that pre-WBE preparation is standardised through structured induction workshops that address technical readiness and soft skills development. It is also advised that mentorship structures be reinforced by assigning dedicated coordinators or mentors within colleges and host organisations, as this provides consistent guidance throughout the placement. Additionally, it is recommended that strong and ongoing partnerships be fostered with industry stakeholders in order to co-design WBEs that are relevant, sustainable and mutually beneficial.

5.7.3 Challenges faced by management

The results of the study highlighted several systemic challenges that management faces when implementing effective WBE programmes. Based on these insights, it is recommended that support for increased government and industry funding be prioritised to expand placement opportunities and modernise institutional infrastructure. Establishing regional placement networks could also alleviate geographic and logistical barriers, enabling TVET colleges to share partnerships more effectively. Moreover, curricula should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain aligned with the evolving requirements of industry and workplace.

5.7.4 Management strategies

The study emphasised the importance of strategic management in optimising WBE outcomes. Consequently, management development initiatives focusing on WBE coordination, stakeholder collaboration, and curriculum-industry alignment should be introduced for TVET managers. Policies should formalise structured mentorship programmes, employer feedback mechanisms and student tracking systems as key elements of WBE. It also essential to expand the integration of digital competencies within placements to prepare students for technology-driven workplaces. Where feasible, longer placement periods should be encouraged to allow deeper immersion in the and stronger professional relationships to be developed.

In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate that a holistic, coordinated and well-supported WBE framework is essential to realise the full benefits of WBE programmes. By addressing systemic barriers, enhancing management practices and embedding strategic leadership approaches, TVET colleges can ensure that students graduate with both academic qualifications and the practical competencies and professional behaviours demanded by the labour market. Implementing these recommendations will be crucial in improving employability outcomes and meaningfully contributing to reducing South Africa’s skills gap and youth unemployment.

5.8 Contributions of the study

5.8.1 Contributions to literature

This study makes a valuable addition to the growing body of research on workplace-based experience (WBE) and the preparedness of TVET students for the labour market. It extends the existing literature by highlighting the important role of management in influencing the quality and impact of WBE programmes within the South African TVET sector. this is an area that has received limited empirical attention until now. While previous studies have recognised the importance of experiential learning, this research uniquely emphasises how strategic managerial actions, such as fostering supportive learning environments, facilitating mentorship and building effective industry partnerships, can enhance student development. Furthermore, the findings enrich ongoing discussions about employability by providing a clearer understanding of how WBE can help to bridge the ongoing gap between academic learning and workplace expectations. This ultimately provides a more comprehensive view of the skills required for long-term youth employment.

5.8.2 Contributions to practice

From a practical standpoint, this study provides TVET college management, WBE coordinators and policymakers with valuable, evidence-based guidance on how to enhance student work readiness. The results highlight the important part played by management in structured-mentorship, thorough pre-placement preparation and continuous collaboration with industry partners in improving the effectiveness of WBE programmes. These insights can inform improvements to WBE frameworks and targeted management training initiatives. Furthermore, by drawing attention to key challenges such as limited placement opportunities, resource limitations, misalignment between the curriculum and industry, outdated institutional infrastructure, the study provides decision-makers with a clearer perspective on priority areas for improvement. These recommendations have the potential to significantly improve student readiness, support curriculum refinement and shape institutional policies that are better aligned with the evolving needs of the modern workplace.

In summary, the study bridges the gap between theory and practice, enriching the academic literature on WBE and management roles while offering actionable recommendations to improve the effectiveness of workplace-based learning and graduate workforce readiness.

5.9 Limitations of the study

While this study has yielded significant insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The research was conducted within a selected TVET institution and focused on managerial staff in a specific geographic area. This approach may not fully capture the breadth of experiences across South Africa or in comparable international contexts. While the qualitative interviews provided rich, detailed data, the responses may have introduced subjectivity and personal bias, and the results cannot be generalised to a wider population. Furthermore, excluding student and industry partner perspectives from this phase of the research limited the opportunity to triangulating findings or gain a more holistic understanding of the WBE programme's impact. Finally, time and resource constraints prevented longitudinal tracking of students' workplace performance after participating in WBE activities, which could have added valuable depth to the evaluation.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into managerial roles and strategies that enhance student workplace readiness, establishing a foundation for further research in this field.

5.10 Suggestions for future research

Based on the results and limitations of this study, the following directions for future research are recommended:

- Broader sample scope: Future studies should comprise a larger and more diverse sample of TVET colleges and WBE programmes across South Africa, in order to enhance the generalisability of the results.
- Longitudinal studies: Conducting longitudinal research would enable students' performance to be tracked during and after WBE placements, providing deeper insights into the long-term impact on employability and career progression.

- Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives: Including the perspectives of students, industry supervisors and other stakeholders in future research would provide a more holistic understanding of WBE effectiveness and the factors influencing workplace readiness.
- Quantitative and mixed-methods approaches: Incorporating quantitative or mixed-methods designs could complement qualitative insights and provide more robust evidence of the relationships between management strategies, WBE programme implementation and student outcomes.
- Curriculum-Industry Alignment Studies: Further investigation into the alignment between TVET curricula and industry requirements could help pinpoint areas where WBE programmes could be optimised to meet evolving needs of the workforce.

Addressing these areas will enable future research to build on the results of this study and provide stronger evidence to inform policy and institutional practices for improving the workplace readiness of TVET students.

5.11 Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the impact of management practices on the effectiveness of Workplace-Based Experience (WBE) programmes in preparing students for the labour market within TVET institutions. The results confirm that WBE plays a vital role in equipping students with the technical and soft skills that are essential for employability. Importantly, the study reveals that active engagement from management, in the form of strategic planning, mentorship, collaboration with stakeholders, and mobilisation of institutional resources, significant facilitates student work readiness.

However, the research also reveals several systemic and institutional barriers that hamper the optimal implementation of WBE. These include limited engagement with industry partners, outdated infrastructure and geographical and financial constraints affecting both students and institutions. The study identifies leadership and management strategies such as stronger industry partnerships, structured induction programmes and aligning curricula with real-world workplace requirements as critical steps towards overcoming these challenges.

In conclusion, the results emphasise the need for a coordinated, well-supported and strategically guided approach to WBE. The recommendations presented in this chapter aim to assist institutional leaders, policymakers and educational practitioners in refining WBE frameworks, ensuring that TVET graduates are academically qualified and posses the practical competencies required in the workplace. As South Africa continues to address youth unemployment and the skills gap, this study contributes both theoretically and practically by demonstrating how effective management can help to bridge the gap between education and employment.

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ADDENDUM A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Committee for Research Ethics

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Senate

Tel: 016 103 4440
Email: Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EduREC)** on 25 July 2024, the Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your application as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) 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: Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof M Matashu Student / Team: Ms V Naidoo (MEd student – 20494386) Ethics number:

Institution	Study Number								Year		Status	
N	W	U	-	0	0	2	7	6	-	2	4	-	A	2

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single study

Commencement date: 25/07/2024 **Risk:** **Low Risk**

Expiry date: 25/07/2025

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 (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the ES-REC:*
  - *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 ES-REC, 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-SCRC and ES-REC 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 ES-REC 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.

The ES-REC 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 ES-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance. Yours sincerely



Prof CP van der Vyver
Chairperson NWU Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ADDENDUM B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

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

UMFOLOZI TVET COLLEGE
Let the future be known

Ref: UMF 007/01/2024 Date: 02/0812024

North-West University
Faculty of Education

Private Bag X6001
POTCHEFSTROOM
South Africa
2520

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UMFOLOZI TVET COLLEGE FOR THE MASTERS OF EDUCATION STUDY

1. Following your application to conduct research on the "Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme", I am pleased to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research at uMfolozi TVET College as proposed.

2. In undertaking this research, you agree to respect and abide by all rules and regulations for conducting research at uMfolozi TVET College.

3. Upon completion of your study, you are requested to submit a copy of your thesis to uMf010zi TVET College.

Yours Sincerely

Date: 15/8/2024

EPI- du Toit

Acting College Principal

ADDENDUM C: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
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Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
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Faculty of Education

(Research entity details)

Tel: 018 111 1111
Email: Name.Surname@nwu.ac.za

EPL du Toit
Acting Principal
Private Bag X5023
RICHARDS BAY
3900

Date: 08 April 2024

PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON

I herewith wish to request your permission for three Campus Managers and five Heads of Units to participate in this research, which involves answering questions during a semi-structured interview to determine their roles in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

N W U - 0 0 2 7 6 - 2 4 - A 2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: **Professor M Matashu**
CO-SUPERVISOR: **None**
ADDRESS: **Corner Luthuli and Univ. Drive, Education Building A9, Room 105, First Floor, Mmabatho, Mafikeng, 2735**
CONTACT NUMBER: **018 389 2323**

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: **Vanessa Naidoo**
ADDRESS**:** **31 Edgar Charlton Crescent, Newtown, KwaDukuza, 4449**
CONTACT NUMBER: **081 216 7007**

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical

guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research is:

The objective of this research is to investigate roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET college students through workplace-based experience programmes.

- To identify the benefits of workplace-based experience (WBE) programme that may enhance TVET college students' job readiness and employability skills.
- To explore ways in which management can provide support for student's job readiness through workplace-based experience (WBE) programme.
- To examine the challenges faced by management when developing students with workplace readiness skills during the workplace-based experience (WBE) programme?
- To identify strategies that can be used to enhance workplace readiness of TVET college students through workplace-based experience programme.

Participants

- 3 x Campus Managers
- 5 x Heads of Units.

What is expected of the participants?

- **Active Participation:** Participants are expected to actively engage in the interview process. This involves answering questions thoughtfully, sharing their experiences and insights, and providing detailed information related to the research questions.
- **Honesty and Transparency:** Participants should be open and honest in their responses, sharing both positive and negative experiences and opinions related to the topic. This helps ensure the accuracy and richness of the data.
- **Respect for Confidentiality:** Participants should understand that the information they provide will be treated with confidentiality. They should avoid disclosing sensitive personal or organizational information that they do not wish to be shared.
- **Adherence to Ethical Guidelines:** Participants should adhere to ethical guidelines set by the research team. For example, they should avoid making false statements, defamatory remarks, or engaging in any form of discrimination during the interview.
- **Respect for Time:** Participants should be punctual for scheduled interviews and respect the allocated time, typically one hour. If additional time is needed, it should be negotiated in advance.

Benefits to the participants

Direct Benefits

1. **Enhanced Management Skills**: Technical college managers can gain a deeper understanding of their roles in facilitating workplace-based learning for students. They may receive guidance on effective mentoring, coaching, and support strategies, thereby enhancing their management skills.
2. **Professional Development**: Participation in the study can contribute to the professional development of managers. Insights into best practices in workplace-based learning programs can help them refine their management techniques and approaches.
3. **Awareness of Effective Strategies:** Managers can become aware of effective strategies and interventions that can improve workplace readiness among technical college students. This awareness can lead to more informed decision-making and program improvements.
4. **Networking and Collaboration:** Engaging in the study may provide opportunities for managers to network with fellow industry professionals and researchers. Building these connections can facilitate knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts to enhance workplace readiness initiatives.
5. **Personal Growth:** Participation in research can promote personal growth and a sense of accomplishment among managers. It can foster critical thinking skills, research literacy, and an improved ability to reflect on their management practices.
6. **Contribution to Research:** Managers have the opportunity to contribute to valuable research that can inform educational and workplace practices. Their insights and experiences can shape the future of workplace-based learning programs.
7. **Increased Self-Awareness:** Managers may gain increased self-awareness regarding their roles, strengths, and areas for improvement in facilitating workplace-based learning. This self-awareness can lead to more effective management practices.
8. **Empowerment:** Managers can feel empowered by their participation, knowing that their perspectives and experiences are contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field of workplace readiness.
9. **Alignment with Organizational Goals:** Insights gained from the research can align managers' efforts with the broader goals of their technical college or organization, ensuring that workplace-based experience programs are in line with educational objectives.
10. **Improved Program Outcomes:** By implementing effective strategies identified through the research, managers can contribute to improved outcomes for technical college students, such as enhanced employability and readiness for the workplace.

Risks involved for participants

1. **Confidentiality Risks:**

Disclosure of Sensitive Information: Participants, especially TVET graduates and industry stakeholders, may share sensitive or confidential information about their experiences,

organizations, or colleagues. There is a risk that this information could be inadvertently disclosed in the research process, potentially causing harm to individuals or organizations.

However, participants will not be probed for and asked to disclose sensitive information. Participants will be asked questions that will require prompts that will not cause harm to any individuals or the organisation

2. **Emotional Risks:**

Emotional Distress: Participants may discuss challenging or negative experiences related to the discrepancy between TVET education and industry demands. This could potentially trigger emotional distress, particularly for TVET graduates who may have faced employment challenges.

However, participants will not be probed for responses that cause emotional distress. Participants will be told to answer only questions they are comfortable to answer.

3. **Reputation Risks:**

Reputation Damage: TVET colleges, lecturers, or industry organizations may be concerned that negative findings could harm their reputation.

However, participants will be assured of anonymity at all times.

4. **Data Security Risks:**

Data Breaches: There is a risk of data breaches or unauthorized access to participants' data, especially if it's stored electronically.

However, there will be no risk of data breaches as data will be stored under password protection and with restricted access for the storage duration and securely destroyed once the storage period is up.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

1. **Informed Consent**: All research participants will be provided with detailed information about the study and their role in it. They will be asked to provide informed consent voluntarily, ensuring they understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of participation.
2. **Confidentiality**: Participants' personal information and data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Measures such as data de-identification and secure storage will be implemented to protect their privacy.
3. **Data Security**: Any data provided by participants will be securely stored and protected against unauthorized access. Participants will be assured that their information will not be used for any purpose other than the research.
4. **Feedback Mechanism**: A feedback mechanism will be established to allow participants to express concerns or ask questions about the research. Researchers will be responsive to their feedback and concerns.
5. **Regular Updates**: Participants will receive regular updates on the progress of the research and any findings that are relevant to them. This maintains transparency and keeps participants informed about the study.

6. **Risk Assessment**: A thorough risk assessment to identify and mitigate potential physical, psychological, social, or legal risks to participants will be conducted. Strategies will be developed to minimize risks and ensure the research process is as safe as possible.
7. **Participant Well-being**: The Well-being of participants will be continuously monitored during the research process. Mechanisms will be provided for participants to report discomfort, concerns, or adverse events, and be prepared to take appropriate actions to address them.
8. **Inclusion and Diversity**: It will be ensured that the recruitment and participation process is inclusive and respects diversity. Any form of discrimination will be avoided, and a welcoming and respectful research environment will be created for all participants.
9. **Consent Revocation**: Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The process for revoking consent will be made clear and easily accessible.
10. **Professional Conduct**: All interactions with participants will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner. Researchers should maintain ethical behaviour and avoid any form of exploitation or harm.
11. **Ethics Review Board Approval**: Seek and obtain approval from the institutional ethics review board, and adhere to their recommendations and guidelines throughout the research.
12. **Debriefing**: Debriefing: Upon completion of the study, participants will have the opportunity to debrief and discuss their experiences. This can help address any lingering concerns or questions they may have.
13. **Ethical Oversight**: The study will undergo ethical review by an institutional review board to ensure that it meets ethical standards and prioritizes the well-being and safety of participants.

Dissemination of findings

1. **Educational Institutions:** Share findings with participating educational institutions to inform curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and workplace-based experience program enhancements. Presentations or workshops can be organized for faculty and staff.
2. **Industry Engagement:** Organize workshops or seminars for industry stakeholders, such as employers and human resources professionals, to share insights on improving workplace readiness. Emphasize the practical implications of the research for the business community.
3. **Online Platforms:** Create a dedicated website or online platform to host research findings, resources, and related materials. This can serve as a centralized hub for disseminating information to a wide audience.
4. **Community Engagement:** Organize community events or town hall meetings to share research findings with local communities and gather feedback on how the research can benefit them.

5. **Feedback and Discussion Forums:** Establish online forums or discussion boards where stakeholders can provide feedback, ask questions, and engage in discussions related to the research.
6. **Academic Publications: Journal Articles:** Prepare scholarly articles for submission to peer-reviewed academic journals in fields related to education, management, and workforce development.
7. **Conference Presentations:** Present research findings at relevant academic conferences, both nationally and internationally, to reach a broader academic audience.
8. **Reports and Whitepapers:** Create comprehensive research reports and whitepapers summarizing the study's objectives, methodologies, key findings, and implications. These can be distributed electronically or in print to academic institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.
9. **Webinars and Online Workshops:** Host webinars or online workshops to present the research findings and engage with a diverse audience of educators, managers, and industry professionals. These can be interactive sessions where participants can ask questions and discuss the implications of the research.

The various ways in which the findings may be disseminated to participants of the study:

1. **Individual Feedback Sessions:** Offer one-on-one or small-group feedback sessions with each participating manager. This personalized approach allows for in-depth discussions and ensures that participants fully grasp the implications of the research.
2. **Printed Materials:** Provide printed copies of reports, executive summaries, or fact sheets to participants during face-to-face meetings or workshops. Ensure that these materials are easily accessible and well-organized.
3. **Follow-up Interviews:** Conduct follow-up interviews with participants to gather their insights and feedback on the research findings and their real-world applications.
4. **Personalized Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication with participants through email, phone calls, or personalized messages. Address their questions or concerns individually.
5. **Feedback Surveys:** Use feedback surveys to gather participants' opinions on the research findings and their perceived impact. This can help researchers gauge the effectiveness of the dissemination efforts.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON:

By signing below, I ……..…….. agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____

Signature of School Principal/Relevant person

ADDENDUM D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

(Research entity details)

Tel: 018 111 1111
Email: Name.Surname@nwu.ac.za

(Recipient name)
(Recipient address)
(Recipient address)
(Recipient address)

Date

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I herewith wish to request your consent to participate in this research, which involves answering questions during a semi-structured interview to determine your role in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes. Before you give consent, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

N W U - 0 0 2 7 6 - 2 4 - A 2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: **Professor Martha Matashu**
CO-SUPERVISOR: **None**
ADDRESS: **Corner Luthuli and Univ. Drive, Education Building A9, Room 105 First Floor, Mmabatho, Mafikeng, 2735**
CONTACT NUMBER: **018 389 2323**

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: **Mrs Vanessa Naidoo**
ADDRESS: **31 Edgar Charlton Crescent, Newtown, Kwa-Dukuza, 4449**
CONTACT NUMBER: **0812167007**

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also asked from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body (please describe) as well as the school principal (if relevant).

What is this research about?
The aims of this research are:

Aim

The objective of this investigation is to investigate roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET college students through workplace-based experience programme.

Objectives

4 To identify the benefits of workplace-based experience (WBE) programme that may enhance TVET college students' job readiness and employability skills.

5 To explore ways in which management can provide support for student's job readiness through workplace-based experience (WBE) programme.

6 To examine the challenges faced by management when developing students with workplace readiness skills during the workplace-based experience (WBE) programme?

7 To identify strategies that can be used to enhance workplace readiness of TVET college students through workplace-based experience programme.

Participants

3 x Campus Managers
5 x Heads of Unit

What is expected of you as participant?

- **Active Participation:** Participants are expected to actively engage in the interview process. This involves answering questions thoughtfully, sharing their experiences and insights, and providing detailed information related to the research questions.
- **Honesty and Transparency:** Participants should be open and honest in their responses, sharing both positive and negative experiences and opinions related to the topic. This helps ensure the accuracy and richness of the data.
- **Respect for Confidentiality:** Participants should understand that the information they provide will be treated with confidentiality. They should avoid disclosing sensitive personal or organizational information that they do not wish to be shared.
- **Adherence to Ethical Guidelines:** Participants should adhere to ethical guidelines set by the research team. For example, they should avoid making false statements, defamatory remarks, or engaging in any form of discrimination during the interview.

- **Respect for Time:** Participants should be punctual for scheduled interviews and respect the allocated time, typically one hour. If additional time is needed, it should be negotiated in advance.

Benefits to you as participant

1. **Enhanced Management Skills:** Technical college managers can gain a deeper understanding of their roles in facilitating workplace-based learning for students. They may receive guidance on effective mentoring, coaching, and support strategies, thereby enhancing their management skills.
2. **Professional Development:** Participation in the study can contribute to the professional development of managers. Insights into best practices in workplace-based learning programs can help them refine their management techniques and approaches.
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6. **Contribution to Research:** Managers have the opportunity to contribute to valuable research that can inform educational and workplace practices. Their insights and experiences can shape the future of workplace-based learning programs.
7. **Increased Self-Awareness:** Managers may gain increased self-awareness regarding their roles, strengths, and areas for improvement in facilitating workplace-based learning. This self-awareness can lead to more effective management practices.
8. **Empowerment:** Managers can feel empowered by their participation, knowing that their perspectives and experiences are contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field of workplace readiness.
9. **Alignment with Organizational Goals:** Insights gained from the research can align managers' efforts with the broader goals of their technical college or organization, ensuring that workplace-based experience programs are in line with educational objectives.
10. **Improved Program Outcomes:** By implementing effective strategies identified through the research, managers can contribute to improved outcomes for technical college students, such as enhanced employability and readiness for the workplace.

Risks involved for participants

5. **Confidentiality Risks:**

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Confidentiality and protection of identity

1. **Informed Consent**: All research participants will be provided with detailed information about the study and their role in it. They will be asked to provide informed consent voluntarily, ensuring they understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of participation.
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6. **Risk Assessment:** A thorough risk assessment to identify and mitigate potential physical, psychological, social, or legal risks to participants will be conducted. Strategies will be developed to minimize risks and ensure the research process is as safe as possible.

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10. **Professional Conduct:** All interactions with participants will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner. Researchers should maintain ethical behaviour and avoid any form of exploitation or harm.

11. **Ethics Review Board Approval:** Seek and obtain approval from the institutional ethics review board, and adhere to their recommendations and guidelines throughout the research.

12. **Debriefing: Debriefing**: Upon completion of the study, participants will have the opportunity to debrief and discuss their experiences. This can help address any lingering concerns or questions they may have.

13. **Ethical Oversight**: The study will undergo ethical review by an institutional review board to ensure that it meets ethical standards and prioritizes the well-being and safety of participants.

Dissemination of findings

There are various ways in which the findings of the study can be disseminated.

1. **Educational Institutions:** Share findings with participating educational institutions to inform curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and workplace-based experience program enhancements. Presentations or workshops can be organized for faculty and staff.

2. **Industry Engagement:** Organize workshops or seminars for industry stakeholders, such as employers and human resources professionals, to share insights on improving workplace readiness. Emphasize the practical implications of the research for the business community.

3. **Online Platforms:** Create a dedicated website or online platform to host research findings, resources, and related materials. This can serve as a centralized hub for disseminating information to a wide audience.
4. **Community Engagement:** Organize community events or town hall meetings to share research findings with local communities and gather feedback on how the research can benefit them.
5. **Feedback and Discussion Forums:** Establish online forums or discussion boards where stakeholders can provide feedback, ask questions, and engage in discussions related to the research.
6. **Academic Publications: Journal Articles:** Prepare scholarly articles for submission to peer-reviewed academic journals in fields related to education, management, and workforce development.
7. **Conference Presentations:** Present research findings at relevant academic conferences, both nationally and internationally, to reach a broader academic audience.
8. **Reports and Whitepapers:** Create comprehensive research reports and whitepapers summarizing the study's objectives, methodologies, key findings, and implications. These can be distributed electronically or in print to academic institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.
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The various ways in which the findings may be disseminated to participants of the study:

1. **Individual Feedback Sessions:** Offer one-on-one or small-group feedback sessions with each participating manager. This personalized approach allows for in-depth discussions and ensures that participants fully grasp the implications of the research.
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3. **Follow-up Interviews:** Conduct follow-up interviews with participants to gather their insights and feedback on the research findings and their real-world applications.
4. **Personalized Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication with participants through email, phone calls, or personalized messages. Address their questions or concerns individually.
5. **Feedback Surveys:** Use feedback surveys to gather participants' opinions on the research findings and their perceived impact. This can help researchers gauge the effectiveness of the dissemination efforts.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Naidoo
RESEARCHER

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, I …….…….. agree to take part in a research study entitled:

Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of me in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the research process before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Researcher**

ADDENDUM E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

These questions are crafted to prompt thorough responses and perspectives that correspond with the study's goals and aid in achieving its comprehensive aim.	Below are a few recommendations for each goal to explore the topics further.
Objective I: Benefits of workplace-based experience programmes in enhancing students' workplace readiness and employability skills 1. In your experience, what are the key benefits of WBE programmes that enhance technical college students' job readiness and employability skills? 2. How do WBE programmes contribute to the development of employability skills among students? Are there any specific skills that you have observed students improve through these programmes? 3. From your perspective, how do WBE programmes enhance students' understanding of their chosen field of study and its practical application in the workplace? 4. How does the integration of classroom learning and workplace experience in WBE programmes contribute to students' overall job readiness and employability? 5. From your perspective, how can the WBE programmes be further improved to maximize their benefits on students' job readiness and employability skills?	**Objective I: Benefits of workplace-based experience programmes in enhancing students' workplace readiness and employability skills** • **Follow-up for Q1:** Could you give examples of how these programs help students get ready for jobs better? • **Follow-up for Q2** Which skills do you see students improve the most in these programs? Can you explain how they learn these skills?? • **Follow-up for Q3:** Can you share stories of when students understood their subjects better because of these programs? How does this help them work in real jobs? • **Follow-up for Q4:** What makes mixing classroom learning and work experience work well in these programs? Can you give examples of how this helps students get ready for jobs? • **Follow-up for Q5:** What changes do you think would make these programs even better for helping students get ready for jobs? Based on what you've seen and heard from students.
Objective II: Management support for students' job readiness 6. In you experience, how do you ensure that students are adequately prepared and equipped with the necessary skills before they begin their WBE? 7. How do you collaborate with employers to ensure that students receive appropriate support and guidance during their WBE? 8. In your opinion, what additional resources or support could be provided by the college management to further enhance students' job readiness through the WBE programme? 9. How do you work with employers to identify and address any potential barriers or challenges that students may face during their WBE? 10. How does management monitor students' progress and performance during the WBE programme, and how do they address any issues that arise?	**Objective II: Management support for students' job readiness** • **Follow-up for Q6:** Can you explain some specific methods or activities you use to make sure students have all the skills they need before starting their WBE? • **Follow-up for Q7:** Could you give examples of how you and employers work together to support and guide students during their WBE? How do you ensure students get the help they need? • **Follow-up for Q8:** From your experience, what kinds of extra help or resources do you think would make the WBE program even better for preparing students for jobs? Can you give some examples? • **Follow-up for Q9:** How do you and employers identify and tackle any problems that might come up for students during their WBE? Can you share an example of a challenge you've addressed together? • **Follow-up for Q10:** Can you describe how management keeps track of how students are doing during the WBE program? What actions do they take if there are any problems or issues?

Objective III: Challenges faced by management when developing students' workplace readiness skills 11. What challenges, including specific industry-related challenges, do you encounter as a manager when developing students' workplace readiness skills during WBE programmes, in order to align these skills with the needs and expectations of employers? How do you address these challenges? 12. How do you, as a manager facilitate effective communication and coordination between students, employers, and staff at your college to address any challenges or concerns during the WBE programme? 13. As a manager, how do you deal with the specific barriers or obstacles that students commonly face in adapting to real-world work scenarios during their WBE? 14. How do you as the TVET college management address any mismatch between students' academic qualifications and the actual demands of the workplace during the WBE programme? 15. In your opinion, what role does communication and collaboration play in overcoming challenges and fostering a successful WBE programme that enhances students' workplace readiness?	**Objective III: Challenges faced by management when developing students' workplace readiness skills** • **Follow-up for Q11:** Can you give examples of specific industry-related challenges you've faced while helping students develop workplace skills? How do you solve these problems? • **Follow-up for Q12:** How do you make sure everyone, including students, employers, and college staff, talks to each other well during the WBE program? Can you share an example of a time when communication helped solve a problem? • **Follow-up for Q13:** What are some common problems students face when they're learning to work in real jobs? How do you help them get past these problems? • **Follow-up for Q14:** When students' academic skills don't match what employers need, what do you do? Can you give an example of how you've helped students bridge this gap during the WBE program? • **Follow-up for Q15:** From your experience, can you explain how good communication and teamwork help make the WBE program successful? Can you give an example of when collaboration led to a better outcome?
Objective IV: Strategies that can be used to enhance roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programme 16. In your opinion, what are the strategies that the TVET college can adopt to effectively enhance roles played by management in improving students' workplace readiness through the WBE programme? Can you identify any that have been successful at your campus? 17. How do you as college leadership collaborate with department heads and lecturers to align the curriculum and learning outcomes with the specific workplace readiness skills required by employers? 18. As a manager, how would you identify and provide professional development opportunities for staff to improve their ability to mentor and guide students during the WBE programme? 19. What strategies do you employ to strengthen the collaboration between the academic faculty and industry professionals in designing and implementing the WBE programme to ensure that it remains relevant to industry demands? 20. How does the TVET college leadership facilitate communication and feedback channels to ensure that students receive	**Objective IV: Leadership and management strategies to enhance students' workplace readiness** • **Follow-up for Q16:** Can you elaborate on any specific leadership and management strategies that have worked well at your campus to enhance students' workplace readiness through the WBE program? How do you see these strategies making a difference? • **Follow-up for Q17:** Could you provide examples of successful collaboration between college leadership, department heads, and lecturers in aligning the curriculum with workplace readiness skills? How do you ensure this alignment is maintained? • **Follow-up for Q18:** If you were to introduce professional development opportunities for staff to improve mentoring and guidance during WBE programs, what specific areas would you focus on? Can you share any methods or trainings you believe would be effective? • **Follow-up for Q19:** Can you give examples of how you strengthen collaboration between academic faculty and industry professionals in designing and implementing the WBE program? How do you ensure that the

constructive feedback and support throughout their WBE?	program remains up-to-date with industry demands? • **Follow-up for Q20:** How does the TVET college leadership ensure that communication channels are open and effective for students to receive feedback and support during their WBE? Can you share any specific initiatives or systems in place to facilitate this?

ADDENDUM F: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

TM SERVICES
CERTIFICATE OF COPYEDITING

Freelance Editor/Copyeditor/Proofreader Copyediting – University of Cape Town Registered with SACE

This certificate serves as formal acknowledgment of professional copyediting services rendered.

Presented to:
Vanessa Naidoo

Title of Document:
Roles played by management in improving the workplace readiness of TVET students through workplace-based experience programmes

Certificate Number:
2025-003

This is to certify that the above-mentioned **research proposal** has been professionally copyedited by **Dr. Thapelo Mokgadi**, ensuring:

- Clarity and consistency of language
- Grammar and punctuation accuracy
- Logical structure and academic flow
- Alignment with applicable style guides and academic conventions
- Enhanced formatting and readability

Date of Completion: 22 November 2025

Word Count: 58,137 words

Service Rendered By:
Dr. Thapelo Mokgadi (PhD – Curriculum Studies: English)
Email: thapzzz@gmail.com

Signature: 

Authorised Copyeditor

This certificate may be used as proof of professional editing when submitting to academic journals, publishers, or institutions.

ADDENDUM G: TURNITIN REPORT

28164407:Vanessa_Naidoo_Turnitin_report.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%	4%	4%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to North West University Student Paper	3%
2	Choi, Wai-Shan Tina. "How Various Experimental Learning Activities Affecting on Students' Learning Motivation and Satisfaction in Business Education", University of Wales Trinity Saint David (United Kingdom) Publication	1%
3	utmcdex.utm.my Internet Source	<1%
4	Lema, Aikande. "Exploring Management Practices of Technical Education and Training Institutions in Developing Soft Skills for Self-Employment Among Learners in Tanzania", University of Dodoma (Tanzania) Publication	<1%
5	mmcalumni.ca Internet Source	<1%
6	ir.mu.ac.ke:8080 Internet Source	<1%
7	Johnstone, Matsobane Elaine. "The Alignment and Impact of the TVET College National Certificate (Vocational) Tourism Curriculum on Graduate Skills and Employability", University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2022 Publication	<1%