

**STUDENT SUPPORT OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT
SUPPORT PROVISION IN TECHNICAL AND
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING (TVET) COLLEGES**

by

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges (Formerly Further Education and Training [FET] Colleges) in South Africa have undergone many changes since 1994. The sector has been reformed with much policy change. There are currently 50 multi-campus sites spread across South Africa. Government has realized the plight of many jobless youth. The lack of trained workers with certain scarce skills has therefore come to light in the world of work. TVET Colleges have the potential to answer this need. In 2007, a new curriculum, National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)] was rolled out to replace the National Assembly Training and Education Department or NATED (N1-6) qualifications. This new curriculum was described as an equivalent to Grades 10 to 12, with students generally being between the ages of 16 and 18. Most of the students enrolled for these courses hold bursaries. Of concern for this study is the low throughput rate of roughly 40% of this age group per year, since roll-out in 2007.

In this generic qualitative research study framed with a constructivist paradigm, I set out to explore the student support officers' perceptions of providing support to these NC(V) students that did not pass their courses. I made use of semi-structured individual and telephonic interviews to gather data and the respondents were selected based on their role within the college. I developed thematic networks to organize the data before analyzing it into themes. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework served as the theoretical framework underlying my research.

Findings showed that the roles of the student supporters were not clearly defined. This led to many challenges within the performance of their roles. Student supporters thus seemed to be in constant battle to support the students. In addition, working with adolescent students in the

TVET College sector also presented unique challenges, since they are a new cohort of students entering the colleges. The student supporters shared recommendations that could be considered for the development of their roles within the college sector.

Opsomming

Tegniese- en Beroepsonderwys- en- Opleidingskolleges (TVET Colleges) in Suid-Afrika het vanaf 1994 baie veranderinge ondergaan. Daar is beleide in plek gestel wat hierdie sektor herskep het (tot onlangs bekend as verdere Onderwys en Opleiding). Daar is huidiglik 50 TVET Kolleges regoor Suid-Afrika. Die regering het besef dat daar baie jongmense sonder werk is. Dit het aan die lig gekom dat daar 'n tekort aan opgeleide mense met sekere vaardighede is. Die TVET Kolleges is geïdentifiseer as die plek waar hierdie opleiding aangebied kan word. In 2007 is 'n nuwe kurrikulum by TVET Kolleges bekend gestel. Die doel was dat dit die ou NATED (N1-6) kursusse vervang en dat dit vir jonger studente opgestel is. Hierdie kurrikulum is die NCV (Nasionale beroepsgerigte Sertifikaat) genoem. Die studente is dan tipies besig om hul Graad10-12 by die Kollege te voltooi en is tussen die ouderdomme van 16-18. Die meeste studeer met 'n beurs. As daar nou teruggekyk word na die slaagsyfer van hierdie NVC kurrikulum vanaf 2007, is die gemiddeld 40%. Dit is iets waaroor die media gereeld rapporteer.

In hierdie generiese kwalitatiewe navorsingstudie met 'n konstruktivistiese paradigma, het ek besluit om ondersoek in te stel oor die persepsies van die studenteondersteuners oor hul rol as ondersteuners vir hierdie groep jonger NCV studente wat sukkel om te slaag. Ek wou verstaan wat studentondersteuning binne die TVET Kolleges beteken. Ek het gebruik gemaak van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met persone binne die rol van studenteondersteuners. Die resultate is volgens temas geanaliseer en georganiseer. Bronfenbrenner se bio-ekologiese raamwerk het gedien as die teoretiese raamwerk wat die navorsing rugsteun.

Die resultate het aan die lig gebring dat die studenteondersteuners se rolle nie duidelik omskryf was nie en dat hulle konstant moet baklei om die student te kan ondersteun. Die

nuwe adolessente wat nou deel uitmaak van die studentestelsel het ook unieke uitdagings, aangesien hulle 'n nuwe ouderdomsgroep is wat nou ondersteun moet word. Die resultate gee ook aanbevelings weer wat deur die studenteondersteuners gemaak is ten opsigte van die uitvoer van hul rol binne hul spesifieke TVET Kollege konteks.

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List of acronyms

CHET:	Centre for Higher Education and Training
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
DST:	Developmental Systems Theory
FET:	Further Education and Training
FETI:	Further Education and Training Institute
HPCSA:	Health Professions Council of South Africa
NATED:	National Assembly Training & Education Department
NC(V):	National Certificate (Vocational)
SETA:	Sector Education and Training Authority
PPCT:	Process Person Context Time
SSO:	Student Support Officers
SSS:	Student Support Services
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges

Chapter 1

Context and Rationale of Study

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET from now on), previously referred to as Further Education and Training [FET] Colleges, have an important role to play. In South Africa, TVET Colleges are regarded as a core component of the national skills development strategy of the Department of Higher Education and Training (2014). The experience of the past few years has made the Government appreciate that TVET College programmes are essential for the improvement of the skills base of the country. This is evident in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013), wherein the Department of Higher Education and training state that the expansion of the TVET College sector is their highest priority (p. xii). TVET Colleges offer two streams of training. On the one hand, National Assembly Training and Education Department (NATED) courses (known as the N1-N6 courses), have students enrolling after they have completed Grade 12. On the other hand, National Certificate Vocational [NC(V)] courses are offered to students with a completed Grade 9. The vocational programmes are intended to directly respond to the priority skills demand of the modern economy in South Africa (ETDP SETA Public Further Education and Training Sector Skills Plan 2013/14 Update).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Since 2011, TVET Colleges have featured heavily in media coverage, when many changes took place within colleges themselves. One of the articles that sparked my interest was

published on the *City Press* website on 23 June 2012, and was entitled “Young, jobless and desperate – Will FET Colleges fix our future”. The article states the following:

Zuko Venge’s story shows exactly why FET graduates face an uphill battle in finding work. From the small Eastern Cape town of Willowvale, Venge left his family after matric in 2009 and moved in with an uncle so that he could study at South West Gauteng FET College.

“That was at the time when they were taking out the N-courses, so I enrolled for NC(V),” he says, referring to a 2007 decision taken by the education department to phase out the outdated National Certificate (N-programmes) and replace them with a new, comprehensive curriculum called the National Certificate (Vocational) or NC(V) programme. According to Kraak, this decision was a “good example of policy failure”, which did “a lot of damage to the colleges”. The NC(V) was originally designed as an alternative for the more academic grades 10, 11 and 12 – the idea being that these students could then leave colleges for vocational employment at the age of 18. Gewer says: “As it worked out, there was more demand for colleges at a post-matric level and the curriculum was far too challenging for (Grade 9 graduates).” In Venge’s class, almost all of the Grade 9 graduates who started the course with him dropped out because they “couldn’t stand the pressure”.

Several points culled from the aforementioned quotation stood out for me, namely: that the fact that students finishing at TVET Colleges struggle to find work; that the new NC(V) courses were too challenging for the Grade 9 learners; and the low throughput rate of these learners. This made me wonder about three things in particular:

1. That the work was too challenging for Grade 9’s;
2. The fact that the NC(V) students are adolescent learners;
3. The question of support available to these students.

It is particularly the last two points, namely student support available to adolescents that spoke to me as an Educational Psychologist in training. I wondered about the perceptions of the staff responsible for providing this support. The support that youth in this vulnerable

developmental phase need is crucial. In my experience thus far, this is the stage where wrong decisions can have the direst consequences.

As part of the enhancement of the college sector, more bursaries were made available to help more students to be able to enrol in a TVET College. The following statement by Blade Nzimande (Minister of Higher Education from 2009 until May 2014) confirms the bursaries that were made available to the students:

In 2011 Government took the bold decision to further increase the FET bursary allocation fourfold from R318-million in 2010 to R1.235 billion in 2011. This is the single largest ever increase in government funding for FET Colleges. In 2012 this bursary has increased to R1, 7 billion, thus making FET College education for poor students free (Dr B.E. Nzimande, 4 June, 2012 p. 3).

This development in the TVET sector makes it important for students to be successful at TVET Colleges. Consequently, the focus of this study is on the staff in the important role of supporting the higher number of student enrolments at the colleges. Their throughput rate is low as mentioned in the article, complicated by the adolescents enrolling for NC(V) courses now falling under Higher Education, where they were previously part of Basic Education. This is highlighted further in the following statement by Pillay (2009, p. 12):

Further Education and Training Colleges have an important role in the Education landscape of South Africa. The FET sector is seen to be well positioned between compulsory General Education and Higher Education on the one hand and schooling and the world of work on the other. This sector straddles the last 3 grades of senior secondary school, private colleges, public colleges and some higher education institutions.

This statement made me question the availability of support available to students in the TVET sector, specifically the type, as well as amount of support, and by whom such support are provided to students. According to the student support framework of 2008,

the provision of SSS at FET Colleges should be a comprehensive service that responds to the overall needs of students. Student support should be modeled in a manner that aims at developing a holistic person. Where colleges are unable to offer a particular service, referral systems should be in place (Student Support Services Framework, 2008).

TVET Colleges are in the position to help more young South Africans add (further) tertiary education to their resumes.

1. 3. NEED FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY AND MOTIVATION

The motivation to understand the support available to students, as well as the people responsible for implementing the support, made me read more about TVET Colleges. I did not find much information about TVET College staff in general and student support staff in particular. This was confirmed in the literature review, since there is a limited body of research into staff in the TVET Colleges. There is little known about the biographical profile of the college staff, and why they choose to teach at TVET Colleges. The only work available is a limited number of dissertations that test perceptions. More research is needed about the TVET College staff (Wedekind, 2008, p. 14). This deepened the need for my research study about student support staff and support for the adolescent student.

A book about the development of student support in South Africa states the following:

A key assumption that underpins and informs the student-centered and development-oriented approach to the field and practice of Student services is that Student services plays a fundamental rather than a merely ancillary or incidental role in the core function of higher education institutions (Castells, 2001, p.22).

In other words, student services should be conceptualized as being located at the centre rather than the margins of the core business of tertiary institutions (Mandew, 2003). As such, much more research is needed on the impact of SSS and academic development programmes on student outcomes in the TVET College context (Hendricks, 2011). Increasingly it became

clear that there is a gap in the research regarding these particular staff members at TVET Colleges and their influence on student success rates.

My motivation for this study was to find out what being in the role of a SSS staff member means. I wanted to understand the exact nature of their employment and how they are able to support students. My focus was specifically on the student support officers' perceptions of providing support within this TVET College. Certainly, working with younger adolescent students had a new set of challenges for the college. Many of these challenges will fall on the student supporter's desk. I wanted to explore what this student support entails.

I wanted to make it clear that my aim was not to criticise or in any way undermine what is currently being done. I entered the study with an open mind with a genuine interest as to what happens and how it is implemented. The data I collected was in collaboration with the student supporters. I regarded them as the experts in the field, and myself as a curious observer, who might view the current situation from a different perspective:

The Department of Higher Education has set a target of one million students to be enrolled in the FET Colleges by the year 2014. These and many other challenges necessitate that colleges should strengthen their SSS. The development of such support services has been uneven across the 50 FET Colleges and has not been prioritized. If colleges are to be truly 'student-centered', Student Support Services (SSS) should not be treated as a 'nice to have' but should be integral to the FET College teaching and learning system (SSS Framework, 2008 p. 3).

As part of wanting to understand the true meaning of support within the TVET College context, this has led me to ask the questions that follow in the next section.

1.4. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The central question that guided the research was: *What are the student support officers' perceptions of being in a supporting role to the students enrolled for NATED and NC(V) programmes at this TVET College?*

The following sub-questions were also investigated:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of Student Support Officers (SSO's) in general at this TVET College?
2. What are the realities for SSO's working with the adolescent student at this TVET College?
3. What is hindering or advancing the SSO's role fulfillment?
4. What are their recommendations from within the roles and responsibilities of a SSO, to successfully support students?

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was *to explore and describe the perceptions of student support officers' of being in a supportive role within this TVET College.* The research question, with four sub-questions, also made the following sub-goals apparent for this study.

1. To describe what the role and responsibilities of TVET College student support staff are.
2. To explore the implications within this role specifically on working with adolescents entering the Higher Education environment.
3. To identify and describe what challenges exist within this role from a broader perspective within the context of a TVET College?

4. To describe the recommendations that they would make for supporting adolescents in TVET Colleges.

Due to the limited scope of a mini-thesis as well as how student support is framed in policy documents this study will focus on the role of student support staff within one TVET College.

1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I will describe the theoretical framework guiding this study. This framework places research within a certain context. This context makes connections between how the theory has been applied in the past and how this research can add to the theory in the future:

The meaning of theory in any scientific field is to provide a framework within which to explain connections among the phenomena under study and to provide insights leading to the discovery of new connections (Tudge et al., 2009).

Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory informed this enquiry. This theory looks at how person and context are interrelated developmentally over a period of time. This theory has been updated over time by Bronfenbrenner from the 1970's until 2005, and it is important to make explicit which version of the theory the research is based upon. I based my research on his mature theory where he placed a lot of emphasis on the individual and the proximal processes in which they are involved. Bronfenbrenner critiqued his own previous theories, by saying that he did not place enough emphasis on the individual's own influence on their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). This led to the shift to the "Process-Person-Context-Time" model. Bronfenbrenner proposed the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model of development, and the concept of proximal processes became central to his theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Bronfenbrenner formulated two propositions that guided this model. Figure 1.1 and 1.2 illustrates these propositions:

Human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving, biopsychological human organism and persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996).

Figure 1.1 Bronfenbrenner's first proposition

The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes affecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person; of the environment—both immediate and more remote—in which the processes are taking place; the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration; and the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996)

Figure 1.2 Bronfenbrenner's second proposition

This then implies that the PPCT model has to be applied in its full form to explain the developing person in context optimally:

Thus, human development is ultimately shaped by these proximal processes (P), which vary systematically as a function of characteristics of the developing person (P), characteristics of the environment, both immediate and more remote (C), and with attention to social continuities and change over time through the life course and during historical time periods of the person (T) (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 189).

I will now explain the relevance of these PPCT aspects to my study:

1.6.1 Process

I make it explicit here that the study focuses on particular proximal processes within the broader TVET College environment, namely the student support services staff (SSS) and the college environment with particular emphasis on their role as student supporters within the TVET College and their support of adolescents. These staff members are growing into their roles through reciprocal interactions between themselves and their immediate work environment. This interaction is regular and evolves over time. The other proximal processes

relevant to my study, which are also affected by this proximal process, are the adolescent students' daily interactions, including those with friends, family, classmates, at the college, with lecturers and student support staff. These interactions are part of the student's closer networks, or their microsystems. In understanding the proximal process relevant to my study, the quality of the proximal process between adolescent students and the SSO could increase.

1.6.2 Person

The person aspect in my study is two-fold. On the one hand, I focused on the SSS and on the other hand the adolescent student. After explaining the process in the previous section, my person aspect will be focused on the characteristics of the students that the SSS are serving. Knowing the person will help the SSS to implement their process more effectively. In his later version of the Bioecological model Bronfenbrenner devoted more attention to the personal characteristics that individuals bring with them into any social situation (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). He divided these characteristics into three types, which he termed *demand*, *resource*, and *force* characteristics.

The demand characteristics refer to first impressions people make based on factors such as age, gender, skin colour and physical appearance, which affect how you are treated in initial interactions based on expectations. The second and third characteristics are relevant to my study. Resource characteristics are not immediately apparent, but can be influenced by demand characteristics. This relate to mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, skills and intelligence, as well as access to social and emotional resources such as food, good parenting, housing, transport and educational opportunities.

In the context of my study, many students did not have proper resources. According to Papier (2009, p. 5), the student related factors leading to a low throughput rate in TVET Colleges include student expectations about the courses not being met – for instance: expectations

about more practical work and less theory; inadequate academic preparedness with regard to mathematical and language skills; school learners with learning problems recruited into NC(V) programmes; socio-economic conditions of students viz. financial difficulties, transport, living conditions, nutrition; self-management skills and self-discipline” (Papier, 2009 p.5).

These are all person characteristics that SSS has to be aware of and has to consider in order to effectively support the students. Finally, force characteristics have to do with differences of temperament, motivation and persistence. According to Bronfenbrenner (1998), two children may have equal resource characteristics, but their developmental trajectories will be quite different if one is motivated to succeed and persists in tasks and the other is not motivated and does not persist (Tudge et al., 2009). Understanding where students come from and what motivates them to succeed is part of the SSO’s role with working with these persons within this proximal process.

1.6.3 Context

The context of the PPCT model is the most well-known aspect of Bronfenbrenner’s theory. It can be described by using his first theory as a reference, where Bronfenbrenner proposed that the developing child is surrounded by layers of relationships like a set of nested Russian dolls (1979, p. 3). These nested structures include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The microsystem and mesosystem are closely linked to the process factors and the interaction between the two systems. The chronosystem is relevant in the next section referring to the time aspect of the PPCT model. In this study, the context is more closely related to the systems that are not directly involved with the student, including the SSS and their experience of being in their role at the TVET College (exosystem) and the

impact of the DHET (macrosystem) on the TVET Colleges. This is the central contextual aspect in my study. See 3.4.1 for a description of the context for this study.

1.6.4 Time

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) write about time as constituting micro-time (what is occurring during the course of some specific activity or interaction), meso-time (the extent to which activities and interactions occur with some consistency in the developing person’s environment), and macrotime (the chronosystem, to use the term that Bronfenbrenner had earlier used). The latter term refers to the fact that developmental processes are likely to vary according to the specific historical events that are occurring as the developing individuals are at one age or another (Tudge et al., 2009). In Table 1.1 I illustrate the impact of time on my study relating to the students and SSS.

Table 1.1 Different time aspects relevant to my study

Micro time	SSS interaction with students and other college staff
Meso time	Developing adolescent students and the proximal processes relevant to them, including with SSS
Macro time	Adolescent students and TVET Colleges, SSS and TVET Colleges, TVET Colleges and DHET and the political past of the TVET sector

To summarise the PPCT model relevant to my study, the process that is given particular emphasis is the proximal process of SSS and the TVET College and how it affects the fulfilment of their role. The person aspect refers specifically to the students and how knowing their characteristics can help the SSS to effectively support the student, where the context is about placing emphasis on the TVET College context and its effect on the SSS to effectively fulfil their role, as well as the influence of the DHET on the TVET College. Finally, the time

aspect is related to the current interaction between adolescent students, SSS and the TVET College with some reference later in the study to the political past of the TVET Colleges.

In asking the research question about what the SSS role is within the TVET College and how they can specifically address the needs of adolescent NC(V) students, it is necessary to understand that this is not an isolated scenario, but that it is embedded in many interrelated factors. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand that it is not just the context that influences the persons involved, but that the person also influences his/her context:

An ecological perspective stresses the interrelatedness of the person and the context, suggesting that not only do social contexts, both immediate and distal, influence human development but also that humans play an active role in shaping their social worlds (Perry-Jenkins, Newkirk, & Ghunney (2013).

1.7. THE RESEARCH PROCESS:

1.7.1 Research Methodology

According to Silverman (2006), research methodology refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc. in planning and executing a research study. Thus, your methodology defines how you will go about studying any phenomenon. It begins with knowing what you, as the researcher, want to find out. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), knowing what you want to find out leads inevitably to the question of how you will get that information. A comprehensive description of the research process was discussed in Chapter three. This serves as a summary of the process.

The research questions that I focused on are related to the student support officers' perceptions of their role as supporters within this college context, with particular focus on the adolescent student as well as the reality of fulfilling this role, the hindrances and their

recommendations for the role. I designed a generic qualitative research study and used semi-structured individual interviews to generate data. According to Merriam (1998), a generic qualitative research design “simply seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p.11). The methods used for analyzing the data were coding and thematic analysis. I made use of thematic networks to organise my data.

1.7.2 Research Design

My research design includes the following: a research paradigm, purpose of study, the context of study and techniques used. These four principles are suggested by Durrheim (2006) to achieve design coherence. I have already referred to my purpose and motivation in section 1.2 above. In the following sections, I will first discuss the paradigm of this study and then briefly describe the context, including selecting the participants, as well as the techniques or methods used in order to achieve design coherence.

1.7.2.1 Paradigm

Constructivist and interpretivism informed my study. A paradigm usually includes the ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects of the study. Constructivism and interpretivism are two terms used by scholars to explain the philosophical foundation for qualitative research. Constructivism tends to refer to a philosophical stance (ontological and epistemological assumptions) while interpretivism (or interpretivist tradition) denotes a research paradigm that places emphasis on “understanding” embedded in all human actions (Schwandt, 2001). Constructivism is viewed as an underlying worldview that supports the interpretivist research paradigm (Hoare, 2011). The study will take an explorative and descriptive stance. I will use the term “constructivism” throughout this paper.

Constructivist assumes a relativist ontology (suggesting there are multiple realities), a subjective epistemology (knower and correspondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.24). This is appropriate for the study, as it allows me to use a paradigm that can make clear human perceptions through using descriptions and creating meaning with my research participants. I am a curious observer wishing to understand and construct meaning.

1.7.2.2 Context of study and selecting the participants

The context of my study is at a TVET College in the Western Cape province. The college has five campuses and one head office, making it six campuses in total. Students at the college range from ages 16 and older. Most of the younger students attending the NC(V) courses received bursaries. The SSS's title at this college was Student Support Officers (SSO's). They were the respondents in this study. There was an SSO placed at each of the five campuses. Most of these SSO's was employed recently in this role. I conducted an interview with each of the five SSO's as well as three other staff members that worked closely with the SSO's, placed at Head Office.

1.7.2.3 Research Methods

According to Silverman (2006), the *method* used during a qualitative study is the specific research technique used. This is more specific than the methodology. The methods chosen should cohere between the research design and the questions of the study. The methods include sampling techniques that are purposeful. For my study I chose a sample of SSO staff willing to partake in the study. I also interviewed three auxiliary staff members who work closely with the SSO's. The three respondents in the roles different to the SSO's are based at the college's head office. They do not work as closely with the students. They are in a coordinating role.

I designed semi-structured interviews to gather my data. The semi-structured interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories (Marshall &, Rossman, 2006). I had a few open-ended unstructured questions for my interviews, but treated it more like a conversation, with a genuine interest to know what the student support personnel think and experience. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), during semi-structured interviews, the researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses.

During the interpretation of my data, I transcribed my interviews and continued to thoroughly read my data in order to identify codes. I then used these codes to construct thematic networks that helped me organize the data. Subsequently, I grouped sets of codes together into themes that assisted me in answering the research questions.

1.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter served to give a broad overview of my study. My focus was on understanding the role of the staff responsible for SSS at this TVET College. These staff members are referred to as SSO's. I also focused on the adolescent students. This chapter explained the need for my study, the research questions asked, the theoretical framework used as well as my research methods. Each of the aspects that I touched on in this chapter will be discussed in more depth in the course of this research report. In chapter two I present the literature review; this explores what research has been done that is related to my topic. Chapter three I devote to explain my process of inquiry. Chapter four reveals my findings while chapter five is my discussion chapter. SSS are central to the success of students at TVET Colleges and this study thus aimed to put the SSS into perspective to have a better understanding of the realities within the changing TVET Colleges climate.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to understand what the role of being a SSO means within this TVET College context. As mentioned before, TVET Colleges in South Africa have undergone many changes. One that was of particular interest to me was a new curriculum that was implemented for students to complete a qualification similar to Grade 10 to 12 in 2007. At this age (generally between 16 and 19), the students would still be in their adolescent developmental phase. This would mean a new curriculum as well as a new cohort of students in the TVET Colleges since 2007. This made me wonder about the perceptions of the staff responsible for providing support to these students. I gathered my data from one TVET College in the Western Cape. This led me to the following research questions:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of SSO's in general at this TVET College?
2. What are the realities for SSO's working with the adolescent student at this TVET College?
3. What is hindering and also what is helping the SSO's from fulfilling the role?
4. What are their recommendations from within the roles and responsibilities of a SSO, to successfully support students?

While considering how I could begin answering these questions, I first had to understand more about certain aspects of the research questions. The purpose of this literature review

chapter is to describe what research has been done about my topic, with the aim to locate the knowledge gap that I am focusing on, as well as to find out where my research fits in. This means that the existing knowledge is used to further the understanding of my particular study. It expands the basis from which meaning of the interpretation of my data can be made. According to Henning, et al. (2004), the literature review is used first and foremost in the contextualisation of a study to argue a case and identify a niche to be occupied by the research. In this chapter, then, I will begin by analysing certain concepts relevant to my study: adolescence, student support and role description. This will be followed by my research into what it entails to be a student at an TVET College, particularly an adolescent student following the NC(V) courses, then I will delve deeper into the factors relevant to the TVET Colleges with particular referral to the historical, curriculum, institution and student related factors that are relevant. Lastly, I will refer to the development of the role of student support.

2.2 ADOLESCENCE, STUDENT SUPPORT AND ROLE DESCRIPTION DEFINED

These three concepts are all relevant to the understanding of this study. The definitions that follow describe the concepts as I understand it and as it is relevant to this study. The study focused on the adolescent student. I therefore wanted to explain the age group specifically referred to in the study. The second concept is student support. Various definitions of student support exist and I needed to explain what kind of support I referred to in this study. Lastly, I aimed to understand the role of the SSO's at the college. Understanding the concept of a role description meant understanding their perceptions of their roles better.

2.2.1 Adolescence

Adolescence is viewed as the developmental phase between childhood and adulthood characterised by major physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes and takes place between

the ages of 13 and 18 years (Carr, 2006). According to the Status Report on Adolescents and Young People in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hervish & Clifton, 2012), adolescence is a time full of physical, psychological, emotional and economic changes as they leave childhood and enter adulthood. Regardless of the timing of puberty, it can be a difficult time in which young adolescents feel anxious, self-conscious, and awkward (Vernon, 2009).

As can be seen from this literature, adolescence is characterised as a time of change and uncertainty. This necessitates the need for various kinds of support, including psychologically, emotionally, financially and academically. My own experience as a teacher in a High School confirms this. Students of this age need guidance and support on many levels. It is a time where learners begin to form their identities and where they start questioning what the world has to offer. Adolescence marks the onset of complex thinking that includes in-depth questioning. Parents and other adults need to expect searching and uncertainty when interacting with adolescents. Adolescents are taking steps toward independence, yet they are not independent (Perkins, 2007). The need for support from adults who understand this developmental phase is thus imperative.

2.2.2 Student Support

Most Universities and colleges have definitions and conceptual frameworks of support in general and support to students in particular. I was looking for a conceptual framework that would be relevant to my study in terms of the kind of support that is offered. The conceptual framework used by UNISA (TASK TEAM 4: Student Support, Definition of Student Support STLSC 10 May 2010) and implemented in 2010 seemed like a comprehensive description of the kind of support that could ideally be available to students. In this table three types of support are described and as I gathered from my interactions with SSO's so far, affective support might be a relevant description of the kind of support available at this TVET College.

Table 2.1 Three types of student support

Academic (cognitive support)	Affective (also includes social elements)	Administrative (non-academic) support (includes technical support)
<p>This kind of support is wide-ranging and includes “content”-related and “non-content” related student support with the aim of enhancing the cognitive dimension of the learning experience. Academic support is (and should be) integrated into the course design of the learning materials and resources</p>	<p>This kind of student support focus on the impact students’ life-worlds (environmental, inter and intra-personal) have on student success and retention. Though affective support should be an integral part of all student support offered by any stakeholder, affective student support often requires specialised interventions by trained staff. Affective student support provides pastoral care and guidance to students and is based on three distinct phases – prior to registration, after registration and post-graduation (as suggested in the Conceptual Model for student support approved by Senate at UNISA, 2 June 2010). Affective support encompasses holistically the whole student during the whole study experience.</p>	<p>Non-academic factors often outweigh academic factors in their impact on student success and retention. Often these factors are outside the loci of control of students and they depend on the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional systems, procedures and processes.</p>

(Prinsloo, 2010, pp. 13-14)

According to Barnett (2010), whose thesis focuses on adult students returning to academic study, colleges are not prepared for their needs. The same can be said about the adolescent students and their needs, who are attending the TVET Colleges. They are a new cohort with different support needs. According to Tannehill (2009), most services offered on college campuses were developed to serve the traditional student population. However, with a

continual increase in a diversity of students, it is necessary to identify their needs to ensure that programs and services exist for them.

In this study, with the focus on the SSS and them now working with the adolescent student, I was curious as to how they proceed in addressing the particular needs of adolescents. What is evident from reading about the support that students need is that each context is unique. Further research needs to be done on the specific needs of young adolescents entering TVET Colleges within the South African context, in order to identify their own specific needs with regards to support.

2.2.3 Role description

The TVET College is an organization within which the SSS's work. The SSS's are spread amongst the various college campuses. On each campus they work in a collaborative role with other college staff. Within this collaborative role, as a student support officer on campus working together with academic and administrative staff, the need for role clarity is important. In this study I hope to find out if the differentiation between roles within this college is clearly defined.

In this section I focused on the need for a clear role description within organizations. "Within organizational role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), roles within groups are considered to be a set of prescriptions that define the behaviours required of an individual member who occupies a certain position (Bray, 2002). Ideally, the process of defining each employee's role should proceed such that each employee is clear about his or her role. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and employees experience a lack of role clarity or, as it are commonly called, role ambiguity (Jex, 2011). According to Breugh and Colihan (1994), employees are often unclear about how to do their jobs, when certain tasks should be performed, and are unsure of the criteria by which their performance will be judged. This aspect of role

description within the college context will be further explored in chapter 4, when the roles of SSS's within the college context was analyzed and interpreted.

2.3 BEING AN ADOLESCENT AT A TVET COLLEGE

Adolescents have been attending TVET Colleges since 2007 with the roll-out of the new NCV curriculum. In the TVET Colleges in South Africa there were many changes. One of these was the influx of younger students into the TVET Colleges, which changed the profile of students attending TVET Colleges. Generally, this younger group of students are between the ages of 16 and 18, and they are essentially completing their Grade 10, 11 and 12 at the college. At present, as Lolwana (2010) indicates,

The public FET College [now TVET] sector did not only experience institutional mergers but also a curriculum engineering, resulting in institutions that look more like schools with young students pursuing a set curriculum [the NC(V)] pegged at basic school levels (grades 10-12) and on a full-time basis (p.7).

Before 2007, the college typically catered for post-matric students, older than 18 who followed the NATED (N1-6) programmes (as discussed in section 2.4.3). Arguable, the needs of younger adolescents would be different from the traditional students who entered post-school education after turning 18.

The combined implication of the developmental phase of the younger students at TVET Colleges, as well as the implementation of the new NC(V) curriculum, is that there are certain changes for lecturers at TVET Colleges. They are now faced with teaching a younger cohort of students, without necessarily being trained for it. A further result of this is that the new cohort of college students is new to the South African education landscape. The students between the ages of 16 and 18 are a unique group, since they are not Basic Education learners anymore and they are not Higher Education learners either, it seems as though they fall

between the cracks in terms of being the age of a High School learner studying at a college originally designed for post-matric students.

What I discovered during my literature review was that adolescents under 18 are generally still in High School in a familiar environment, whereas most college students are older than 18. The implication for my study is that I found no literature pointing to youth in late adolescence, between 16 and 18 being in an unfamiliar college or tertiary education environment in South Africa. In most other countries the learners complete a qualification similar to Grade 12 at the age of 18 and then they enter tertiary education after they turned 18. According to Eurostat Education Statistics (2011) the age for entering tertiary education stayed relatively stable from 2000 until 2011, with the average age being nearly 19 years old.

My referrals to college students thus would point to learners older than 18. I argue here, in the light of my background of teaching in a High School for Grade 10 to 12 learners, that this age is a time of large-scale changes and challenges. According to Zarrett and Eccles (2006) the transition into college and persistence to stay there can be challenging and stressful, since the students discover new-found independence and have to practice self-governance and individuation from parents. The need for support in a successful transition to college life is imperative to the educational success of these students.

As I mentioned in section 2.2.1, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory is relevant to this study because it combines the adolescent developmental phase with the context in which they exist. In this study the student's age and the transition to the TVET College environment is the context within which SSS is compulsory, as argued in section 1.2. A developmental systems theory (DST) that is inspired by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is relevant to this study, since it links to my theoretical framework. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005) this theory sees development in a person as a process of

change. This change is not only in the individual, but also in the different layers of the environment in which the person exists.

After consulting literature about what the development of adolescents entail and the reading about them as students in a college environment, I focused on the factors that contribute to the students not passing in the TVET College environment. The adolescent students are coming from a structured school environment with rules and discipline. The younger students that enter college are reportedly developmentally immature and then released into the college environment where they have to cope with certain factors that I will elaborate more on in the next section. These factors include historical, student, institution and curriculum related issues that seem to be the reason for students not being successful in the NC(V) programmes.

2.4 FACTORS RELATING TO CHALLENGES IN TVET COLLEGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In trying to find information and statistics on the various factors relating to the challenges that exist within TVET Colleges, I could, at first, only find brief referrals to what seems to be happening in TVET Colleges. This perception changed after discovering the latest publication of Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa (DHET 2014). A clearer picture of the TVET college landscape is thus now available. According to this document the average pass rate for the NC(V) courses was 39% for 2012, a decline from 42% in 2011. This gave a picture of the possibility of factors that could be influencing the pass rate. After reading various documents, I decided to focus on the factors that I discussed in the next section. Below is a visual representation of the factors that will be discussed (Figure 2.1).

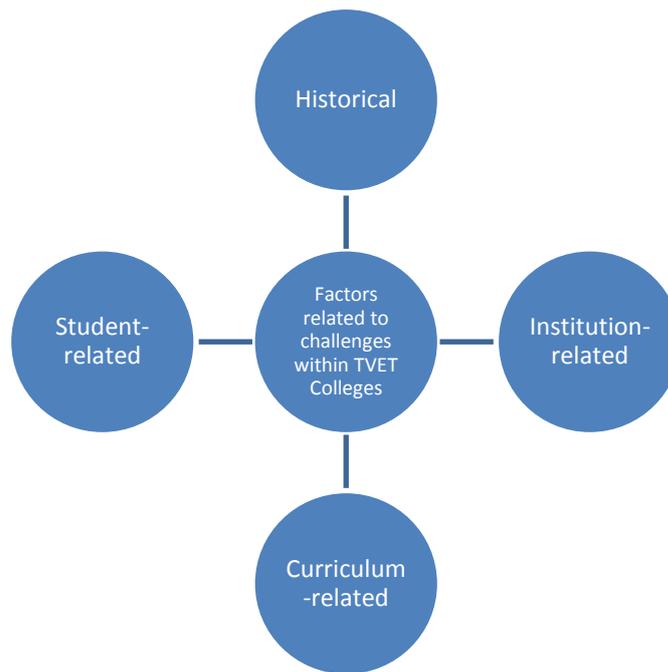


Figure 2.1 Factors relating to challenges within TVET Colleges

2.4.1 Historical factors

The TVET Colleges have a rich history. It was a racially segregated sector and there are many negative connotations linked to this sector. This made it necessary to change the reputation of the colleges and shift focus to what role the TVET Colleges have to fulfil within the education sector.

Since 1994, there have been many changes in the education sector. When it became evident that there is a need for a more skilled work force and that many learners leave school without plans for the future, FET Colleges became the new focus of the Department of Education (Gewer, 2010).

The implication is that the colleges have still not found their niche within the education landscape, as is evident from my opening segment in Section 1.2. The throughput rate is low because the TVET Colleges seems to be still finding their feet since the focus has shifted to training more skilled workers. The most concrete way to measure this would be to look at the throughput-rate of students.

In an effort to try and find the reasons for this low throughput rate of the students and how support staff plays a role in this, I found a scholarly book published by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) in 2003 on support in TVET Colleges available. It seems as though the term student support was not the original name and that Student services was used. According to Mandew (2003), student services leadership is facing a somewhat daunting challenge as it struggles to find its voice, provide appropriate leadership, and articulate a compelling vision for this division in an environment of change and uncertainty. I wondered if this was still the case eleven years later. It would seem that supporting students within colleges are a field with many challenges.

Mandew (2003) writes that this environment often appears inimical to the very object and subjects of the education enterprise, namely the students and their well-being. He uses the example that when institutions are forced to tighten their financial belts and implement various measures such as right-sizing and other forms of restructuring, it is often the student services sector that has to shout the loudest to be acknowledged when resources are channelled to what is seen as core business (academics). It seems then that when there are other challenges within the colleges, the support to the students is the first service to be restricted, whereas if, for example, the throughout rate is low, the student support staff would be the first people to be blamed.

There are also more recent reports and research about the students in TVET Colleges in South Africa, especially reports by the Further Education and Training Institute (FETI) at the University of Western Cape. I found some more information in round table discussion documents (Report of the further education and training round table of 9 April 2010), TVET conferences (SACPO Conference, 2009), Development Bank of Southern Africa Reports (Gewe, 2010; Mayer et al. 2011) and Education policy documents for example the DHET

Annual report of 2011. Parts of my literature review are therefore based on research findings from previous studies (as is commonplace for a study such as mine) and some quotes are used from these resources, especially where students and staff at TVET Colleges cite the reasons for the low throughput rate and challenges facing the TVET Colleges.

The 2009 CHET publication described the post-school education and work environment as being characterised by the following: (1) a large annual outflow of students from schooling without meaningful further educational opportunities; (2) post school institutional architecture that limits further educational opportunities for young people; (3) lack of integrated and systematic data about the ‘excluded youth’; and (4) a recapitalised FET Colleges sector that requires capacity building (Perold, Cloete & Papier, 2012, p.1). These are all adding to the challenges that exist within TVET Colleges that is related to the past.

In light of the above statement, it is clear that there are many factors that contribute to young people struggling to build a future after school. The TVET College system is situated in a crucial position to answer the post-school training needs of the country. With the availability of bursaries for students who want to study at TVET Colleges, opportunities are created.

According to the ETDP SETA Public Further Education and Training Sector Skills Plan 2013/14 update, the TVET Colleges are regarded as weak institutions because they are struggling to fulfil their mandates. One of their biggest challenges is to improve throughput rates. While it is not possible to make a direct comparison between the TVET College and schooling sectors – since the Department of Education publishes examination results for matriculants and not for all students enrolled in grades 10 to 12 (DoE, 2010) – it is nevertheless instructive to compare the throughput rate of students enrolled for the NC(V) in 2012 (the latest results available) with that of students enrolled for Grade 12. Such a comparison reveals that while the throughput rate of TVET College students enrolled for

NC(V) programmes in 2012 was 39%, the throughput rate of those enrolled in grade 12 in schools was 58%. For every 100 students who enrolled for NC(V) programmes, a massive 60 students failed or dropped out (Cosser et al. 2011, p. 36).

Why is this the case? In the reports that I have read, there is no single explanation for this, but there are multiple reasons on different levels within the colleges. Joy Papier's study (2009), where she investigated the reasons for the low throughout rate of NC(V) students at TVET Colleges in the Western Cape, identified three interrelated factors that contribute to the problem. They were: curriculum-, learner-, and college-related factors. I referred to Institution related factors instead of College-related factors in my study. Learners and college respondents (lecturers, managers and student support staff) agreed on the following factors (see Figure 2.1), broadly categorized, as contributing to poor performance and attrition (Papier, 2009).

2.4.2 Institution-related factors

The college-related factors that add to the reasons that there is a low throughput rate in the TVET Colleges in the order that I will discuss them is the following: The merging of colleges, the change to Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the lecturers not being prepared for the new curriculum, and lastly, the infrastructure of the colleges that is not sufficient. As I mentioned in my introduction to this section, the TVET Colleges is going through a transition currently. Many policies and changes took place, including the merging of all public colleges into 50 multi-site campuses.

As can be expected with all these changes, it will impact on the colleges' ability to answer the demands of the TVET sector:

The merger of 152 colleges throughout South Africa started in 1998 in the Western Cape and was finalised there on September 1, 2002. Thirty-eight technical college sites merged into six

institutions that is spread over 50 campuses countrywide."It is not a process to reduce the system, but to increase efficiency," says Keith Loynes, Chief Planner of Technical Colleges at the Department of Education. "It is a two-part process to transform technical colleges into further education and training (FET) institutions. It is much more than just merging, which is a formality. It is transformation, which is more demanding. Transformation involves the design of new training programmes on an ongoing basis, which will mean that the colleges will be responsive, not supply-driven institutions and will be placed at an internationally competitive level (*The Weekend Argus*: 25 January 2003).

This statement in 2003 was true in that transformation did take place. I feel that some aspects of the transformation were positive, like more bursaries being made available, but positive change do not happen overnight. The negative side of this transformation seems to be the throughput rates that remain low, and the college curriculum that is still not answering the skills needs. The rationale for the merging of TVET Colleges was based on political, economic and educational agendas with a view to transforming the sector by addressing past disparities and widening access to these institutions by providing relevant education to all learners (Pillay, 2009, p. 14)

The decision to create the Department of Higher Education and Training, effectively removed the tension between training – falling under the Department of Labour – and education falling under the Department of Education. The creation of DHET in 2009 has provided the basis for greater coherence in the post-school education environment, and potentially provides a clearer institutional home for TVET Colleges. While the TVET Colleges have a clearer place as to where they fit into the Education landscape, there are many other factors within the colleges that affect the learner throughput rate.

In Papier's (2009) research study there was a litany of student complaints about lecturers not giving students sufficient support, and asking for 'a better teacher who can explain', 'teachers

that teach better’, ‘more experienced lecturers’, and maintaining that ‘some lecturers do not teach the way we want them to’, ‘teachers come and go’, and so on. A student said that ‘I wanted the lecturer to understand students the load that he has he must manage and he must not take his stress and give it to students’ (Papier, 2009, p.29). There was also general agreement among students that lecturers had been under severe stress from all the policy change in their sector, and that they needed motivation and incentives in the form of better salaries, working conditions and training (Papier, 2009 p.35).

A further complication is that many colleges, especially in the rural areas do not have the infrastructure such as recreational facilities, comfortable spaces for after-hours study and computer internet access that is needed for the demand of students coming into their system:

The institutional capacity of the FET system is simply inadequate to address the need for such education by young people and the demand for these skills in the labour market. Hence, both the scale and quality of vocational education create substantial bottlenecks to economic growth and labour absorption (Mayer, 2011, p.26).

These are all factors mentioned in reports that reviewed the low throughput rate in the colleges as well as why the NC(V) programmes have not been as successful.

2.4.3 Curriculum-related factors

In this section I will discuss the curriculum factors that could be adding to the low throughput rate. I will refer specifically to the new NC(V) curriculum that was implemented in 2007. This curriculum impacts my study directly, since the cohort of students enrolled for these courses are the adolescents which my study is focused on. A more in-depth description follows.

As can be expected, the changes within the TVET sector have not solved problems overnight, especially since this sector has been neglected for so long. One of the policies that changed

was the curriculum currently presented at the college. The old NATED curriculum (N1-6) courses were replaced in 2007 with the NC(V) curriculum. The NC(V) was written for the adolescent students that I already referred to. The change was sudden and final, as can be sensed from this statement taken from the policy that implemented NC(V):

This policy replaces all the previous NATED Report 190 (2000/03) specified in Report 191 (2001/08). FET College candidates registering for level 2 for first time must register for the instructional programmes and subjects appearing in this policy document, National Certificate (Vocational) Programmes for levels 2 – 4 in the Further Education and Training College. (DoE, 2007)

When I read this I could not help but wonder what happened to the students who wanted to enrol for the NATED programmes in that year. The NC(V) curriculum was developed for a much younger cohort and includes basic school subjects like Life Orientation, Mathematical Literacy and a Home Language. The cohort who would have enrolled for NATED would already have completed Grade 12. This is one of the aspects that made the implementation of the NC(V) unpopular. As can be seen from the following quote, NC(V) was implemented without considering the whole impact:

The NC(V) curriculum has come in for its fair share of critique, especially for its hasty implementation in spite of inter alia materials, equipment, infrastructure and teaching staff not being everywhere in place in 2007 (Papier, 2009, p. 43).

Other concerns include the high pass criteria for the NC(V) programmes, the Curriculum not being aligned with the students' abilities and the curriculum not being aligned with industry needs, as can be seen from the following statements taken from various documents and reports. NC(V) was also written to answer the Grade 10-12 education needs, and therefore it consists of three fundamental subjects (A language, Mathematics or Mathematics literacy and

Life Orientation) and then four vocationally specific subjects. The structure of the courses, as well as the pass criteria, are set out in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Promotion criteria for NC(V)

Subject		Percentage
Fundamental Subjects	Official Language	40%
	Mathematics OR Mathematics Literacy	30%
	Life Orientation	40%
Vocational Subjects (Three specialization/compulsory subjects and one additional subject from the optional subjects)		Minimum 70% in all FOUR vocational subjects

Adapted from Department of Education policy document for NC(V) implementation, (2007, p.12)

Lecturers regarded the new NC(V) curricula as more academically challenging than the previous NATED curricula, resulting in the need for more training in teaching and classroom management. They wanted help in interpreting the curriculum documents, but also in arriving at a common understanding of what was required (McBride, et.al, 2009).

The NC(V) Curriculum consists of seven subjects. The criteria to pass are higher, and with this added pressure it is no wonder that the students do not pass. I cannot help but feel that the students were never properly considered during the planning phase.

In the research done by Papier (2009) at the TVET Colleges in the Western Cape, respondents indicated the following: criteria for promotion and certification – promotion

concessions set by the National Department of Education were viewed by college staff as compounding the academic difficulties of learners at the next level, while pass requirements and certification criteria were seen as setting the bar too high, certainly higher than that of high schools (Papier, 2009, p. 40).

With the negative reaction to the NC(V) Curriculum and the low student throughput rate, it was decided to reinstate the NATED programs. Government managed to reverse the decision to do away with the NATED courses offered at our TVET Colleges (Nzimande, 2012). The FET Summit of 2010 recommended that the NC(V) qualifications be reviewed. A Task Team has now concluded the review and accordingly, the Department of Education and Umalusi, will revise the qualification. During the time of my interviews and the research for this study the original NC(V) courses were offered, even though referrals were made to the reviewing of the NC(V) curriculum in 2013 by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The FET Act (DoE, 1998) aims at enabling students to acquire knowledge, practical skills and applied vocational and occupational competence. These aims cannot be achieved if students are experiencing difficulty in handling the subject matter and students are battling to cope, thus reducing the overall student academic performance (Mahlo & Taole, 2009). This section referred to the curriculum aspects impacting the throughput rates at the TVET Colleges. Many of the students are first generation students that have no referral to further studies. With a curriculum not tailored to their unique challenges, it is no wonder that they struggle to cope. I am positive that the evidence from this study, as well as more research into the support needs of these students, will influence this in future.

2.4.4 Student-related factors

The focus of this study is specifically on the adolescent students aged between 16 and 18 that enrolled for the NC(V) Curriculum. These students have unique needs due to their

developmental phase, as mentioned in Section 2.2.1. According to the report by Papier (2009, p. 26) and as depicted in the figure, the following was mentioned by the students (all ages) as challenging within the college environment.



Figure 2.2 Learner difficulties experienced

As can be seen from the above figure, the three biggest factors were: adapting to the college environment and programmes (curriculum); long hours; and an excessive work load. It seems that students entering the college environment are not properly prepared for post-school education, adding to their struggle to adapt to the college environment. Many of the NC(V) students since 2007 entered the colleges after they completed Grade 9. They are young and still expect the college to be like school. As I mentioned in Section 2.4.3, the excessive workload and long hours are linked to the curriculum that was not implemented with the students in mind.

It also seems that many students have faulty perceptions about the TVET College. College respondents in particular agreed that the NC(V) programmes were high-quality curricula aimed at a particular niche market, but that students who had been recruited especially in 2007 had not been fitting students for these programmes. Marketing had targeted post-Grade 9 school leavers, thus attracting poorly performing school learners who saw college as an 'easier' option, and were woefully under-prepared for the demands of the new curricula, especially with regard to academic reading and writing skills, mathematical and language abilities (Papier, 2009, p.7).

It appears that the institution-, curriculum-, and student-related factors are intertwined. The colleges are not prepared for a new curriculum and a new cohort of students. The curriculum was written and implemented without having the infrastructure in place in the colleges and without considering the students and the students are not prepared for the college environment or the demands of the curriculum.

2.5. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT SUPPORT

In the literature there are different terms used for SSS. In my study the term SSO's are used for this role. Bodibe (1998) refers to Student services practitioners. In the title of his book, Mandew (2003) uses the term Student Services only, while in the book he refers to Student Services Officers and Student Services Officials. Regardless of the terms used, Bodibe (1998) states that Student [services] practitioners worldwide are always caught in a spiral of change, and adapt by negotiating successful pacts with adversity. They also survive by developing skills to manage paradoxical environments. Mandew (2003) states that the term 'student services' designating a specific integrated group of departments and units providing support and welfare services and programmes for students in higher education institutions, is

relatively new, though for all intents and purposes been in existence since the first universities were formally established.

The levels of these support services have evolved over time as a result of prevailing circumstances. According to Mandew (2003), there are three broad models of student services, namely the *in loco parentis* model, the German model and the hybrid model. The *in loco parentis* model literally means supporting a student in the place of the parents. This is the oldest model of Student services. It has its roots in the English residential system. Mandew (2003) further states that in terms of this system the entire staff – academic and administrative support – is responsible for the welfare and support of the students. The system can also be described as holistic, in that all staff focused on the intellectual, social, moral and spiritual development of the students.

The German model was established at the University of Berlin. The focus of universities moved to intellectualism resulting in the support services becoming the responsibility of non-academic specialists while the academics could focus exclusively on their disciplines (Allen & Garb, 1993). From the perspective of Student services, the German intellectualist system can also be described as dis-integrative in that Student services were not integrated into the three-pronged primary functions of teaching, research and service (Mandew, 2003).

The last model, namely the hybrid model, is currently dominant in Higher Education institutions. This method essentially combines the *in loco parentis* and the intellectualist approaches. Literature attests to the deliberate attempts to involve academic and non-academic staff alike in the support, development and welfare of a diverse body of students, that is, a student population that comprise of men and women, heterosexual and homosexual, religious and non-religious and spanning all classes and races (Mandew, 2003). Mandew continues to state that the philosophy that guides this approach is based on the assumption

that intellectual development is also a function of emotional, spiritual and social growth. However, a shortcoming of this approach, for the South African context, is that it does not take sufficient cognisance of the country's socio-political history and its impact on the education system.

The description of the role of a SSO in different countries enables me to better understand where student support fits into the bigger picture. According to the Student Support Services Guidelines (2012) in Australia the student support officers work in a multi-disciplinary team focusing on providing group based and individual support, workforce capacity building, and the provision of specialised services. According to the Department of Public Instruction website of North Carolina in America the Student Support Services are described as providing direct services for all children and youth, to help manage barriers to learning. Direct services are provided by means such as education, counselling, consultation and individual assessment. In addition, student support services personnel provide in-service training, parent education, community collaboration and carry out student service program management. Student support services are a vital part of comprehensive school program success. It seems to me that SSS are seen as a role that is fulfilled in the schools of other countries not necessarily only in tertiary institutions.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this part of the research study, I summarized what I found in the literature about my research topic. I described the three main concepts relevant to the study, namely adolescents, student support and role description. I also touched on what it means to be a student at an TVET College, with specific reference to the South African context. There are various factors contributing to the low throughput rate, which is used as the concrete measurement of success at the TVET Colleges. I described various factors mentioned in the literature and specifically

referred to historical-, curriculum-, institution- and student-related factors. Next, I discussed the development of SSS. In the last section, I discussed what SSS as a job means in general. This was for the reader to understand where my literature review fits into the study and how all the reading that I have done linked to the title and research questions.

In this study I wanted to know what the SSO's at this particular TVET College deals with on a day-to-day basis, specifically with relation to the adolescent student. In the next chapter, I explain the process of inquiry that I followed in order to answer my research questions.

Chapter 3

Process of enquiry

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The overarching purpose and aim of this study was to understand student support available to adolescents at a TVET College in the Western Cape. The study offered an opportunity for SSO's at this college to voice their experiences of being in this role of SSO and to make recommendations towards fulfilling this role within the college context:

The main question to the study was: What are the student SSO's perceptions of being in a supporting role to the students enrolled for NATED and NCV programmes at this TVET College? The following sub-questions, put forward and highlighted in Chapter one, guided the investigation:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of SSO's at this TVET College?
2. What are the realities for SSO's working with the adolescent student at this TVET College?
3. What is hindering and also what is helping the SSO's from fulfilling the role?
4. What are their recommendations from within the roles and responsibilities of a SSO, to successfully support students?

This chapter focuses on the research procedures I used in order to answer these research questions. This involved using a specific research paradigm and research design, as well as research methodology. The various research methods are described with reference to the

context of my study and how I gained access, the selection of participants, the methods of data collection, how I managed my data, as well as the methods I employed in order to analyse the data. This is followed with an explanation of how I ensured trustworthiness throughout. Lastly, I explained the ethical considerations of this study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND APPROACH

A research paradigm is a broad framework that includes the purpose and process of a research study, as discussed in Chapter one, Section 1.6.2.1. Paradigms are systems of understanding which vary, depending on the scientific methods to which they subscribe. They are often viewed as a "system of interrelated practice and thinking" (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 2006, p. 6). Thus, a paradigm describes the nature of the researcher's enquiry taking into account certain ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. This study was guided by a constructivist paradigm, as described in section 1.6.2.1.

Before I continue to explain the paradigm I used, I needed to make it clear what kind of research I used, since the paradigm will be embedded within this form. In referring back to my research questions, I knew now that I was not interested in anything related to quantity. I did not want answers in numbers. I wanted to understand the lived experiences of the participants within a particular context. The use of a basic generic qualitative research study made sense for this purpose, as I mentioned in section 1.7.1.

According to Merriam (2009, pp. 14-17), qualitative research can best be defined by its four main characteristics. The four main characteristics include: a focus on meaning and understanding on the way in which people make sense of their world; the researcher is regarded as the primary instrument of data collection and its analysis; the qualitative research process as inductive in nature; and it aims to provide a rich description of the research findings. This is the approach followed in this study. I wanted certain *who*, *what* and *how*

questions answered. I wanted to know: *who* is a SSO, *what* their role within their context is and *how* working with adolescent students affects this role. According to Henning et al. (2004, p 3), in a qualitative study we want to understand, and also explain in argument, by using evidence from data and from the literature, what the phenomena that we study is about. Qualitative research examines individuals, institutions, and phenomena within the context in which they occur (Salkind, 2012, p. 3). In my study I interviewed individuals within the context in which they work.

As mentioned in section 1.6.2.1, the paradigm that I worked from is constructivism. The goal of constructivism is to “gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 102). According to Riegler (2012), constructivism refers to the idea that the mental world – or the experienced reality – is actively constructed or “brought forward,” and that the observer plays a major role in any theory. How I asked my interview questions was affected by this. The participants’ own perceptions of their roles as student support officers (SSO’s) were interpreted by me, the researcher. In research, the researcher is often described as the research instrument. As the researcher, I would approach the world with a certain framework (theory and ontology), and ask a set of questions (epistemology) which I then analyse in a certain way (my methodology and analysis). A discussion of these aspects of the paradigm is discussed in the next few paragraphs.

Epistemology is, simply put, the theory of knowledge. The researcher thinks about how knowledge is constructed. I approached this study from the constructivism paradigm. As Gomm (2009, p. 114) states, constructivism refers to the questions about how we know what we know and how we can know what is true. In Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the question is asked: “what is the relationship between the researcher and the participant?” (p. 12). In the course of my research study, I saw myself as a curious observer open to the realities the research participants brought to the research relationship. We were in a relationship where we

shaped and influenced each other. In this particular study, we constructed the understanding of the phenomenon that I was interested in through a researcher/participant relationship. “This means we are shaped by our lived experiences and these will always be mirrored in the knowledge we generate as researchers and in the data generated by our participants” (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, p.105). In this study, the research participant brought to the relationship knowledge about their role within this TVET College as SSO’s, and I brought to the relationship certain questions about this role as well as my background of working with adolescents. The knowledge that was created was dependent on the questions that I asked and the replies of the participants.

Ontology refers to the worldviews and assumptions in which researchers operate in their search for new knowledge (Schwandt, 2007, p.190). In other words, it aims to answer the question: What is the nature of reality? From within a constructivist paradigm this means to me, that I believe that we construct knowledge in the process of interacting with people and the knowledge is built by how we live our experiences. According to Guba and Lincoln, (1994) this ontology assumes that reality as we know it is constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially. My assumption was that the perceptions of which I would hear in the interviews would be based on the personal beliefs, views and values of the participants.

Methodology is also about how we come to know, but it is much more practical in nature (Henning et al. 2004, p. 2). This is the process of research and the techniques used. Methodology is closely related to the epistemology. As Henning et al. (2004, p. 2) state, epistemology is the *philosophy* of how we come to know the world and methodology involves the *practice* of coming to know and how we study this practice., I will explain this

in more depth in section 3.3, where I go deeper into the research design and the methodology that guided this study.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of a research design is to ensure that the methods used lead to answering the research questions. In this study a generic qualitative research design was used as described in section 1.7.1. According to Durrheim (2006), in qualitative research, the design of the study is usually "more open, fluid and changeable", flexible and non-sequential (p. 35). Durrheim (2006) further describes it as "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research (p. 34)". Durrheim (2006, pp.37-39) furthermore identifies four principles which contribute towards design coherence and assist in answering the research questions. These include the purpose of the research (discussed in section 1.2), the context in which it takes place, (discussed in section 3.4.1), the research paradigm, (discussed in section 3.2), and the techniques used (described in the next section, 3.4).

3.4. RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are a group of tools and techniques used to answer research questions in a scientific manner (Salkind, 2012, p. 47). There is a difference between the "methods" and "methodology" of a research study. As Henning et al. (2004, p. 36) note, the term "method" denotes a way of doing something (one thing). Methodology refers to the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the "goodness of fit" to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose. The following aspects would be considered the research methods, as it was the way in which I completed my study practically. It includes how I gained access, who my participants were, how I gathered my data and finally what I did with the information to help me answer my research

questions. This is an iterative and not a linear process. The following diagram depicts the different aspects of the design. (Figure 3.3)

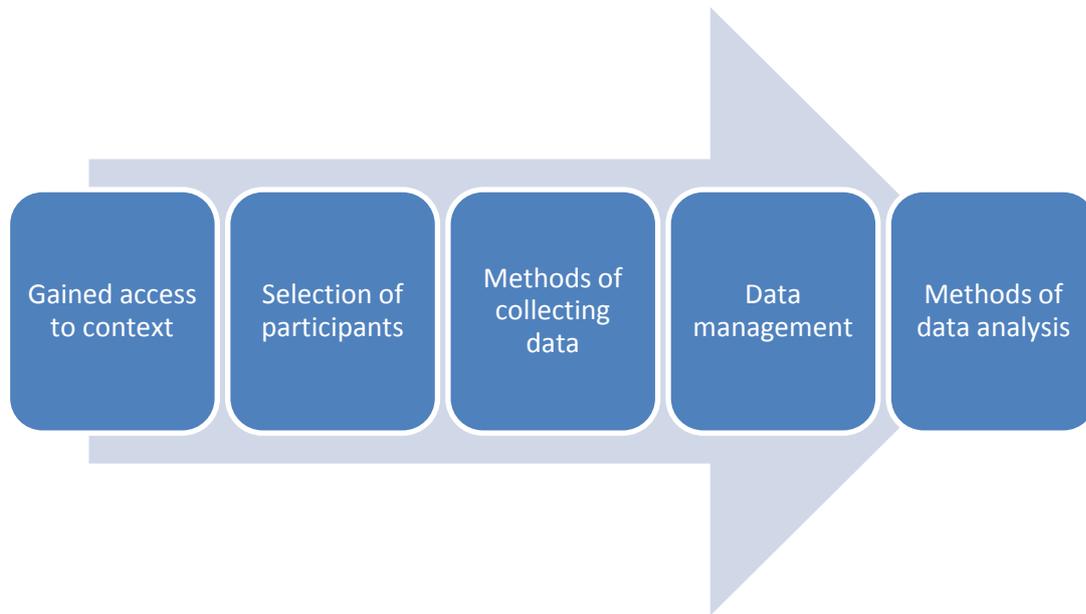


Figure 3.1 Research methods

3.4.1 Context of my study and process of gaining access

I decided on the context based on a referral from a student support manager at another TVET College in the Western Cape, I was given a telephone number. I contacted her and she agreed that I could do my research there. I also spoke to two of the SSO's on the phone before I started conducting my study. When I mentioned what my study was about, the SSO's almost sounded relieved to be able to talk to someone about their role. They also seemed excited about the prospect of a research study about them. I felt that this was a confirmation of the contribution that my study could make. Subsequently, I went about getting a letter of permission from the College principal/head (Appendix B)*. After permission was granted, I contacted the student support manager and ask if I could join one of their monthly SSO meetings.

*Appendixes refer to "FET" as well as previous title of thesis used while conducting interviews in 2013. This changed in October 2104

I used this opportunity to introduce myself. I spoke to SSO about my intended study, and also invited them to be part of my research study (Invitation to be part of the research study can be found on Appendix C). Having met them personally, all the SSO agreed to take part. After this, I set up a time and date for each individual interview.

Five of the interviews were conducted at the particular campuses during exam time when the SSO's could make time for me without it interfering with their work. Some of the campuses were further away, and logistically it would not have been possible to travel to them for the interviews and a focus group was out of the question. I thus had telephonic interviews with the three more remote participants. I contacted them beforehand to ask when a convenient time would be. I then phoned them at the agreed time, ensuring that I was at home in my study without any disturbances. In retrospect, I found the telephonic interviews more challenging, as I would have preferred to do the interviews in person. The advantage of this method is that I could broaden my study to include these participants.

This particular TVET College has six different campuses across the Western Cape (Five campuses spread over the Western Cape and one head office). They also have three satellite campuses. Since my study is about SSS, it made sense to me here to explain the context in terms of the demographics of students attending the college as well as factors relating to the SSO's. Most students attending the college at the various campuses are predominantly from lower socio-economic areas. Most students study with bursaries. The language of instruction is Afrikaans, with one particular campus seeming to become English-speaking. The students range from ages 16 and older. Most of the students aged 16-25 follow the NC(V) courses (20% of the total student population) and the older students follow the NATED programmes. What I understood from the interviews was that the context of every campus is unique in terms of procedures followed.

There are five SSO's that work in this role on their respective campuses. The sixth campus is the Head Office, here I interviewed people with different roles, but closely involved with the SSO on each campus. At head office there is skills related training. One of the interviewees is appointed on contract basis to oversee the support needed for specific skills training courses endorsed by various SETA's. This is a new position at the college. Her role is defined as the SSO for skills training, but she does not share the same responsibilities as the other five SSO's. She attends all the SSO meetings and helps out with assessments and group training where needed on the other campuses.

The other two respondents from Head Office have a coordinating role overseeing sport and assessments respectively. Each SSO was still responsible for the sport and assessments on their campuses. The sport coordinator organizes the big inter-campus events and the assessment coordinator interprets the assessments and makes recommendations regarding students. All the staff involved within the SSO department has a degree. Most of them are social workers. I explained the participants and their roles at the different campuses in the following diagram (Figure 3.2)

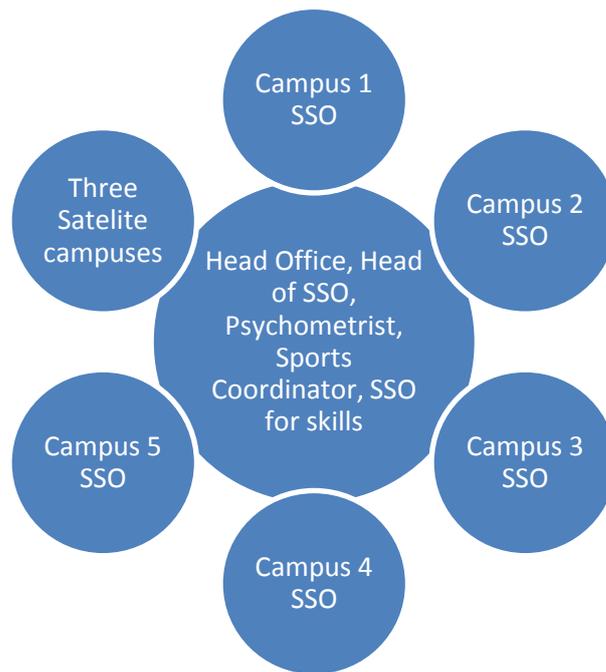


Figure 3.2 Roles of participants

3.4.2 Selection of participants

In qualitative research, the logic of selection is grounded in the value of information-rich cases and emergent, in-depth understanding not available through random sampling. From this perspective, purposeful selection is a strategy for accessing appropriate data that “fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced” (Patton, 2002, p. 242).

My participants were selected on the grounds of being appointed in a position of Student Support Officers (SSO’s) at a TVET College. Four of the participants have been at the college less than a year, and this had to be considered when I interpreted the data. I did not have the need to select participants for any other criteria, other than being employed at the college within this role. I added other role players to my interview list, that were not SSO’s as such, but that work closely with them and have an insider’s perspective of the role that the SSO’s fulfil. I also wanted my research questions answered by people close enough to understand the SSO’s role, without being in the role and thus bringing another perspective to

the answers. It could be seen as a way of verifying the data that was shared. I had eight interviews in total, five with SSO within their role at five different campuses, and three with the staff at the Head Office. Below is a display of the participants that were interviewed (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1: Demographic data of the participants

Campus	How long at campus	Qualifications	Student ratio	Role at College	Interview mode
Head Office	4 years	BTh Bachelors in theology, PDt Hons in youth development and a MTh Masters in theology, specialising in youth development	Across campuses	Sport Coordinator	Face-to-face
Head office	4 years	BA Hons in Psychology; Diploma in Education Management, MEd degree, Registered Psychometrist	Assessment of learners at all campuses	Psychometrist	Face-to-face
Campus 1	9 months	BA Social Sciences majoring in psychology and sociology, PGCSE, Hons in Educational Psychology, Registered Psychometrist	1:1000	Student Support Officer	Face-to-face
Campus 2	11 months	BA Social work degree	1:1500	Student Support Officer	Telephonic
Campus 3	4 years	BEd Psych degree	1:1500	Student Support Officer	Telephonic
Campus 4	5 years	BA Social Work degree	1:900	Student Support Officer	Face-to-face
Head Office	9 months	BA Social Work degree	1:200	Student Support Officer for Skills	Face-to-face

Campus 5	10 months	Bachelor of Community Development studies Degree (BCMDST)	1:500	Student Support Officer	Telepho nic
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3.4.3 Methods of data collection

In this section, I will describe my method of data collection. I made use of semi-structured interviews. Firstly, I will discuss interviews in general, and then refer to semi-structured interviews, both one-on-one and telephonically, since both modes were used. I will then discuss how and when I conducted the interviews followed by a short reflection of the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews as a research method. The method used to collect information had to be in line with the kind of study I was conducting, a qualitative study from a constructivist paradigm, as discussed in Section 3.2:

The decision to interview implies a value on personal language as data. Face-to-face interviewing may be appropriate where depth of meaning is important and the research is primarily focused on gaining insight and understanding (Gillham, 2000, page 11).

The gaining of insight and understanding of the role of an SSO within this context was the goal of my research and added to the choice of using semi-structured interviews. DeMarrais (2004) defines an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to the research study” (p. 55). According to Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2011, p. 529), most qualitative researchers make use of interviews for good reason, by using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people’s subjective experiences and attitudes.

According to Merriam (2009, p.88), interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them. After reading the different definitions of interviews, I felt that the choice of method were in line with the

objectives of the study. I therefore conducted individual semi-structured interviews in order to build this relationship and generate information. I made use of both face-to-face and telephonic interviews during my data collection.

The semi-structured individual interview approach refers to open-ended questions prepared prior to the interview and are aimed at accessing quality data. The use of a general interview guide [Appendix E] allows the interviewer the opportunity to ask all interviewees similar questions, while facilitating a meaningful conversation that can potentially benefit both interviewer and interviewee (Patton, 2002).

I have to note here that I used both face-to-face and telephonic interviews. Due to a distance factor I had telephonic interviews with three of the respondents as discussed in section 3.4.1. There is much debate about telephonic interviews as a mode of interviewing. It is a method that is used more often, even though there does not seem to be much of it used in qualitative research. While the use of the telephone has increased as a means of collecting research data in a range of areas, there are few examples of studies where telephonic interviews have been conducted to collect qualitative data (Glogowska et al. 2010). This type of interviews is mostly used for market related research, in which the data is mostly used quantitatively.

In order to know what kind of questions to add to my general interview guide (Appendix E) , I attended a meeting where all the SSO's were present, I was just a silent observer there to gain access, introduce myself and invite members at the meeting to be part of my research study. I then had one interview with each respondent. I used a "call recorder" for the telephonic interviews which I downloaded from "Play store" for Samsung, while the face-to-face interviews were recorded by the "voice recorder" that was already an application on the phone. This is further discussed in section 3.4.3. All respondents were informed and gave consent (Appendix D) to being recorded.

In evaluation of the method used, there are certain advantages and disadvantages to be noted. One of the disadvantages of this method could be the inexperience of the researcher. It was not that easy to conduct an interview. It seems logical when you read the literature about interviews, for example, not to ask any closed or leading questions, but when it came to practice, I found it challenging. I overcame this challenge by consciously reflecting on myself as an interviewer and striving to improve my interview methods with each interview. A second disadvantage could be that the researcher have preconceived ideas of what they will discover, and focus their questions on that. It could mean that even though the interview guide is open to adapt to the respondent, some important new information could be missed.

As Newton (2010) stated:

Threats to the validity of this kind of interview include the use of leading questions or the researcher's preconceived ideas influencing what is and is not worth discussing. Considering the 'live' nature of face-to-face interviewing and the complexity of language in use it is not easy to avoid all these and other challenges.

One of the ways to counter the disadvantages is to constantly reflect on the interview process. It was beneficial to transcribe the interviews immediately in order to reflect on the process.

The advantages of this method are that the information gained is in cooperation with the respondents. Gomm (2004) describes the cooperative nature of the interview as a fact-producing interaction. According to Newton (2010), 'facts' are always socially produced and the influence of a responsibly engaged researcher helps interviewees describe perceptions they would otherwise think irrelevant or in their normal social context feel inhibited from mentioning. Most of the respondents mentioned after the interview that it was a relief to them to be able to talk about their roles within the college context to someone who was genuinely interested.

3.4.4 Data-management

Data management in qualitative research is basically ways to stock the data. As mentioned in section 3.4.2, I made use of both face-to-face and telephonic interviews. I immediately transcribed the data and deleted the files from my phone's memory. I transcribed by playing a bit and then stopping the recording, typing it out and listening again. As an example of the raw data, a transcribed page is added in the addendums (Appendix F). I knew before I started the interview process that I would be interviewing eight participants. The number was limited in terms of the amount of people who work as SSO's at the particular campus. I also decided beforehand to work with numbers and named them Interviewees one to eight (I 1-8). During the interviews the same themes could be seen to emerge, by the time I conducted the last interview, it was a confirmation that the information shared by the other participants were echoed again. I felt that data-saturation was reached. Saturation is the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges with respect to the newly constructed theory (Merriam, 2009). Hence, a researcher looks at this as the point at which no more data need to be collected. When the theory appears to be robust, with no gaps or unexplained phenomena, saturation has been achieved and the resulting theory is more easily constructed (Given, 2008). The next step was to analyse the data collected as explained in the next section.

3.4.5. Methods of data analysis

Data analysis is making sense of the data collected in order to summarize it and draw my conclusions from. According to Holliday (2007) "this involves the data, which is what the researcher sees or hears what is collected and recorded, and the data analysis, which is the process of making sense of the data and discovering what it has to say" (p. 89). I made use of a thematic analysis to analyse my data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and reality of participants.

The steps that I followed in order to analyse the data are described in the table below. Appendix I gives a step-by step description with examples of every step.

Table 3.2 Procedure for analysing data

Step 1	Conducted Interviews
Step 2	Transcribed Interviews (example Appendix F)
Step 3	Read transcribed interviews several times to establish and highlight which codes occurred.(Also highlighted in Appendix F)
Step 4	Put all codes in a table (example in table 3.3) with a description of each. Added columns to give an indication of how often this particular code was mentioned by respondents (verifying data saturation)
Step 5	Grouped codes together to establish themes that emerged(Table 3.4)
Step 6	Put themes in thematic networks with the codes that informed the themes in order to gain an overall picture of the data collected (example Appendix G)
Step 7	Trim the codes and add them together to give a better coherent picture and to word the themes that were found more coherently so that it makes sense to the reader. I grouped the quotes by participants that explained the theme best on a separate page. (Appendix H)
Step 8	Wrote Chapter 4, where the themes were described in detail with relation to answering the research questions as set out in the beginning of this chapter (Section 3.1). Sections of the interviews was added in order to verify the themes that were established (Chapter four)

In Step five in Table 3.2 above, I mentioned the identification of themes (thematic analysis). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke 2006). In using the thematic analysis, I used a specific method within this mode of analysis called a thematic networking. Thematic analysis can be usefully aided by and presented as

thematic networks. Thematic networks are web-like illustrations that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text: “What thematic networks offer is the web-like network as an organizing principle and a representational means, and it makes explicit the procedures that may be employed in going from text to interpretation” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390).

The structure of thematic networks reminded me of a mind map where the process is set out visually. The process of coding, then finding basic themes, which could then be put together into organizing themes and finally main themes, made sense. In this way I could really engage with my data and it made interpretation easier. The thematic network was not part of interpreting the results; it helped me to organize my data in order for me to interpret it.

I made use of the following system to code my material and establish themes. I took each interview transcript and coded them according an open coding technique. According to (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), open coding is specific to the responses of the participants and therefore more closely bound to the particular context of the participant. This implies that I did not have preconceived codes before I started analysing the data. Then I made columns to gauge if there might be some codes that were repeated by other respondents, as well as which other respondents mentioned something that could be explained under the same code (Table 3.3). I added a last column to give a short description of the code. I then made use of a frequency analysis to see which topics were mentioned more frequently by respondents. Where I found a code that was mentioned often, I classified that as themes. Merriam (1998) calls this a master list. She goes further to explain that this master list constitutes a primitive outline or classification system reflecting the recurring regularities or patterns in your study (p. 181). These patterns and regularities become the categories or themes into which subsequent items are sorted.

There were 192 codes in total. I used the codes for my initial thematic networks (Appendix G). The codes in the first column were what I gained from the interview I had with participant 3. I chose this participant because she was the first person that I interviewed. The next 8 columns represent each of the other participants and how many times they mentioned the same code. This was to establish how much emphasis the respondents placed on certain codes that I established. In the last column was a short description of the codes, using words that the respondents used.

Table 3.3 Example of coding transcripts

Code	Times mentioned	Participants								Description
		1	2	4	5	6	7	8		
1.Training	2		1	1	2	2	1	1		Where trained – how affect role
2.Experience	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2		Where worked before, type of background
3.Time in current role	1			1	1	1	1	1		How long in position
4.Jack of all trades	1		1			2		1		Summary of role
5.Coordinating	2			3		1		1		Responsibility and planning
6.Do everything related to students	1	3		1	1	1		1		How role is also described
7.Pressure	6		1					1		Within role from other staff etc.
8.Cannot do alone	1							1		A lot to get done
9.Information about courses	1									Little time to share this with students
10.Hard to get to everyone	4	1	1		1			1		Do not get to be thorough in anything
11.PACE	1	1	1	1	2		2	1		Takes a lot of time
12.Not taken seriously	1	1	1		1	1	1	2		By other staff, recommendations not taken seriously

In Table 3.4 is an example of the secondary coding of the initial codes identified above, whereby I organised the data in possible main themes with the descriptions from the initial codings together to get more coherent descriptions to the answers of the research questions.

Table 3.4 Example of secondary coding

Jack of all trades (number 4 in table 3.3)	Coordinating (5) Do everything related to students (6) PACE (11)
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I then started exploring and describing the initial thematic networks by constructing more comprehensive categories. After doing a basic description of the data, the next level of analysis was to construct categories that captured the recurring patterns that were present in the data. According to Merriam (1998, p. 179), devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systemic and informed by the study’s purpose (As described in Section 3.1), the investigator’s orientation and knowledge (As described in Section 3.2), and the meanings made explicit by participants themselves.

Bits of data are sorted into groupings that have something in common. This unit used as a grouping, according to Lincoln and Guba (1995), must meet two criteria. Firstly, it should be heuristic – that is, the unit should reveal information relevant to the study and stimulate the reader to think beyond the particular bit of information. Secondly, the unit should be the smallest piece of information that can stand by itself – that is, it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out.

In this step of the analysis process, I started thinking about making the data more meaningful and for the names of the categories to begin answering my research questions. I decided to look at the data and codes in the first thematic networks, and keep the codes that can answer the research questions, as well as have meaning when observed through the lens of the context of the study. The last step before I started the interpretation of the data was to read through my interview transcripts again to identify the direct quotations from my participants that captured the themes and assisted in answering the research questions. In Chapter four I described the main themes that I interpreted from the data in order to answer my research questions.

3.5. DATA VERIFICATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Merriam (2009) names the importance of “producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 209) when conducting qualitative research. I will refer to the ethical considerations in section 3.6. Given (2008) stated that all research must respond to canons that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of a study can be evaluated. This trustworthiness includes adherence to constructs such as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability in a research study. Merriam (2009) names some strategies that can be used for data verification, which inevitably answers the question of trustworthiness in the process. These strategies include an audit trail and reflexivity. In this section I will first refer to the verification process used, referring to the strategies described, followed by a discussion of the different constructs of trustworthiness.

Audit trail: According to Merriam (2009), the audit trail provides documentation of the decisions and descriptions of the research process, with particular attention paid to the collection and analysis of data (Merriam, 2009). In this study, chapters 3 and 4 provide this documentation of the exact process involved in the completion of this study, including

descriptions about the data collection, data analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, I provided examples of raw data, the analysis process in chapter 3, (Section 3.4.5) as well as addenda (Appendix F-I). I felt that data saturation was reached, since the same themes were evident from all the respondents.

Reflexivity is the process of constantly reflecting on what is being done and why it is being done while conducting the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that the researcher is a central figure in the research process, as each researcher brings his or her own personal history and worldview to the process, thereby influencing it. In reflecting on the study, the personal history of the researcher must always be considered in every step. I will provide a thorough reflection in Chapter 5 based on my own reflective journal kept throughout the study. Also see Section 3.2.

I will now continue to briefly discuss each of the following constructs that I used to achieve trustworthiness in conjunction with the data verification strategies. These strategies include credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

Credibility acknowledges that reality is subjective and that it can be influenced by many perspectives. Credibility is therefore the correspondence between the way in which the researcher interprets and presents the research findings and the meanings and perspectives of the research participant (Merriam, 2009, pp. 213-215). In order to ensure credibility the interpretation of the data is important. By engaging with the data thoroughly during the analysis phase the researcher can gauge the perspectives of the research participants. The above mentioned data verification strategies add to the credibility in the study.

Dependability in qualitative research aims to ascertain whether a study's research design can be used in other studies, as well as what procedures have been followed. This allows one to assess whether a study has made use of best practices and whether its findings can be

considered 'reliable' within this context (Merriam, 2009). Strategies which can be implemented to aid dependability are: reflexivity; and the use of an audit trail (Merriam, 2009).

Transferability is the degree to which the context of a study has been described to ensure internal validity so that other researchers may know the extent to which the study can be applied to other contexts (Given, 2008). Merriam (ibid.) suggests that we need to think of generalisability in ways appropriate to the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, namely that findings of research can be transferred to certain other contexts if the contextual influences are documented in the research in question and are applicable to other situations (Shenton, 2004, p.70). Since this study was only applied to one of the 50 FET Colleges in South Africa, this study could be transferred to any of the other colleges that could be seen as a similar situation and context.

Confirmability captures the traditional concept of objectivity and refers to the degree to which the research findings reflect the meaning intended by the participants, rather than the preconceptions of the researcher (Jensen, 2008). In order to achieve this, the method of data verification was used. After the initial meeting that I attended where the participants discussed some of what their reality entails, I verified with the participants during my interviews whether I understood the concerns and realities that they raised correctly.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Allen (2011, p. 294) states that the integrity principle is very important in all areas of research. The whole research process should be transparent and subject to peer-review. There are many articles and books about ethical conduct. This statement by Allen sums it up for me. There are many factors to consider, but the essence is that you have to be ethical in your approach throughout. According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA),

Booklet 6 (2008), “for research to be ethical, guidelines need to be followed and such guidelines flow from underlying ethical values, standards, and principles” (p. 2). Tracey (2010) goes deeper by breaking the ethics up into different aspects that is relevant to this research process. She refers to procedural, situational, relational and exiting ethics.

Procedural ethics refers to the importance of accuracy and avoiding fabrication, fraud, omission, and contrivance. Procedural ethics also suggest that research participants have a right to know the nature and potential consequences of the research—and understand that their participation is voluntary (Tracey, 2010). During the meeting in which I introduced myself and invited participants to be a part of the research study, I explained that this would be a low-risk study. I informed them that their interviews would be recorded for transcription purposes. Yet, I explained that after I transcribed the interviews, the files would be deleted from my phone, and that the transcribed interviews would be kept safe on a password protected computer and that only I and my supervisor will have access to it. Participants were informed that their participation is entirely voluntary, and that they could choose not to take part at any point before or during the interviews.

Furthermore, the participants in this study were given a letter of consent, which I pre-drafted (Appendix D). I also obtained written permission from the institution at which I conducted my study to perform the research there (Appendix B). The participants’ names were not used, to protect their identities. The anonymity was limited, though, as there is only one person in that particular role at each campus of the TVET College. I therefore had to give the participants a number instead of a name (I 1-8), and I made sure that any data I used in my reporting couldn’t be traced to a particular campus and thus a particular participant.

Situational ethics refers to the context within which a study takes place. It assumes that each circumstance is different and that researchers must repeatedly reflect on, critique, and

question their ethical decisions (Tracey, 2010). Since I conducted my study at an organization, there will inevitably be politics and internal discourses present. I took care to focus on the research questions at hand. In order to protect my participants, I was careful not to delve into any sensitive information regarding the institution. I blocked out identifiers in all the addenda and described, for example, the advertisement as the text could easily be found using Google search. I had to apply for ethical clearance at the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) and the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) (REC) before I could conduct my study. My ethical clearance application was approved after this, and the letter is attached as Appendix A.

Relational ethics involves an ethical self-consciousness in which researchers are mindful of their character, actions, and consequences to others. Relational ethics are related to an ethic of care that “recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). I took care to treat my participants with the needed respect. The researcher/participant relationship was based on an understanding that I was a curious observer genuinely interested in what the participants had to say, without any hidden agendas.

Murphy and Dingwall (2001, p. 339) have developed an ‘ethical theory’ that provides a useful framework for any research. It is based on four principles, which sum up being ethical in a relational way as a researcher to me even further. The principles are non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy and justice. Non-maleficence include not harming your participants in any way, be it psychologically, emotionally or physically, or by revealing information that could harm them. Beneficence means that the research should be to the benefit of the participants as well. It is not just about the researcher’s own agenda. The ethical

consideration of autonomy has the result that the research participants' values and decisions will be respected. The participants were aware that they took part in the study voluntarily and could abort their participation at any time. The last principle of justice means that all the participants should be treated equally.

Exiting ethics refers to the fact that ethical considerations continue beyond the data collection phase to how researchers leave the scene and share the results (Tracey, 2010). This involves keeping the participants involved in the study, sharing the findings with them and ensuring that you do not just go in, get the data and leave again. After the study has been concluded, I will attend one of the monthly SSO meetings to report the findings and have a discussion with them about the findings.

According to Gomm (2009, p. 117), ethics is a branch of moral philosophy dealing with the criteria by which behaviour should be judged as morally good or bad, and the standards by which behaviour ought to be regulated. As researchers we have to be ethical in the conducting of our research studies. Being ethical is showing respect towards your research participants as well as to the field of research as a whole.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the constructivist paradigm and gave a description of the research design. The research methods were discussed in detail with particular reference to the context of the study and gaining access, the selection of participants, the use of semi-structured interviews as a method of collecting data, how I managed my data as well as the methods I employed to analyse the data. The verification of the data, as well as ethical considerations, were discussed. In the next chapter the research findings are explained. These findings were derived from the emerging themes and categories that were identified as contributing to the answering of the research questions.

Chapter 4

Data analysis and presentation of findings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I display my research findings. These findings are organized according to the research questions and how I answered them after analyzing the data. According to Merriam (2009, p. 175), data analysis is the process of making sense of the data. The questions for this research were linked to the title of the thesis. The main research questions with four sub-questions that I asked were as follows (See section 1.3):

Main question: What are the student support officers' perceptions of being in a supporting role to the students enrolled for NATED and NC(V) programmes at a TVET College in the Western Cape Province?

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of SSO's in general at this TVET College?
2. What are the realities for SSO's working with the adolescent student at this TVET College?
3. What is hindering and also what is helping the SSO's from fulfilling the role?
4. What are their recommendations from within the role of a SSO, to successfully support students?

As mentioned in Chapter 3 section 3.4.5, I made use of thematic analysis for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This method organized and described the data set in (rich) detail (Braun, 2008). This means that I interpreted my findings in terms

of the lived experiences of my participants. Their perceptions of their role as SSO were the lens through which I interpreted the data. The research questions were answered by making use of four categories. Each category aimed at answering each of the research questions.

In the table below I explain the categories that I constructed, as they are answering the research questions:

Table 4.1 Research questions and link to categories

Main Research Question: What are the student support officers' perceptions of being in a supporting role to the students enrolled for NATED and NCV programmes at a TVET College in the Western Cape province?

Sub-Research Questions	Category	Sub categories
1. What are the roles and responsibilities of SSO's in general at this TVET College?	<i>Roles and responsibilities of SSO's</i> Role is diffuse with many responsibilities	1.1 <i>Primary responsibilities</i> – Counseling, SRC, Assessment and Sport 1.2 <i>Secondary responsibilities</i> – Culture, health and wellness and social events 1.3 <i>Tertiary responsibilities</i> : - Any new project on campus
2. What are the realities for SSO's working with the adolescent student at this TVET College?	<i>The realities SSO's face</i> Having to take responsibility for own studies is a challenge	2.1 Emotionally immature 2.2 Peer pressure 2.3 Already have an academic backlog 2.4 Freedom within college environment
3. What is hindering and also what is helping the SSO's from fulfilling this role?	<i>Challenges and support in fulfilling the role as SSO</i> Status in college and role not clearly defined	3.1 Seen as not necessary 3.2 Seen as part of admin staff and not academic staff 3.3 Academics is core business 3.4 Not included in decision making regarding students
4. What are their recommendations from	<i>Recommendations to support</i>	4.1 Being a team on a campus to help

<p>within the role of a SSO to successfully support students?</p>	<p><i>students more successfully</i></p> <p>To help fulfill this role</p>	<p>students</p> <p>4.2 More collaboration with lecturers</p> <p>4.3 Having their role more clearly defined, leading to being recognized</p> <p>4.4 More personal support and supervision</p>
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Following is the categories explained in paragraphs, with direct quotations from my participants. It has to be noted here that the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, I have translated the quotations to English, since the rest of my study is in English. The Afrikaans quotes can be found in the Addenda.

4.2 CATEGORIES

In deciding what to include into the categories, I studied my initial thematic networks in conjunction with my research questions. I made sure that there was no overlap of information in the different categories and that the sub categories were meaningful when looking at them in isolation. In the discussion of the findings that follow I describe each sub category in a narrative form with direct quotations from the participants, and then I end each section with a concluding interpretive sentence.

4.2.1 Roles and responsibilities of SSO's

The participants of this study experienced their role as multifaceted and they felt that they have many responsibilities. These responsibilities are seen as diverse and after the interviews with the respondents, the best way to describe this role is being a “jack of all trades”. This is a term that was used by most of the respondents to describe their role.

Basically a good description would be that you are a Jack of all trades. (I 3)

Many of the respondents found it difficult to describe their role. As one respondent said:

You know, when someone asks me about student support, then my head starts running, where do you begin? There are so many things. (I 3)

After listening to the way the respondents described their role, combined with reading through the data and conceptualizing it, I pictured a hierarchy of responsibilities. According to the SSO's, they are responsible for all these tasks, with some being more pertinent and clear as their primary responsibilities, some could be classified as secondary responsibilities and then there were tertiary responsibilities, which could best be described as a grey area.

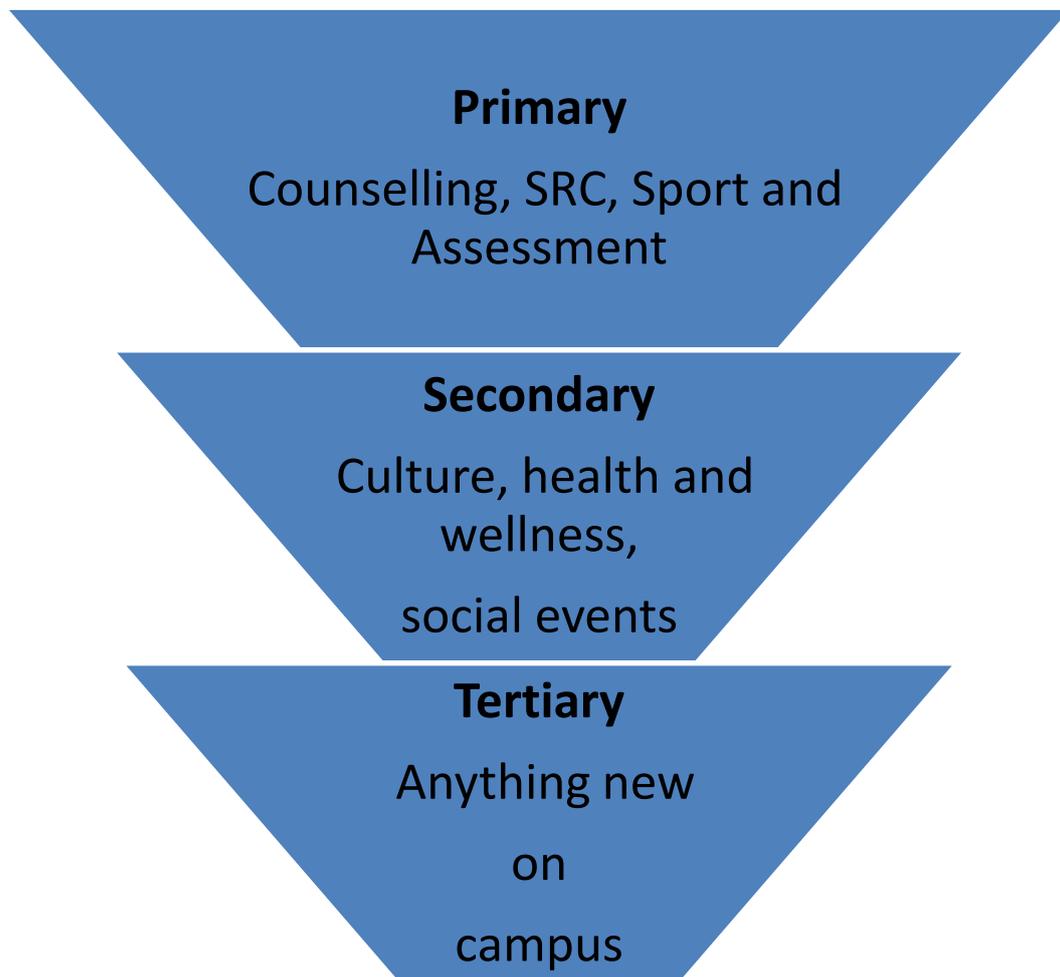


Figure 4.1 Hierarchy of SSO responsibilities

4.2.1.1 Primary responsibilities

The primary responsibilities were coded as Counseling, SRC, Sport and Assessment. I named these the primary responsibilities because it took the most time according to the SSO's. They

said counseling happened on a daily basis. The kind of issues they dealt with during counseling could also be described as social work, as it mainly deals with poverty amongst the students. Other issues mentioned by the respondents include personal problems, relationship issues, including being far away from home to complete studies, death in the family, rape, violence at home or among students, to name a few. Working with the younger (NC(V) students was described as challenging, as the respondents perceived them to be immature and struggling to adapt to the college environment.

I will now discuss the respondents' feedback by first referring to Counseling, then SRC, Sport and lastly Assessment. Counselling was mentioned by each respondent, even though they seemed to be more involved with sport and the SRC than with counselling when they described their role. With reference to counselling, there are certain issues that are dealt with often, including:

And then we have a lot of poverty, that leads to many other things, like students that cannot concentrate in class and then we find out they have not eaten that morning. (I 4)

Personal counselling that can include anything, girls that are raped to study methods. Anything like that. (I 5)

Some of the respondents made the comment that you do more social work in this role; this is what the needs of the students seem to be:

I feel personally that the role of student support has moved to social work. It is not a lot of academic support. (I 5)

In terms of the sport and the SRC, there seems to be a close connection in fulfilling this part of the role. The respondents said that sport is more an administrative role. They have to ensure that it is implemented on campus and have to organize everything when there are big inter-campus events (generally twice a year). Even though the sports coordinator was appointed for implementing sport at all the campuses of the college, each SSO had sport

responsibilities on their respective campuses. The SRC is also the SSO's responsibility for the whole year. They have to manage the group in terms of teaching them how to conduct meetings, how to organize social events and how to be leaders on the campus. Many of the SRC members are young students with little confidence and no leadership experience. The SRC member with the sport portfolio helps with implementing the sport on campus.

Then we have to work closely with the SRC. On our campus there are eight members and two additional that are in the residence. They are young themselves and have their own issues that you as SSO have to deal with. Sometimes they do not do what they are supposed to do and then you have to stand in as SSO, it keeps you away from other students that needed you more at that stage. (I 3)

The SRC activities take a lot of time, but the sport especially takes time, and I feel it shouldn't since we have a sports coordinator that organizes the sport, but on campus you are still responsible for it. Your SRC helps with the planning, but at the end of the day, you are still the one that gets the teams together, pump up balls, make sure the clothes are washed, it takes a lot of time. The indemnity forms that have to be signed, then you sit next to the field the whole day; it takes a lot of time. On the day of a sporting event you can put the whole day aside. Two weeks before the time you have to start planning the event.(I 5)

For example, the week before a sports day is chaos, because you try to get students, you phone buses, you facilitate meetings, you get classroom representatives, you have to keep up, and you have to manage this thing. (I 6)

The SSO's mentioned that assessment is especially challenging in the beginning of the year. Every student that is enrolled at the campus has to be assessed by the SSO, to ascertain what their particular abilities are with regards to math and English. This takes full days in the beginning of the year that is set aside for only that purpose. After assessments are done the results are used to recommend what a student should study as well as if they would be able to cope with the coursework.

On our campus we use about a week to do full days of testing. We have done 300 in three days in July, and then in the following weeks we have two or three testings per day if more students enroll. (I 5)

Another aspect that is closely linked to the assessment is ensuring that students who needs concessions, get assessed so that they can apply for readers or scribes in time for tests and exams. One of the participants for example said: “*We also help students that need concessions.*” (I 1)

The roles of the SSO’s seem complex, especially with them being involved in so many activities at the college. I get the impression that it required the SSO’s to be flexible and resourceful.

4.2.1.2 Secondary responsibilities

The secondary responsibilities can be defined as those responsibilities that are definitely part of the SSO’s job description, but that do not take as much time as the primary responsibilities according to the respondents. Responsibilities like organising dances, planning cultural activities and organising health and wellness activities took a lot of initiative and time. The SRC was involved in helping the SSO plan and implement any of these events.

And then we have to ensure that culture, this includes activities like dances, dramas and singing, that has to be done by the SSO’s and then also wellness, we have to do. We usually let the blood donation come and testing for HIV. Including Health and wellness, this is part of the SSO’s job on campus. (I 1)

And with the SRC we work on social activities, functions, all sport gatherings, then you are involved with the health and wellness programmes. Blood donation, the police dog unit that comes. Community work, where we help out. (I 5)

4.2.1.3 Tertiary responsibilities

I described the tertiary responsibilities as anything new happening on campus. This description might sound vague, and I did that on purpose to illustrate this aspect of their role as perceived by the respondents. That is why I mentioned earlier that it can be seen as a grey area. According to some of the SSO’s, they had to deal with many strange situations and aspects that are unforeseen. Examples are: being there to help when students get sick and

taking them to hospital, being the person in charge of first aid and, if there is a hostel on campus, they are in charge of issues that might arise there.

And then students, you are there to create things on campus, they want Culture Day and it is a big load that they place on you, students by way of the student council, will tell you, but why don't we do this and that. That's the one thing, every time something new happens on campus, or they want to implement something new, they come to us.(I 1)

Any odd job gets sent to the SSO. Everything extra that happens on campus gets sent to the SSO. (I 5)

Every day you are confronted with new challenges, things that you have to do research about, make queries about how the process works. (I 4)

In order to summarize their role, I feel that this response of one of the respondents at the college sums it up well.

They have sport, SRC, new things on campus must be implemented, and they have to follow up absentees also, that is part of what they have to find out why students are absent. That is the life skills part that comes in. The ideal is that they have to do group work with these children. No their role is very full. They must be able to multitask. (I 2)

This category reflected the wide range of responsibilities that the SSO's has according to the interviews. It seems to be a role with many aspects and the term "jack of all trades" feels like an apt description, especially, if you look at the three tiers of responsibilities that became evident as I analyzed the data.

4.2.2 The realities SSO's face

I mentioned four different aspects relevant to the adolescents at this TVET College in Table 4.1. Similar issues were echoed by most of the participants. In a nutshell, the participants agreed that the adolescent NC(V) students were emotionally immature and not prepared for the freedom of the TVET College environment. They did not seem to be aware of how to take responsibility for their own learning. According to the SSO's, the lecturers do not check up on the students like their school teachers used to. This resulted in many of the learners

skipping classes, which was also a result of peer pressure as observed by students that the SSO's dealt with.

You know, there are a few challenges. The first one is that the children are emotionally immature. Very much. They are just not mature enough for the college sector. And the college is not a school, so there is a lot of freedom and the children just cannot handle the freedom. (I 2)

Immature, it's a new experience for them. They are used to the school environment, and then they are, it's like they are, sort of free here. They often do not accept responsibility for their own actions. (I 4)

The respondents agreed that the adolescents struggled to take responsibility for their actions and learning and this leads to them not being committed to their studies. They have opportunities to get assistance with some of their subjects. There are extra classes offered during their free lessons. Not being used to the free lessons also adds to respondents not attending these.

We struggle to get them committed, if say we have academic support, then we have extra classes to offer. You are basically responsible for that yourself. Your extra classes are not on your timetable, it's in your free period that you use for extra English or maths. So it's your own responsibility to be there, so we struggle with the students.(I 4)

NC(V) is not that committed, they want everything but are not prepared to do the work. The NC(V) students are really still immature, they do not attend classes, everything still has to be done for them and made easier. (I 5)

Most of the SSO's agreed that they have a lot of issues relating to the NC(V) students and peer pressure. Accordingly, it is seen as a new "grown-up" environment for most of the adolescents. Many of the students are exposed to a college culture which includes older, adult students.

Look, these students (NC(V)) are students that come fresh from school. They have a Grade 9. Peer pressure is a challenge for them. Peer pressure and then the fact that they are not strong academically. Now they come to college and struggle here. (I 8)

If you look at the hostels, you will see it's the younger students. The older ones also bunk, but the younger ones struggle a lot more to find their feet in the academic environment. They give in easily to peer pressure. So they are the ones that easily get involved with drugs, if someone says, let's skip class today, the younger ones are more likely to go with them.(I 2)

The academic demand of the NC(V) course have been mentioned already (Section 2.4.3, Table 2.2). In addition to it being a difficult academic course, the NC(V) students often seemed to choose courses without knowing what the vocation involved. According to the SSO's, they arrive with a bursary, seen as a second chance after struggling at school. Then, as soon as the reality of their workload hits them, they struggle to cope.

The children, because of their emotional immaturity, they give up easily. They do not have the perseverance to cope with the demands placed on them. Many of them come from schools, they are 16 years old, and they are still in Grade 9. In other words they are academic failures, now they come to us, we offer them a second chance. They do the NC(V), Career related courses. The course is not what they expected. The academic content is very difficult, it's not a practical course. They do not like studying, they have had a bad experience, they are emotional. Now they come to college and it's not practical enough. They get involved in other things because they do not have a vision of the future yet. So that's the other thing, they are not only emotionally too immature, but also not ready to make a career choice. (I 2)

This category has the same message that is repeated by all the respondents. The adolescent NC(V) students come across as being emotionally immature. They seem to be unprepared for the college and choose courses without knowing what exactly it entails. When it becomes apparent to them that the NC(V) courses are basically more challenging than High School, then this cohort of students seem to lose interest. This could be a factor that further influenced the low throughput rate. This can be understood given that, according to the SSO's, most of the NC(V) students had had a challenging academic career up until then. Now they are in an age group that is especially vulnerable to peer pressure. The interviews revealed that within the college the students are treated as young adults and it is assumed that they can take responsibility for

themselves. The adolescent stage of development and the freedom of the college seem to mean that these students need a lot of support.

4.2.3 Challenges and support in fulfilling the role as SSO

Even though I numbered the different sub-categories, I described this section in one paragraph. The four sub-categories (Table 4.1 on p. 64) are the main issues under the systemic context of the TVET College and they can be named separately, but are intertwined in their manifestation to the Student Support Officers (SSO's). There is a sense amongst the SSO's that they are not seen as important by the other members of staff.

I get the idea they think we are not important yet. Just a by the way. That is the message that I get. (I 7)

If there is anything that has to be done, it's just ag, the SSO will do it. I do not feel appreciated here. (I 8)

Part of the reason for this perception, according to the SSO's, is their job description on campus. They are seen as part of the administration staff and are treated as clerks. The sense within the college is that the academic staff or lecturers are the more senior staff with the most influence on campus. The following quote summarizes the perception amongst the SSO's:

On campus you are classed as part of the administration staff. My personal feeling is that we are not really seen as valuable on campus. And it is a feeling that many of the SSO's experience. You sometimes feel like a dumping site. A lecturer is willing to help a student up to a certain point, but if it gets too much, then you are the best candidate to take over, but you are not seen as valuable. They will make decisions and do things on their own, but not involve the SSO. For most of them, not all, academics stays the core business. Student support is only an added extra, not really important. (I 4)

You know, there is a professional snobbishness in the college. You can quote me. Academics are what it is about. (I 2)

The people lose touch that we work with students and what their needs are, but academics is the core business, that is all it is about. (I 6)

With academics being perceived by the SSO's as being the main focus, what seems to frustrate SSO's is that they are there to support students, and that this is not acknowledged by other staff members. They feel that they work with the students on grassroots level, dealing with their everyday challenges. They have an important role in that they have to ensure that the students are emotionally strong enough to be academically successful. The problem arises, according to the SSO's, when there are meetings and decisions have to be made regarding students, and the SSO's recommendations or input are not considered.

A further complication mentioned by respondents that the college has to enroll a certain number of students, according to rules set forward by the Department of Higher Education. The SSO's felt that the college then accepted students that struggled academically into the college. The frustration to the SSO is that they do the assessments of the students, as mentioned in 4.2.2.1. After these assessments, the SSO's make recommendations regarding the students. According to the SSO's, these recommendations are not necessarily considered because they need a certain number of students. The SSO's then question what their role really entails within the college.

They accept students to fill the numbers. That's our crisis; we always discuss it during our meetings, because we feel, at the end of the day, what is our role? Why do we do the assessments? (I 4)

There are students in classes that should not be there. We identified them in the beginning of the year as High Risk, a student that management said, we need to fill the numbers, let them register. (I 5)

It's about bums on seats, we can make recommendations, but at the end of the day because of history, the final decisions are made by the academics. (I 6)

Another contributing factor is a lack of clearly defined roles. This was perceived by all the SSO's. If anybody on campus is not sure who is responsible for something they seem to send it to the SSO. The SSO's felt that the other staff did not even know that they have degrees and what they had to study in order to fulfill this role. Most of the SSO's are more qualified

than the academic staff. They voiced that they do get frustrated when they have to answer to a junior administration clerk with a lower qualification. They also mentioned that the unclear role definition leads to them feeling mistreated.

I sometimes think the staff forgets that you are not just a student supporter like that. They think that we do not have qualifications, or that we do not have a good qualification, and then they treat you differently. You have to constantly prove yourself to get that recognition, that I feel is not necessary, we are all here to fulfill a role. (I 3)

I do not think all the people at the college, the lecturers and administration staff know what student support is about, and what you had to study to be one. I think they think we are admin and they do not see our importance. (I 5)

The other thing is that the SSO is there to do the dirty work, if I can say it like that. Then you feel your role as SSO is being abused and you become frustrated. (I 3)

A further complication is that the SSO's are not considered when important decisions regarding students and campus life are made. Some of the SSO's felt that they were aware of issues regarding students that they wanted to raise at staff meetings. When they do raise these issues, they felt disregarded. Since there was only one SSO per campus representing the students, they felt that they needed back-up to strengthen what they had to say about students. The SSO's find this challenging because at the end of the day they feel that they are not there fighting for themselves, they are there, representing the students. One SSO felt that she finds it challenging to not be able to make important decisions regarding students. She felt that the SSO's always have to answer to someone who does not understand your role.

You can't make your own decisions. Everybody wants to be your boss, for everything you need permission; you cannot take initiative, that's another problem. (I 5)

During management meetings I am not taken seriously. I make myself ready to talk and I am not there for myself, I am there for the student. To sit there alone, I feel lonely; the management doesn't always notice the importance of student matters. (I 8)

We know what our role is; I do not know if the others see the value, they do not understand the need of the student. Or that we have a role or the importance of that role. The department understands, and by department I mean the other SSO's. But I am telling you, higher up than our manager, there is no comprehension. We are a nice to have not a necessity. They have told us straight before, if there is a budget cut, we are the first department to go. (I 6)

Another issue within the system is that the head of the SSO's had two departments to manage. This meant that the manager was extremely busy, overloaded even. According to the SSO's, this added to their roles being abused, as there is only one SSO per campus and sometimes had no manager to back their decisions. The head of the department tries to accommodate them and it is due to the way the manager's role is defined within the college context that adds to the problem.

With the move, job placement became the manager's responsibility and the support to the SSO's fell away. (I 2)

The head is very busy, she tries. (I 3)

So as SSO you sit there, you want to make sure you do the right thing; you have a lot of questions, who do you phone, the head is on the way to a meeting, or she is in one. Who do you ask? (I 3)

Another issue that I will discuss more in the next section, but is also linked to the systemic context of the college, is interns (freshly graduated financial students) that some SSO's have on their campus. According to the SSO's, these interns were appointed with the wrong qualifications (finance). They were appointed to assist the SSO's in fulfilling their duties; but without the interest in helping students, they are not motivated to be there. As can be sensed from the issues mentioned above, there are various systemic issues within the college context that adds to the SSO's frustration. One gets the sense that they are there advocating for the

students, fighting for their best interests, with the rest of the college not being on the same page regarding students.

4.2.3 Recommendations to support students more successfully

I will also discuss this section in paragraph form, even though I have four numbered categories in the table in the beginning of the chapter (Table 4.1). The recommendations that the SSO's gave are also intertwined, and using the different headings would hinder me from giving their perspective comprehensively. The SSO staff shared some recommendations that would make fulfilling their roles easier to manage. Some of the recommendations are what they know is happening and working at other TVET Colleges and I think that it would be worthwhile to conduct a similar study with SSO staff at other TVET Colleges and compare the results.

The SSO's felt isolated on their respective campuses. I already mentioned that they felt alone in staff meetings and that they could not make important decisions. A strong recommendation from them was to have more than one SSO on a campus, and to be able to work as an SSO team. The job description specifies that they should have a ratio of one SSO per 500 students. This is a big load as it is. Many of them have a ratio of more than 500. (Described in Table 3.1)

I think if you look at the ratio, it is 1:500 students, so if we are two on a campus it would definitely be better. (I 1)

If the SSO's can get help, if I can get back to their ratio of 1:500, that is their ratio anyway. More than one SSO on campus according to that ratio, then you can diversify and they can focus on their strengths. The one can take the SR and all the class representatives and then you can change the campus climate, and then you can get one that does counseling, or everybody does because one for that is not enough, but then the one that is strong in that can focus on only that. (I 2)

Another SSO will also help (I 4)

I just think more resources, with more people on campus we will be able to help more students, but then your funds are limited, and you are only one on campus, on my campus there are 1500 students, and then you cannot get to everyone. And then to host big functions, teach big classes, classrooms are limited and computers are limited. Just to be able to reach everybody. (I 5)

What they propose is that being a team on campus would not only mean more than one SSO on campus, but also that they want to be able to work closely with other staff members on campus, working collaboratively to help students where necessary.

And then staff, especially academic staff that give their cooperation, if you might need class attendance percentages for example, or you need information regarding a specific student, then it is sort of, you do not get feedback. (I 4)

They compartmentalize academics, SSO separated and that is a problem and until they do not see that, that we are integrally part of each other, it is a big problem. (I 6)

Also if we can work more in a multi-disciplinary team together and that it is not all the SSO's responsibility. (I 7)

The SSO's felt that it was impossible for them to fulfill the role described in section 4.1 and get to all the students that need them. The respondent that is not appointed as an SSO, but work closely with them and understood their role said that they are told to focus on their strengths in the role. Let the other aspects run, but focus their strengths, because it is impossible to get to everything.

You know what we always tell them, choose what you are strong in; you cannot do everything, so choose what you want to do. Choose that and do that. So if you are strong in leadership development go with the SRC. Keep the others going but focus on the SRC, or if your strength is sport. Whatever you feel, but it is impossible for them to do everything. (I 2)

The SSO's felt strongly that they wanted to be recognized for their worth to the students and the success of the college.

I also think recognition is very important, if we make recommendations that it is acknowledged, that's important, a big thing. (I 1)

Just that acknowledgement also of a SSO's input is also very important. (I 7)

I also think if our role is more clearly communicated on campus it will be easier, because then you do not get unnecessary requests coming your way. (I 4)

The SSO's said that they have a lot of emotional issues to deal with, and they also need support. Another concern is that the SSO's do not get supervision or personal support. As explained in section 4.2.1, the academic staff and management are not aware of the pressure on them or the kind of issues they have to deal with. According to the respondents, some of the academic staff does not want to get involved with anything related to student issues

There is supposed to be supervision. That is not how I know supervision. There is no opportunity to talk about what you experience or what you have to deal with. (I 5)

I think what we need is to physically present cases and say, this is what I struggle with professionally. (I 3)

I think because they are a big campus, they need supervision from their manager to talk about specific cases and their challenges with things on campus that is different. (I 7)

Then you get lecturers, that are more teaching NATED programs, that say from the start, look I am not a social worker, I do not want to get involved, so when you need them it is a struggle. (I 3)

Another issue that was mentioned is that the SSO's have interns appointed that is there to help them. The SSO's revealed that the problem is that these interns were appointed with the wrong qualifications and they are thus not really able to help the SSO's, they did not seem motivated to the SSO's to be there because they have a financial background. The SSO's felt that the idea of an intern was great, but they needed interns with the right qualifications and the motivation to be there.

That we get clarity about our role and our interns' role. It is a big thing that they are not appointed correctly, my intern is very unhappy, so tasks do not get done, work gets left behind and then it looks like I am not getting to my job. Just more clarity. (I 8)

The recommendations made by the SSO's centered around having a clearly defined role, being acknowledged as playing an influential role within the college and receiving personal supervision and support to discuss difficult daily issues with another professional. They also felt that they want to collaborate more with other college staff as well as have more staff to operate as an SSO team on each campus.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented the themes and findings supported by direct quotes from my respondents in order to answer the four research questions. I presented this in a summarized table (Table 4.1) and then I added depth to the categories by explaining the findings according to how the respondents perceived it. I managed to reach the aims of the research, which was to describe the SSO's role and exploring their work with adolescents. I also got the sense of how the College system work and gave the SSO's the opportunity to voice their concerns as well as their recommendations for this role. In Chapter five I give a summary of the findings as well as my interpretation. I also add notes on the strengths and limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Summary and interpretation of the findings

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study explored what student support is at this TVET College and how this support is available to adolescent students. I wanted to understand, in particular, what it was like to work with adolescents and what challenges and strengths might exist within this particular college context. I also wanted to afford the SSO staff the opportunity to make recommendations regarding this role. In effect I wanted to advocate for the SSO's, as I realized that they needed a voice within this College context. I designed a basic qualitative research study based on a constructivist research paradigm to investigate the following research questions that was used to answer the main research question: What are the student support officers' perceptions of being in a supporting role to the students enrolled for NATED and NC(V) programmes at a TVET College in the Western Cape Province?

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of SSO in general at this TVET College?
2. What are the realities for SSO's working with the adolescent student at this TVET College?
3. What is hindering and also what is helping the SSO's from fulfilling the role?
4. What are their recommendations from within the roles and responsibilities of a SSO, to successfully support students?

I used semi-structured interviews, which allowed the SSO's to narrate their experiences and the realities of their roles within this TVET College context. My research gave me an insight into the participants' reality within this role, allowing me an in-depth understanding of the challenges they faced, as well as their recommendations for this role. My findings answered the research questions. It appears as if that the low throughput rate of students was due to varying factors. The TVET Colleges, it appeared was in need to address the challenges of many different aspects. There have been a lot of changes within the sector and challenges are thus inevitable.

In this chapter, I present concluding remarks on the main research findings, as well as the limitations and strengths of the study. I also formulated recommendations for future research.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND MY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The bio-ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.5) uses the PPCT model to explain the developing person in context. I used this PPCT model as the theoretical framework in which to discuss the findings relevant to my study in Table 5.1

Table 5.1 Theoretical framework and research findings

Aspects of PPCT model	Relevancy to this research study
Process	The particular proximal process that I focused on was the SSO within their role and their interaction within the TVET College. The SSO's perceived their role as not clearly defined, which leads to their proximal interaction with other college staff to be hindering to the fulfilling of their role. This interaction is regular as is proposed by Bronfenbrenner's first proposition. The SSO's in this environment felt that they were there to serve the students, but that certain power issues from the management hindered this. A further hindrance from growing within their role, as mentioned by the SSO's was that they had no access to personal support and supervision.

Person	The focus was on the students in the college and specifically the NC(V) students because most of them are still adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18. The counselling aspect of the SSO's role has to consider the person's needs that they deal with. Most of the issues relating to these students, dealt with poverty, peer pressure and the students being perceived as immature within the college environment that is less structured than schools. Many of the SSO's felt that they understood the needs of the students, but felt that the lecturing and management staff did not. The complication for this comes where the SSO's wants to advocate for the students but have no power within their roles to implement what they see is needed.
Context	The context that is relevant to this study is the SSO's that was appointed in a role within a changing college environment. The DHET was established in 2009, which lead to inevitable changes. The White Paper for Post School Education and Training has only been completed in 2014, which means that there is possibly more changes to come. Within this context of change, it is even more difficult to define the SSO's role comprehensively.
Time	The study is placed within this particular moment in this context of change. The perceived role of the SSO's as they describe it now is displayed here.

5.3 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

As can be seen from Chapter 4 there were certain categories and sub categories that emerged during analysis of the data. In a nutshell, these categories boiled down to the roles and responsibilities of the SSO's that could be further divided into primary, secondary and tertiary roles, young adolescent students being unprepared for the college environment, certain systemic and contextual issues within the college that influences their ability to fulfil this role and the last category was recommendations from the SSO's to make the fulfilling of this role easier. Throughout the interviews and the subsequent interpretation, a discourse of conflict emerges. The SSO's seemed to be always struggling to be heard. The difficulty seems about how to get their roles formally defined within the college system, which is what

seems to lead to the challenges faced. This is also evident in the recommendations made by the SSO's. I now discuss the different categories (Table 4.1) with interpretations.

The following is said in the Green Paper for Post School Education and Training (2012) about SSS: "Although there have been improvements over the last few years, there is currently still insufficient focus on providing support services for students in colleges. This must be addressed and funded. Services must include academic support, social support, vocational guidance, assistance for students to obtain workplace placements for practical experience during the course of their studies, and job placements on conclusion to allow an easier transition from college to the workplace." My study was thus part of looking at what could help place the focus on SSS for students. I interviewed the people that are responsible for affective support (Discussed in Section 2.2.2, Table 2.1) of students on campus. What they explained and recommended could be considered in order to improve the support in TVET Colleges. The categories are discussed as follows:

5.3.1 Category 1: 2 The roles and responsibilities of SSO's

The term 'Student services', designating a specific integrated group of departments and units providing support and welfare services and programmes for students in higher education institutions, is relatively new, although a variety of disparate services offered to support students have for all intents and purposes been in existence since the first universities were formally established (Mandew, 2003, p. 3). The description of the student support at this college will be different from how it is implemented at another higher education institution in South Africa. In their job description document, provided by one of the SSO's, they are called a "student supporter", with the job purpose "to provide relevant support services to students and academic department." Their main objectives are summarised in the Table 5.1

Table 5.2 Main objectives of student supporter at this TVET College

Main objectives:

1. Co-ordinate student support
2. Identify Academic Support needs
3. Refer Students for financial aid assistance
4. Conduct Counselling and referral Services
5. Promote, Sport, Health & Wellness, Community Awareness and Culture
6. Develop and Manage student leadership
7. Oversee the implementation of the student Code of Conduct
8. Liaise and network to expand Support to our students
9. Support International Students
10. Refer Students for Job Placement
11. Evaluation and Administration
12. Professional Development

The main objectives are reflected in the description that the SSO's gave of their role, but the percentage of time spent on the main objectives is not reflected in this formal job description. The main objectives 4, 5 and 6 seem to take up most of their time, and I sense that the rest of the objectives are almost impossible to fulfil by one person. What is also mentioned in their job description is that they should work in a student to SSO ratio of 1:500. On most campuses and for most SSO's this is not the case (See Table 3.1 where the ratio for each participant is specified). Two SSO's have up to 1500 students on their respective campuses. In my opinion, the main objectives is a lot to fulfil for one person on a campus, it would be much easier to implement if a team could work on fulfilling the objective. As it stands now, I assume that some aspects of the role would inevitably be neglected.

When looking at this role in general, there is no uniform role description for the type of services rendered as a student supporter that can be applied to all student supporters, as for example a doctor's role can be defined. The advertisement for this particular role states that an applicant needs a Grade 12 and 6 years relevant experience or a three year teaching degree and three years relevant experience and a post-school qualification in Educational Psychology/Psychology and Career Orientation or Social Work and Learner Support post-school qualification is recommended, but is not a necessity. This is further evident in my study specifically because there is no specific qualification required to fulfil the role. All my respondents had degrees, but it is different degrees from different backgrounds and in addition, a degree is not a requirement to be appointed in this role. In my opinion, the SSO's role should be specified more clearly and the people appointed in this role should have a more uniform qualification and background. The need for counselling for the student population makes this especially important. Not all the SSO's are registered counsellors and are thus not qualified to act as counsellors. This would add to the status of this role:

Moreover, unlike in the USA, the field of student services in South Africa has yet to evolve to the level of being a formal academic discipline to be studied for qualification purposes at local higher education institutions. Of course this assertion excludes those professional departments under student services such as counselling, nursing and social work which are well-developed professions in their own right (Mandew, 2003 p. 21).

In the case of my respondents, all of them had a degree. Additional workshops could add to the role being more uniformly defined and implemented. One respondent expressed the need for such a qualification. The closest to such a qualification that are currently available is a short course through UNISA,

Yes, I wanted to say, many of the SSO's are social workers, some are counsellors or have a psychology background, but there is not really a place

where you can be trained as an SSO, UNISA has something, a Student Development Course. (I 1)

5.3.2 Category 2: The realities SSO's face

As could be seen from the interviews, the following four reasons were given as to why the adolescent student may struggle to adapt to the college environment. They seem to be emotionally immature, there is peer pressure, the students recruited already have an academic backlog and there is a lot less structure within college environment. The SSO's all agreed on the emotional immaturity of the adolescent student. It seems to me that the adolescent students have to adapt to the college environment, but that the college context has not yet adapted to the adolescent students. An interesting conundrum offered in the REAP Report (2009, p.22) though, which may hold true in the TVET College context, is that while disadvantaged adolescent students may be underprepared for higher education institutions, the latter may similarly be underprepared to deal with disadvantaged adolescent students (Papier, 2009).

After exploring the role descriptions of the SSO, it is evident that they do not have the time to give particular attention to the adaptation and almost survival of the NC(V) students. It is also evident to me that more research needs to be done into the particular needs of adolescent students and that their needs have to be addressed if the throughput rate is to be increased in the TVET Colleges. At the moment the NC(V) students are a unique group in the sense that they are high school-aged learners in a college higher education environment. Within this framework they have different needs to the previous student cohort.

5.3.3 Category 3: Challenges and support in fulfilling the role as SSO

In section 1.4.2, I referred to the dual-role of the SSO's where they are part of the SSO team on the one and also work with the other college staff on campus on a daily basis. They have SSO duties to fulfil but while on campus they also have to work according to expectations of

the head of their respective campuses. This could mean an adjustment to the different ways of implementing college policies. According to Jex (2011), if there is lack of clarity about one's role in a specific context, it leads to role ambiguity.

Part of why there is not role clarity is that some of the SSO's are new in this position and the adolescent students is a new cohort. The beginning phase of employment is known to be the critical time in the formation of newcomers' attitudes about an organization and the development of person-environment fit (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). This could be adding to the role ambiguity that the SSO's perceived as part of their challenges. In a study that focuses on role ambiguity and conflict for a variety of reasons, it emerged that "these two [factors] are major role stressors operating in human service organizations, and they have been shown to lead to social workers' burnout, lack of commitment, low job satisfaction, poor performance, and job stress" (Guterman & Jayaratne, 1994).

This article refers specifically to social workers in a multidisciplinary environment. In many ways this is relevant to my study. The role of the SSO is filled by trained social workers on three campuses. They are also working in a team that is multidisciplinary, even though it is more in the sense of working with lecturing and management staff. "A majority of these workers are employed in multidisciplinary settings where other professional perspectives are dominant, where conflicts of interest can complicate and confuse the newcomer, as well as lead to misunderstanding and tension" (Abramson, 1993). I argue here that most of the SSO's perceived their role as not well defined leading to complications as mentioned in my findings.

In the section on systemic and contextual issues, I raised the issue that the manager of the SSO's has a big workload due to the way work is divided within the college. Inevitably it would be difficult for this person to optimally support the SSO's. The SSO's are trained professionals with degrees and they are able to fulfil their roles independently. The problem

arises where there is decisions to be made. As some respondents mentioned, they are not included in decision making and do not have the authority to influence any decisions. The implication of this is that the SSO's are there to support the students and they understand the needs of the students' best. Any decision that they would want to be part of would be to the students' benefit.

According to Kuh (1990), the conventional model for Student services is that the managers "believe they are responsible for articulating what must be done and when, how and by whom it must be done and are expected to measure, evaluate, and reward efficiency and effectiveness" (p. 220). Mandew (2003, p. 32) continues to argue that

[l]ower-level staff in the division looks towards their managers to provide direction because control is exercised in a top-down fashion. The negative effect of this is that it can diminish trust and motivation on those lower down on the divisional hierarchy. The reality, however, is that these 'foot soldiers' on the lower rungs of the command chain who really know the situation on the ground and how matters should be approached.

The challenge for situations such as ours in South Africa is to devise means through which the Student services 'foot soldiers' can be empowered in meaningful and effective ways (Mandew, 2003 p. 32)

An overwhelming number of college respondents perceived that learner support, both academic and counselling, was needed to improve learner success. There was also general agreement that lecturers had been under severe stress from all the policy change in their sector, and that they needed motivation and incentives in the form of better salaries, working conditions and training (Papier, 2009, p. 35). I argue here that the SSO's and the lecturing staff can collaborate in supporting the students. This could make the workloads of both parties easier. However, managers and lecturers need to understand the value of the role that the SSO's fulfil before this could be established.

5.3.4 Category 4: Recommendations to support students more successfully

In terms of the recommendations made, many of the SSO's were aware of how student support was implemented at other TVET Colleges. This added to the recommendations that were made. The two strongest recommendations made by most of the SSO's were that they wanted to work as a team on campus and they wanted more personal support and supervision. Since most of them have more than their 500 student ratio, it would make sense to have more SSO's per campus. They felt that working as a team would mean that they could share the heavy counselling burden and fulfil the other aspects mentioned as part of their job description more effectively.

To be able to advocate for student matters as a team during management meetings would help them to put more things in place that would help them to help the students more. This also links to the recommendation by the SSO's to be able to collaborate more with lecturers and other college staff to help students. In my opinion, if the roles of the SSO's are more clearly defined, other college staff will understand their role and see the worth of collaborating with the SSO's, which will probably lead to more effectively supporting the students.

The SSO's also felt that they have a heavy emotional burden in working with the students. Some of the SSO's do not have a lot of counselling experience and even the ones who do need to be able to discuss some of the cases that they deal with. Many of the respondents felt that there are certain times when they wonder if they are doing the right thing and would like to discuss it with someone with experience in the Counselling or Psychology field. Supervision as part of counselling development has been seen as necessary for many years.

It has long been acknowledged that professional counsellors should participate in ongoing and regular clinical supervision as evidenced by its inclusion in the codes of ethics of professional counselling associations (American Counselling Association, 1995).

In this regard, Bimrose and Wilden (1994) suggest that supervision has the potential to facilitate continuous self-evaluation and learning beyond the initial training phase.

The importance of supervision is thus mentioned in literature, but the need for supervision also causes a conundrum at this college in that not all the SSO's are registered counsellors. While they express the need for supervision, there also needs to be clear boundaries set as to when SSO's should refer cases. Currently the SSO's at the college are part of group supervision sessions once a month. This takes the format of a workshop where certain topics are discussed. While the SSO's felt that this was helpful, they still felt the need to be able to present individual cases. At the moment the SSO's registered as counsellors, would have to pay for supervision and attend it privately. Most of them do not have the financial means to do that and they feel that as counsellors this should be part of what is offered to them by the college. Figure 5.1 summarises the recommendations made by the SSO's.

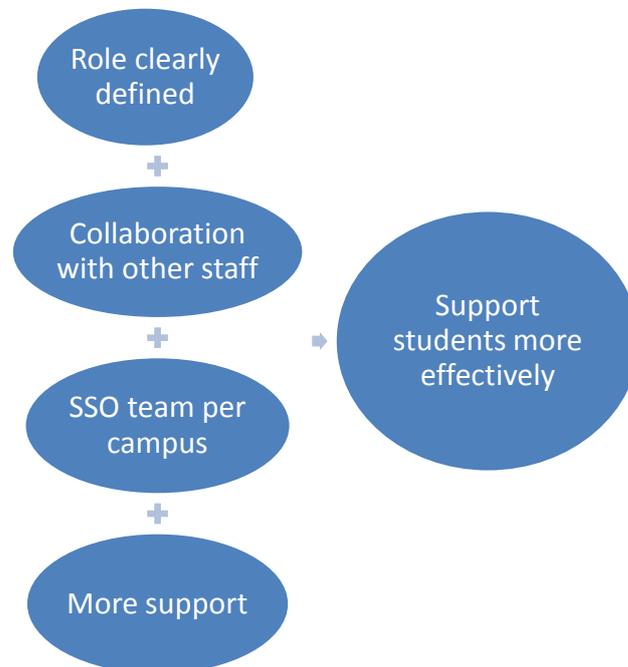


Figure 5.1 Recommendation for more effective student support

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The study was limited in terms of the data collection methods. I could have gained a deeper understanding of their perceptions if I added a focus group interview.

Due to the limited scope of a mini-thesis, this study only focused on the student support from the perceptions of SSO's at one TVET College. Interviewing student supporters from another college would have been more enriching, as well as interviewing students about their needs and experiences on campus.

Being a novice interviewer could also have influenced the data collected. There might have been some information that I missed due to the focus being more on my technique.

More time would have given my study more relevance and this study just reflects a "slice of life" for SSO's. I had one interview with my respondents and thus can only report from their perspectives at the current moment in time.

5.5 STRENGTHS OF STUDY

The study made it possible for the SSO's to be able to share their perceptions and experiences of being in this role. It is a changing TVET College environment, and knowing how the respondents perceived student support could help to improve their role in this time of change.

The low throughput rate and bursaries being utilised without maximum gain is a real and current issue in the TVET sector. Knowing how to support students and staff better can help limit this. The student supporters see what is happening with students every day and therefore their insights are invaluable.

Understanding the role of student supporters and knowing exactly what fulfilling this role entails could assist in policies being implemented for this job description. It could also help refine the role description.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This kind of research could be conducted again in a year or two, to see how the cross-over to DHET has affected the roles of the student supporters.

Similar research could also be done at other TVET Colleges to see if the perceptions generated in this study are perceived by other student supporters as well. It can be done per province and then compared.

Research into how this cohort of students and other college staff perceive the support available to them and their specific support needs could be conducted. Studies into the whole college system in relation to the student supporters could be done, including management and lecturers. Research into the academic support available and how collaboration could be implemented are all research possibilities for the future.

This is a new cohort of students that falls within an Educational Psychologists' scope of practice. The need for support to SSO's, staff and students is something that Educational Psychologists could help establish in TVET Colleges across the country.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Student Support Services have a valuable role to fulfil in supporting students to complete their studies successfully. They are in the position to have a positive influence on students that come from diverse backgrounds. In order for the SSO's to fulfil their role, their importance needs to be acknowledged and this study is to advocate for their role and the importance of developing it more within the TVET College landscape.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT-STELLENBOSCH-UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

Approved with Stipulations New Application

21-Jun-2013
Fryer, Lizelle L

Proposal #: DESC_Fryer2013

Title: Student support services for adolescents at Further Education and Training colleges

Dear Ms Lizelle Fryer,

Your **New Application** received on **06-Jun-2013**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **27-Jun-2013**.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **12-Jun-2013 -11-Jun-2014**

The following stipulations are relevant to the approval of your project and must be adhered to:

Permission letter:

Please ensure that the research does not commence before letter of permission is obtained from the head of Boland College

Please provide a letter of response to all the points raised IN ADDITION to HIGHLIGHTING or using the TRACK CHANGES function to indicate ALL the corrections/amendments of ALL DOCUMENTS clearly in order to allow rapid scrutiny and appraisal.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number (DESC_Fryer2013)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218839027.

Included Documents:

Research proposal
Informed consent
REC Application
Interview guide
Permission letter
DESC form

Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer



UNIVERSITEIT-SELLENBOSCH-UNIVERSITY
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Approval Notice
Stipulated documents/requirements

30-May-2014
Fryer, Lizelle L

Proposal #: DESC/Fryer/June2013/9

Title: Student support services for adolescents at Further Education and Training colleges

Dear Ms Lizelle Fryer,

Your **Stipulated documents/requirements** received on **30-May-2014**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **30-May-2014** and was approved.
Sincerely,

Clarissa GRAHAM
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT-STELLENBOSCH-UNIVERSITY
2006 Kennis is die kern van jou toekoms (2011/12)

The Principal

7 May 2013

Permission to do research study for my master's degree

I hereby request permission to do research with Student Support personnel by way of telephonic interviews.

Title of study: *Student Support Services for adolescents at Further Education and Training Colleges.*

Your sincerely

Lizelle Fryer
MEd Psych Student
University of Stellenbosch

Permission granted.

APPENDIX C

INVITATION TO BE PART OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Student Support Officer

Invitation to be part of my study

I am currently doing my Master's degree in Educational Psychology through the University of Stellenbosch. As part of my research, I have to do a thesis. The title of my thesis is as follows:

Student Support Services for adolescents at Further Education and Training Colleges

I am interested in finding out what it entails to be a Student Support Staff member at an FET College. I also want to look at the documents about student Support available and get a sense of how far the "ideal" of what student support should be is from the "reality" of what is realistically doable. There is such a big focus on the FET Colleges currently, and these colleges have an important role to play in the Educational landscape of our country.

I therefore invite you to volunteer your participation in the study. Participation would include an individual interview with each student support officer. The date and time will be confirmed, it will be during the second term. I do not envisage the interviews to take longer than an hour. If you have any questions you are welcome to contact me at xxxxxx

I will give feedback about my findings after the study is completed.

Yours Sincerely

Lizelle Fryer

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCHUNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Student support services for adolescents at Further Education and Training colleges

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Lizelle Fryer MEd Psych student, from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are involved in student support at an FET College

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My purpose is to investigate what services student support personnel are able to give to support vulnerable adolescents at FET Colleges. I want to establish what is working and where the perceived gaps are in what is currently available. I am focusing particularly on the student support officer's experience of the support they can offer, what kind of support can be offered and how this links to the students' needs.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you would be asked to do the following things:

Take part in a telephonic interview and a follow-up focus group interview. The college gave permission for a telephonic interview only, as they do not want me to impose on College time to conduct my study. I will make use of a semi-structured questionnaire in addition to the telephonic interview to be filled in by you that will cover aspects of student support, like qualifications needed to be a student support officer, the job description, where the student support officers fit into the FET College system and the realities of being in this position.

The interviews will be about your role as a student support officer, looking specifically at the successes and the challenges facing student support.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no perceived risks or discomforts expected in this study.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will gain a better understanding of the challenges and successes that their support offers. They will also have the opportunity to discuss their experience in their roles as student support officers. My findings will be revealed to the participants involved.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive any payment

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can potentially identify you or the institution will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. I will use pseudonyms to protect your identity. Confidentiality will be maintained by saving the data on a computer that is password protected. Only I as the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the raw data. The data will be stored for five years in a cabinet that only I will have access to.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at XXXXX

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the university's Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [me/the participant] by [name of relevant person] in [Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other] and [I am the participant] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [me/him/her]. [I/the participant] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [my/his/her] satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Title of study: Student Support for Adolescents at Further Education and Training Colleges

Interview Questions:

1. What are your qualifications and how many years' experience?
2. Please give me a description of your role as an SSO?
3. How do you see your role within the bigger context of the college?
4. Describe the NC(V) student and what kind of referrals do you get with regards to them?
5. How are the NC(V) students different from the NATED students?
6. How do you feel about the Student Support Services Framework?
7. What recommendations would you put forward within the college context?

APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPTION OF ORIGINAL INTERVIEW

Onderhoud met SSO, 6 September 2013 (I 6)

1 Watter kwalifikasies het jy?

2 Maatskaplik en 'n HOD voorligting.

3 Hoeveel jaar werksondervinding en watter tipe?

4 Ok, dit varieer, weet jy wat na swottings is ek oorsee, ek het 'n
5 verskeidenheid, van caring tot onderwys deurgegaan en toe
6 het ek oorgegaan Amerika toe en daar op 'n kamp gewerk met
7 mentally, physically disabled mense van 5 tot 60. Daar was ek
8 vir vier jaar, en toe terug Suid-Afrika toe en daarna het ek
9 Audio Blocks gegee. Dit was maar 'n stryd om terug in die
10 sisteem te kom, jy weet hulle sê stuur jou CV om op die
11 databasis te kom vir maatskaplike werkers, jy het die skills,
12 dis 'n fabel, die mense kom nooit na jou toe terug nie. Maar
13 soos ek sê ek het Audio blocks gedoen, ek het ingekom by
14 'n seuntjie en bietjie au-pairing gedoen, hy was
15 gemainstream en ek was sy hoofassiliteerder en daarna het
16 ek by die College ingekom. Hy was severely disabled met
17 cerebral palsy. (EXPERIENCE)

19 Wanneer het jy by die college begin?

20 2008. Dis nou my vyfde jaar en dit is awesome, dis 'n baie
21 lekker werk. (HOW LONG IN ROLE)

22 Kan jy vir my 'n kort opsomming gee van jou rol as 'n

23SO.

24 Jy is 'n jack of all trade master of none. Jy het 'n (ROLE
DESCRIPTION)

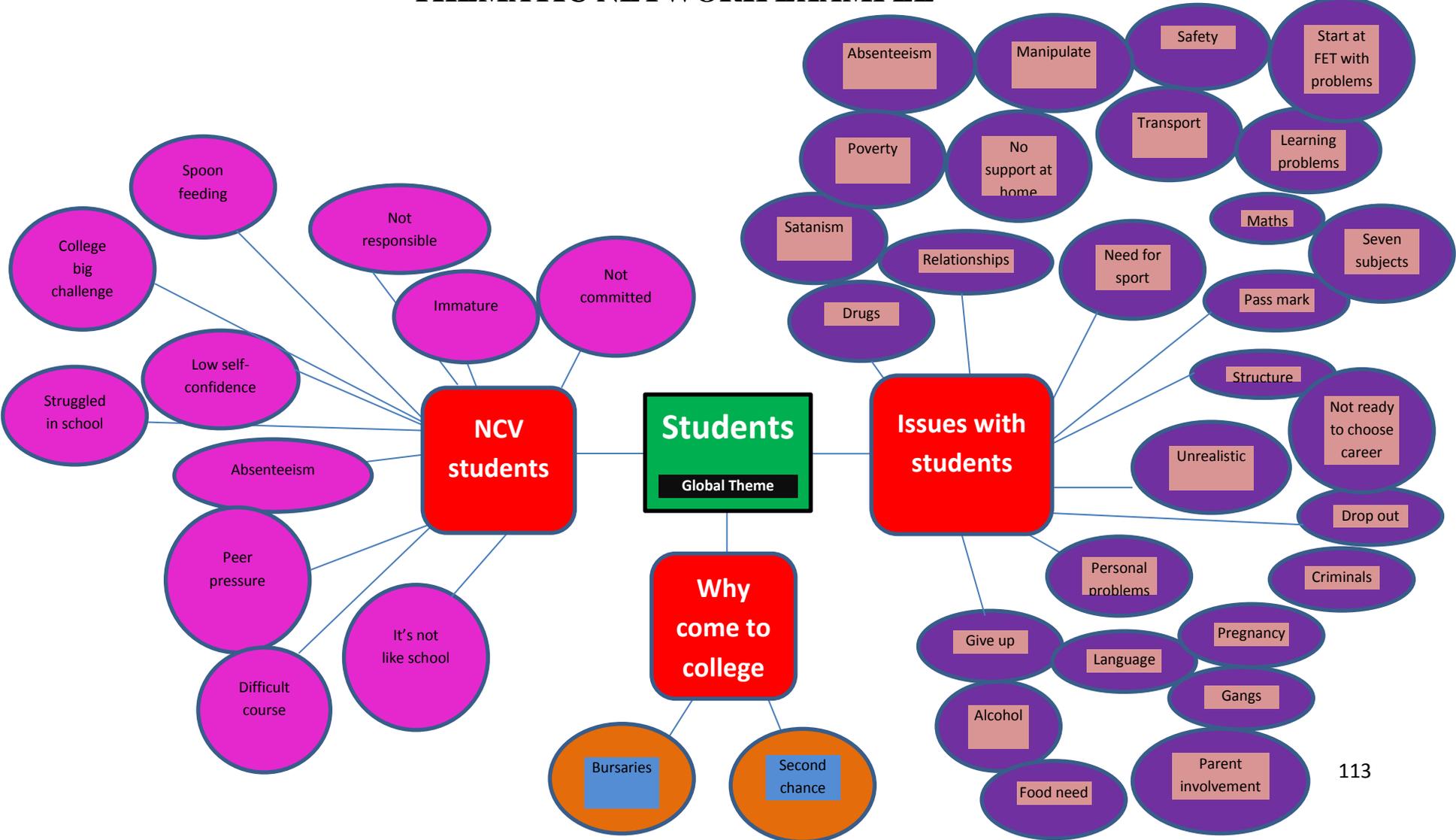
25verskeidenheid rolle wat jy vertolk, akademiese, leierskap,
26counseling en so aan en dis maar wyd verspreid, maar jy is
27 daar vir die student. Hulle storm hier in as dit vir taxi's is,
28hulle storm hier in as hulle uit 'n klas uitgejaag is, hulle storm
29 hier in as hulle sport toebehore benodig, so jy is daar op nie
30 akademiese vlak. Vir enigiets nie-akademiese, daar is ons.

31 Hoeveel tyd vat dit om by die SR betrokke te wees?

32 Dit hang af van die effektiwiteit van die SR. Ek was
33voorheen baie meer intensief betrokke by die SR as die
34laaste twee jaar omrede daar was 'n 42-jarige vrou as
35voorsitter, en weet jy wat op 'n stadium het die SR op hul eie
36 voete begin staan, maar ongelukkig het sy verlede jaar nie
37 opgeskop nie, kon sy nie verder swot nie en hierdie jaar was
38 daar alreeds in die fase van ons is onafhanklik, iets wat ek
39 by hulle wil kweek, maar net jy weet wou glad nie leiding vat
40 nie en dit was vir hulle moeilik, want die leiers, sy was 'n
41geweldige sterk leier, dit was groot skoen om vol te staan en
42 dit was 'n onbestrede SR, so dit was nie noodwendig jou
43sterk leiers nie.

APPENDIX G

THEMATIC NETWORK EXAMPLE



APPENDIX H

GROUPING QUOTES TOGETHER

Golden nuggets for answering research question 1

“Watookal die probleem, of akademies stuur hulle die student na ons toe en dan moet ons basies die persoon help, enige probleem word gestuur na SSO, finansiëel, verhoudings watookal die probleme kan wees” (I 1)

“En dan moet ons toesien dat kultuur, dis nou goed soos danse, dramas, ons sing en almal dit ja, dit moet deur die SSO’s gedoen word en dan nog “wellness” moet ons ook doen, ons laat gewoonlik die bloed skenk kom gewoonlik in, of toetsing vir HIV of ons laat “health and wellness” is ook deel van die SSO’s se werk op die kampus.” (I 1)

“En dan studente, jy is ook daar half daar om dinge te “create” op kampus jy moet “create”, hulle wil kultuurdag hê en dis ook groot lading wat hulle op jou plaas, studente, deur middel van die studenteraad, sal hulle vir jou sê, maar hoekom doen ons nie dit nie hoe kan ons dit en dit. Dis die een ding elke keer as iets nuuts gebeur op die kampus of hulle wil iets nuuts implementeer, dan kom dit gewoonlik na ons toe.” (I 1)

“Ja ons doen die PACE ons doen die CAP doen ons en ons doen ook ‘n one-on-one counselling met studente, probeer vir hulle raad gee.” (I 1)

“Ja individuele probleme kan jy nie regtigwaar na kyk nie. So hulle het nie verblyf nie hulle kom na jou toe hulle het nie kos nie hulle kom na jou toe. Studente kom van Namibië af hulle kom van Zimbabwe af met “transport” probleme, hulle kom na jou toe.” (I 1)

“Alles van dit doen ons saam met die SRC, van a tot b, ons het ‘n program, ons het begroting vir dit, so ons doen gewoonlik ‘n groot verwelkomingsprogram. Dit strek gewoonlik oor twee tot drie dae op ‘n kampus, en dan doen ons nou alles, verduidelik vir hulle waar die klasse gaan wees, verduidelik wie die dosente is, verduidelik vir hulle die akademie, alles ons verduidelik wat die SRC doen, die “code of conduct”, so dis ‘n groot groot projek wat ons doen gewoonlik.” (I 1)

“Ons help ook met student wat konsessies kry en so help ons ook.” (I 1)

APPENDIX I

AFRIKAANS QUOTES OF PARTICIPANTS BY CATEGORY

Category 1

Basies is 'n goeie beskrywing dat jy 'n jack of all trades is. (I 3)

Weet jy as iemand vir my vra oor "Student support" dan hardloop my kop, want waar begin mens. Daar is so baie dinge. (I 3)

En dan het ons ook baie armoede, wat baie goed tot gevolg het, soos studente wat miskien nie konsentreer in die klas nie, dan vind ons uit, ok die student het nie geëet vanoggend nie. (I 4)

Persoonlike berading wat dan enigiets kan wees, meise wat verkrag word of studiemetodes, enigiets soos dit. (I 5)

Ek voel persoonlik die rol van "Student support" het baie geskuif na maatskaplike werk toe. Dis nie baie akademiese ondersteuning nie. (I 5)

Dan moet ons nou saamwerk met die SRC. Op ons kampus is daar 8 lede en 2 addisioneel wat in die koshuis is. Hulle is self ook nog jonk en het hul eie issues wat jy as SO moet hanteer. Soms bring hulle nie hul kant nie en dan moet jy as SO instaan, dit hou jou weg van ander student wat jou nodiger op daardie stadium kon gehad het. (I 3)

Alle SRC aktiwiteite vat baie tyd, maar die sport vat veral baie tyd en ek voel dit moenie aangesien ons 'n sport koördineerder het wat die sport moet reël, maar op kampus is jy nog steeds verantwoordelik daarvoor. Jou SR help beplan, maar op die einde is jy nog steeds die een wat die spanne bymekaar moet kry, dat balle opgepomp is, dat klere gewas is, dit vat baie tyd, dan die vrywaringsvorme wat geteken moet word, dan sit mens heeldag daar langs die veld, dit vat baie tyd, op 'n dag van sport kan jy maar die hele dag uitsit. Twee weke voor die tyd moet jy begin beplan aan 'n byeenkoms. (I 5)

Byvoorbeeld die week voor 'n sportdag is chaos, want jy probeer studente kry, jy bel busse, jy fassiliteer vergaderings jy kry die class reps, jy hou by, jy moet die ding bestuur. (I 6)

Op ons kampus sit ons vier dae na 'n week uit waar ons voldag net toetse doen. Ons het nou in Julie 300 gedoen in die drie dae, en dan het ons in die daaropvolgende weke een of twee toestings per dag as daar nog studente in daai tye kom. (I 5)

Ons help ook met studente wat konsessies kry en so help ons ook. (I 1)

En dan moet ons toesien dat kultuur, dis nou goed soos danse, dramas, ons sing en almal dit ja, dit moet deur die SSO's gedoen word en dan nog "wellness" moet ons ook doen, ons laat

gewoonlik die bloed skenk kom gewoonlik in, of toetsing vir HIV of ons laat “health and wellness” is ook deel van die SSO’s se werk op die kampus. (I 1)

En saam met die SR werk ons dan ook aan sosiale aktiwiteite, funksies, alle sport geleenthede, dan is jy betrokke by die “health and wellness” programme. Bloedskenk die polisie se honde-eenheid wat uitkom, Gemeenskapswerk waar ons uithelp. (I 5)

En dan studente, jy is ook daar half daar om dinge te “create” op kampus jy moet “create”, hulle wil kultuurdag hê en dis ook groot lading wat hulle op jou plaas, studente, deur middel van die studenteraad, sal hulle vir jou sê, maar hoekom doen ons nie dit nie hoe kan ons dit en dit. Dis die een ding elke keer as iets nuuts gebeur op die kampus of hulle wil iets nuuts implementeer, dan kom dit gewoonlik na ons toe. (I 1)

Enige odd job word na die SSO toe gestuur, alles wat ekstra gedoen moet gebeur op die kampus word na die SSO toe gestuur. (I 5)

Jy word elke dag met nuwe uitdagings gekonfronteer, dinge wat jy moet doen wat jy oor moet gaan navorsing doen, gaan navrae doen oor hoe werk die proses. (I 4)

Hulle het sport, SRC, nuwe dinge op kampus moet hulle implimenteer, en hulle moet nou ook afwesighede opvolg, want dit is nog deel van hulle, want jy sien hoekom is die studente afwesig? Dis nou die life skills gedeelte wat inkom en hulle moet dit nou doen. Die ideaal is dat hulle moet groepwerk ook doen met hierdie kinders. Ag nee hulle rol is baie vol. Hulle moet kan multitask. (I 2)

Category 2

Weet jy daar is ‘n paar uitdagings. Die eerste ene is dat die kinders is emosioneel onvolwasse. Baie sterk. Hulle is net nie ryp vir die college sektor nie. En die college is nie ‘n skool nie, so daar is verskriklik vryheid en hierdie kinders kan glad nie die vryheid hanteer nie. (I 2)

Immature, dit is vir hulle ‘n nuwe ervaring, hulle is gewoond aan in die skool wees en dan is dit half, hulle is vry hier. Hulle aanvaar nie verantwoordelikheid vir hule aksies baie kere nie. (I 4)

Ons sukkel om vir hulle committed te kry, sê nou maar ons het akademiese ondersteuning, dan het ons ekstra klasse wat ons aanbied. Jy is basies verantwoordelik daarvoor. Jou ekstra klasse is nie op die rooster nie, dis jou af-periodes, wat jy dan toetsaan vir ‘n ekstra les vir engels of wiskunde. So dis jou eie verantwoordelikheid om tot daar te kom, so ons sukkel met die student. (I 4)

NC(V) is nie so committed, hulle wil alles kry, maar wil nie self insit nie. Die 93 NC(V) is regtig nog klein kindertjies, hulle woon nie baie klas by, alles 94 moet nog gedoen word vir hulle en maklik gemaak word. (I 5)

Kyk, hierdie student (NC(V)) is nou studente wat vars van die skool af kom. Hulle het 'n graad 9. Groepsdruk is 'n uitdaging vir hulle, groepsdruk en dan ook die feit dat baie van hulle nie akademies sterk is nie, nou kom hulle college toe en sukkel hier. (I 8)

As jy nou gaan kyk na die koshuise, sal jy sien dis die jonger kinders, die ouer kinders bank ook, maar die jonger kinders sukkel baie meer om hulle voete te vind in die akademiese omgewing. Hulle raak baie maklik gedruk oor peer pressure. So hulle is die outjies wat, joe, hulle raak maklik onder dwelms, as iemand se kom ons skip klas vandag, dan sal die jonger kinders makliker saamgaan. (I 2)

Die kinders, as gevolg van hulle emosionele onvolwassenheid skop maklik op, hulle gee maklik op. Hulle het nie die deursettingsvermoë om die eise te kan hanteer nie. So hulle kom van die skole af, baie kom van die skole af, hulle is 16 jaar oud, maar hulle is nog steeds in Graad 9, M.a.w hulle is 'n akademiese failure, nou kom hulle daarmee na ons toe, want ons bied nou vir hulle 'n uitkoms, hulle kan nou by ons die NC(V) doen. Beroepsgerigte kursusse. Die kursus is nie wat hulle verwag nie. Die kursus se akademiese inhoud is baie sterk, dis nie die praktiese kursus. Hulle hou nie van leer nie, want hulle het 'n slegte ervaring, is emosioneel, nou kom hulle by die college en dis nie genoeg prakties nie, dis baie teoreties en hulle moet nog steeds leer. En hulle raak betrokke by hierdie ander goeters en hulle het nog nie toekomsvisie nie. So dis die ander ding, behalwe dat hy nie emosioneel reg is nie, hy is nog nie reg om 'n loopbaankeuse te maak nie. (I 2)

Category 3

Ek kry die idee hulle dink nog nie ons is so belangrik nie. En net so by the way. Dis die boodskap wat ek kry. (I 7)

As daar iets is wat gedoen moet word, is dit net aag wat die studente ondersteuner sal dit doen. Ek voel glad nie appreciated hier nie. (I 8)

Op kampus word jy geklas as deel van die admin personeel. My persoonlike gevoel is dat ons nie werklik van waarde geag word op kampus nie. En dit is eintlik 'n gevoel wat baie vandie SO's ervaar. Jy voel partykeer soos 'n dumping site, 'n dosent is bereid om 'n student te help soos hulle dink hulle kan, maar as dit nou te erg raak, en hulle weet nie watter kant toe nie, dan is jy nou die beste kandidaat om die student te help, maar hulle ag jou nie waardevol nie. Hulle sal besluite neem en miskien dinge op hulle eie doen en nie sê, ok kom ons betrek die studente ondersteuner nie. Meeste van hulle nie almal nie, akademie bly die kern besigheid vir hulle. Studente ondersteuning is net 'n byvoegsel, dis nie werklik belangrik nie. (I 4)

Weet jy, daar is 'n professionele snobisme in die colleges. Jy kan my "quote". Akademie is waaroor dit gaan. (I 2)

Die mense verloor voeling dat ons met studente werk en wat hulle behoeftes is, maar academics is die core business, dis al waaroor dit gaan).(I 6)

Hulle aanvaar student om die getalle vol te maak. Dis ons krisis, ons bespreek dit altyd gedurende ons vergaderings, want ons voel op die einde van die dag wat is ons rol, hoekom doen ons dan die toetse? (I 4)

Daar is baie studente in klasse wat nie daar behoort te wees nie, wat ons identifiseer het aan die begin van die jaar as 'n hoë risiko student wat hulle gesê het ons wil getalle vol maak en die student laat registreer he. (I 5)

Dit gaan oor bums on seats, ons kan aanbevelings maak, maar op die ou einde as gevolg van geskiedenis berus die finale besluit by die akademie. (I 6)

Ek dink somtyds vergeet die personeel jy is nie net 'n student ondersteuner somer net so nie, hulle dink by jy het nie kwalifikasies nie, of jy het net somer so kwalifikasie en ons het nie daai kwalifikasies en dan onmiddelik is die hantering of die samewerking vir die SO is ook anders. So jy is gedurig besig om jouself te bewys om daai erkenning te kry wat ek voel nie nodig is nie, want ons is almal hier om 'n rol te vervul. (I 3)

Ek dink nie al die mense wat by die college self, lektore en die admin mense weet regtig waaroor gaan "Student support" nie, en wat jy alles moes geswot het om dit te kan doen nie. Ek dink hulle dink ons is admin, ek dink nie hulle sien die belangrikheid van ons nie. (I 5)

Die ander ding ook die SO is ook daar om al die vuil werkies te doen as ek dit nou so mag sê, dan voel jy jou rol as SO word soms msibruik en dit raak vir jou 'n frustrasie. (I 3)

Jy kan nie self besluite neem nie, almal wil jou baas wees, vir alles moet jy goedkeuring kry, jy kan nie eie inisiatief vat nie, dis nog 'n probleem. (I 5)

Tydens management meetings word ek nie ernstig opgeneem nie. Ek maak myself gereed om te praat, en ek is nie daar vir myself nie, ek is daar vir die student. Om alleen daar te sit, ek voel lonely, die management sien nie altyd raak die belangrikheid van die studente sake nie. (I 8)

Ons weet wat die rol is, ek weet nie of ander mense die nut sien nie, hulle verstaan nie die behoefte van die studente nie. Of dat ons 'n rol het nie en hoe belangrik daai rol is nie. Die department verstaan en as ek sê department is dit letterlik die SO span verstaan die bydrae. Maar ek sal vir jou sê hoër op as ons bestuurder, is daar geen begrip nie. It's a nice to have not a necessity. Daar is voorheen reguit vir ons gesê en dis nie die die CEO van nou nie, het voorheen reguit vir ons gesê, a daar 'n budget cut is, is julle die eerste departement wat gaan. (I 6)

Met die skuif het job placement die bestuurder van SO se verantwoordelikheid geword En die ondersteuning na die SO's het ongelukkig weggeval. (I 2)

Die hoof is baie besig, sy probeer, maar kyk sy het Job placement ook by haar. (I 3)

So jy as SO sit daar, jy wil seker maak jy doen die regte ding, jy het klomp vrae, vir wie bel jy, die hoof is oppad na 'n vergadering toe, of sy sit in "n vergadering, wie vra jy?. (I 3)

Category 4

Ek dink as jy kyk na ons ratio, dit 1:500 studente, so as ons twee kan wees op 'n kampus, dan sal dinge definitief baie beter gaan. (I 1)

Is as die SO's hulp kry en kan terugkom na die ratio van 1:500, wat in elke geval hul ratio is. Meer as een SO op 'n kampus, afhangende van hoeveel studente op die kampus is volgens daai ratio. Dan kan mens diversifiseer en hulle kan hul sterk punte uitleef, dan kan die een die SR vat en al die klasleiers en groepleiers, en dan gaan mens die kampusklimaat verander, en dan kan jy een kry wat net counselling doen, of almal doen counselling 'n bietjie want een gaan nie genoeg wees, maar die een wat sterk is daarin kan net dit doen. (I 2)

Nog 'n SO sal ook help. (I 4)

Ek dink net meer hulpbronne, met meer mense op 'n kampus sal jy 'n groter hoeveelheid studente kan bereik. , maar dan is jou fondse beperk en as jy net een is, op my kampus is daar byvoorbeeld 1 500 studente en dan kan mens net nie by almal uitkom nie En ook om groot funksies, groot klasse aan te bied, klaskamers is beperk en rekenaars is beperk, net om almal te bereik. (I 5)

En dan ook personeel, soos veral akademiese personeel wat hul samewerking gee, as jy partykeer bv klasbywoningspersentasies nodig het, of jy het inligting nodig oor 'n spesifieke student, en dan is dit half van jy kry net nie terugvoering nie.(I 4)

Hulle kompartementaliseer akademie, SO, geskei en dis 'n probleem en totdat hulle gaan sien, maar ons is integraal deel van mekaar, is dit 'n groot probleem. (I 6)

Ook as 'n mens meer in 'n multi-dissiplinere span goedjies aanpak, en dat dit nie net so streng le op die verantwoordelikheid van 'n SO nie. (I 7)

Weet jy, wat ons altyd vir hulle sê is, kies dit waarin jy sterk is, jy kan nie alles doen nie, so kies daai wat jy graag wil doen. Kies waarin jy sterk is en doen dit. So as jy sterk is op leierskapontwikkeling gaan saam met die SR, hou die ander in stand, maar leef jou uit in die SR. Of as jy sterk is in sport. Watookal jy voel, as jy sterk is in counselling, doen dit. Watookal jy voel. Maar dit is ontmoontlik vir hulle om alles te doen(I 2).

Ek dink ook erkenning is baie belangrik, as ons aanbevelings maak dat dit erken word, dis belangrik, 'n groot ding. (I 1)

Net daai acknowledgement ook van 'n SO se insae is ook soveel meer belangriker. (I 7)

Ek dink as ons miskien net ons rol op kampus weer duidelik gekommunikeer kan word sal dit dit makliker maak, want dan het jy nie die onnodige versoeke wat na jou kant toe kom nie. (I 4)

Daar is veronderstel om supervisie te wees. Dis glad nie hoe ek supervisie ken nie. Daar is nie geleentheid om te praat oor wat jy ervaar of met wat jy te doen kry nie. (I 5)

Ek dink wat ons nodig het is om fisies gevalle voor te lê en sê, dit is waarmee ek professioneel worstel. (I 3)

Ek dink juis omdat hulle op 'n groter kampus is dat hulle die supervisie van die bestuurder af kry om spesifieke gevalle en jou uitdagings met dinge op kampus wat anders is. (I 7)

Dan kry jy van die dosente wat meer uit die NATED programme kom wat sommer van die staanspoor sê, kyk hier ons is nie maatskaplike werkers nie ons wil nie betrokke wees nie, so wat jy van hulle nodig het is ook weer 'n gesukkel. (I 3)

Dat ons duidelikheid moet kry oor wat ons rol is en interns, en duidelikheid oor wat hulle rol is. Dit is 'n groot ding dat hulle nie reg aangestel is nie, my intern is baie ongelukkig, so opdragte word nie uitgevoer nie, dit laat my werk agter raak of dit lyk asof ek nie by my werk uitkom nie, daarvoor moet duidelikheid wees. (I 8)

Chapter 5

Ja ek wou vir jou genoem het, baie van die SSO's is maatskaplike werkers baie is beraders of het sielkundige agtergrond, maar daar is nie regtigwaar 'n plek wat jou kan oplei en se hier is nou 'n SSO nie, verstaan, UNISA het iets wat ek vir jou wil wys. 'n "Student Development course" (I 1)