



Stakeholder Perceptions of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia: A Social Realist Perspective

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Declaration

I, Beatha Ndinela Kapolo, affirm that I am the sole author of this research, which investigates the perceptions of stakeholders regarding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia. This work has not been presented for any academic qualification or assessment at any other institution. I have provided complete references and acknowledgments for all the sources I have cited or utilized, following the guidelines of the department.

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Date

Abstract

The role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is acknowledged globally for preparing the skilled labour needed to transform countries' economic prosperity. The importance of skilled labour has increased in Namibia's industrial sector as the country's Vision 2030 focuses on developing a knowledge-based economy. This mixed method study explored the stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia through the lens of social realism to understand the structural, cultural and agential conditions that shape stakeholders' views. A questionnaire was distributed to 145 TVET trainees at the selected six state-owned public Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), and 350 grade 11-12 secondary school learners. Analysis revealed mixed perceptions. Most secondary school learners showed negative perceptions of TVET, while TVET trainees expressed positive views. Interviews held with 11 key informants, including national leaders, career guidance teachers, parents and employers of TVET graduates were transcribed and uploaded to ATLAS.ti 22 for analysis and coding. The findings reveal that both structural and cultural conditions shape the perception of TVET. Notably, historical legacies of colonialism (Germany) and occupation (South Africa) have maintained educational structures, favoring academic over vocational streams, with limited articulation between them. The study also revealed that despite the enduring stigmas surrounding technical and vocational education, stakeholders still recognize the value of TVET in promoting job opportunities, economic growth, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. The study highlights the agency of stakeholders, as teachers shoulder responsibility for the success of vocational education, and parents advise their children to pursue vocational careers, even in the face of resource constraints, lack of information, and preparedness. The study proposes several solutions to bridge the gap between TVET institutions and the job market. Firstly, regular evaluations and revisions of TVET curriculum standards are recommended to meet industry needs and technological advancements.

Secondly, more efforts are required to improve societal attitudes towards TVET and promote the value of vocational education in meeting labour market demands. Lastly, strengthening partnerships between TVET institutions, secondary schools, and industries through internships and apprenticeships is advised to ensure responsiveness to labour market demands.

Keywords: Stakeholder Perceptions, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, structural conditions, cultural conditions, agency

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my lovely husband, Martin Kapolo, and to my children. Thank you, Martin and the children, for bringing so much love, joy and peace into my life. Martin, every day with you is a blessing and I am grateful. I am extremely grateful to you for your belief in me throughout this process, for your continuous support, understanding of my absence from the children, and appreciation of my work, and for your help in getting me through this process.

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Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
List of Appendices.....	xiii
List of Acronyms.....	xiv
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Background and rationale.....	1
1.2 The context of the study	3
1.3 Namibia and its setting	3
1.4 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia: Historical Perspectives and Evolution	7
1.4.1 TVET Education in Pre-Colonial Namibia: Traditional Foundations and Missionary Influence	8
1.4.2 Evolution of TVET Education in Namibia Under Colonial Influence.....	9
1.4.3 Education Reforms in Post-Independence Namibia: Focus on TVET Implementation and Evolution	11
1.4.4 Shape and feel of TVET in Namibia	13
1.5 Statement of the problem.....	16
1.6 Main research questions	17
1.7 Secondary questions	17
1.8 Research aims and objectives	18
1.9 Significance and anticipated contribution of the study.....	18
1.10 Brief overview of the design and methodological approach of research	19
1.11 Chapter outline	19
1.12 Limitations of the study.....	21
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Structure, culture, and agency debate	24
2.3 Margaret Archer's Social Realism Theory	25
2.3.1 Archer and the problem of conflation	27
2.3.2 Archer's analytical dualism as a solution to conflation.....	29
2.3.3 Structure domain and its properties.....	31
2.3.4 Culture Domain and its key properties.....	33
2.3.5 Agency domain and its key properties	34
2.3.6 Morphogenesis and Morphostasis (M/M)	39
2.4 Reflexivity /Stakeholder internal conversation.....	47
2.5 Social Realist Perspectives viz-a-viz the perception of TVET	49

2.6	Summary	51
3	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	52
3.1	Introduction	52
3.2	The historical development of TVET and its importance to economic development and society	52
3.3	International perspectives on TVET educational systems/models	63
3.3.1	The Singapore TVET model	63
3.3.2	The German Dual model	66
3.3.3	The Australian model	68
3.3.4	The Rwandan model	69
3.4	The evolution and historical development of TVET in Namibia.....	72
3.5	Namibia TVET training approaches	75
3.5.1	The modular system.....	75
3.5.2	Competency Based Education and Training (CBET).....	76
3.6	Perceptions of TVET among stakeholders	78
3.6.1	Negative stakeholder perceptions of TVET	79
3.6.2	TVET is inferior in relation to academic education	80
3.6.3	TVET produces weak market labour outcomes.....	81
3.6.4	TVET has a lower status in society	83
3.6.5	Socioeconomic status of parents	83
3.6.6	A weak post-school articulation system	85
3.6.7	Inherent weaknesses in TVET institutions	85
3.7	Positive perceptions of TVET among stakeholders.....	86
3.7.1	Perceptions of the contribution of TVET to socioeconomic development	87
3.7.2	Perceptions of the contribution of TVET to gainful employment	88
3.8	Limitations and strengths of the literature reviewed.....	89
3.9	Summary	90
4	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	91
4.1	Introduction	91
4.2	Methodological orientation.....	91
4.3	Methodology.....	94
4.3.1	The Quantitative Component	94
4.3.2	Population and sampling	95
4.3.3	Purposive Sampling	96
4.3.4	Stratified Sampling.....	96
4.3.5	Methods.....	97
4.3.6	Methods used to recruit participants.....	98
4.3.6.1	<i>Recruitment of prospective TVET trainees (Grade 11-12 learners at the four selected secondary schools) questionnaire</i>	<i>98</i>
4.3.6.2	<i>Recruitment of first year TVET trainees to participate in the study questionnaire</i>	<i>99</i>
4.3.7	Risk Mitigation Strategy	99
4.4	Data analysis.....	102

4.4.1	Measures of validity and reliability	102
4.5	The qualitative part of the study	103
4.5.1	Population and sampling	103
4.5.2	Methods.....	104
4.5.3	Data analysis	105
4.5.4	Measures of validity (trustworthiness)	106
4.6	Ethical considerations.....	106
4.7	Intellectual significance of the study	107
4.8	Limitations of the study.....	108
5	STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF TVET IN NAMIBIA: QUANTITATIVE ACCOUNTS AMONG TRAINEES AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN NAMIBIA	109
5.1	Introduction	109
5.2	Section A: Perceptions of TVET among state owned VTC trainees	110
5.4	TVET trainees' demographic	111
5.4.1	Age of the TVET respondents.....	111
5.4.2	Gender and highest grade level of respondents	112
5.4.3	TVET course enrolments	112
5.4.4	Perceptions of TVET among VTC trainees.....	113
5.4.5	Perceptions of state owned VTC trainees about the value of TVET in Namibia.....	114
5.4.6	Perceptions of VTC trainees about their experiences of TVET in Namibia.....	116
5.4.7	The reasons VTC trainees give for enrolment in a VTC	118
5.4.8	State owned VTC trainees' perceptions about the value of TVET in Namibia	119
5.4.9	Exploratory Factor Analysis results (EFAs).....	119
5.4.10	Eigenvalues of the factors	121
	5.4.10.1 Factor 1: Perceived quality of TVET education.....	123
	5.4.10.2 Factor 2: Perceived stereotypes of TVET education.....	123
	5.4.10.3 Factor 3: Perceived value of the TVET education system.....	124
5.5	Section B: Secondary school learners' perceptions of TVET.....	124
5.5.1	Demographics of the secondary school learners study sample.....	125
5.5.2	Overview of Secondary school learners' descriptive results	125
5.5.3	Summary and conclusion	127
6	STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF TVET IN NAMIBIA: QUALITATIVE ACCOUNTS	128
6.1	Introduction	128
6.2	Overall findings	128
6.3	Theme 1: TVET as quality education	129
6.3.1	Perceptions of the structural qualities and stereotypes of TVET.....	130
	6.3.1.1 Structural challenges of the TVET System	130
	6.3.1.2 Perceived Stereotypes about TVET Education.....	132
6.3.2	TVET and Career Guidance	136
6.3.3	Parents' Perceptions of their Advising Role.....	136

6.3.3.1	<i>Parents' Perceptions of Career Guidance</i>	137
6.3.3.2	<i>Perceptions on Decisions for Children's Career Choice</i>	138
6.3.4	Career and Area of Specialisation	140
6.3.4.1	<i>Life Skills Teachers Workshop Attended</i>	141
6.4	Theme 2: TVET for sustainability	142
6.4.1	Perceived Value of TVET in Namibia	143
6.4.1.1	<i>Perceptions on the Design of TVET</i>	143
6.4.1.2	<i>Perceived Role of TVET in Namibia</i>	145
6.4.2	Perceptions of the Relationships Between NTA and the Ministry of Basic Education	147
6.5	Theme 3: Perceptions of TVET linked to the socioeconomic status of parents	148
6.5.1	Perceptions on the Promotion of TVET	149
6.5.2	Recommendations of TVET	150
6.5.2.1	<i>Parents Perceptions on Recommending TVET</i>	150
6.5.2.2	<i>Teacher's view on recommending TVET to their learners</i>	151
6.6	Theme 4: TVET as a response to global challenges	152
6.6.1	Perceptions of the link between education and employment	153
6.6.2	Perceptions on Improving the Labour Market	154
6.6.3	Perceptions on the role of TVET on the future of education and employment	155
6.6.4	Perceptions on improving the labour market	156
6.7	Conclusions	157
7	STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WAY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE TVET IN NAMIBIA.....	159
7.1	Introduction	159
7.2	Structural conditions responsible for stakeholder perceptions of TVET	159
7.2.1	The Structure of the Namibian education system	160
7.2.1.1	<i>The Focus on the academic stream rather than TVET, and a lack of clearly defined articulation</i>	161
7.2.1.2	<i>Lack of connection between the Ministry of Basic Education and the Ministry of Higher Education</i>	162
7.2.2	Inadequate career guidance in secondary schools	165
7.2.3	The influence of parents and teachers	167
7.2.4	The structure of the TVET subsector of the Namibian education system	169
7.2.4.1	<i>Inconsistent admission requirements in TVET</i>	170
7.2.4.2	<i>Neglect of informal and non-formal training</i>	171
7.2.4.3	<i>Non-alignment of NQF levels between basic education and TVET on the NQF</i>	174
7.2.4.4	<i>A fragmented TVET system with hybrid programme offerings</i>	176
7.2.5	The structure of the TVET curriculum design	178
7.2.6	Insufficient TVET advocacy, information, and motivation	180
7.3	Cultural conditions influencing stakeholder perceptions of TVET	182
7.3.1	The value and importance of TVET	183
7.3.1.1	<i>TVET and global development</i>	185
7.3.2	Economic discourse	187
7.3.3	Demand for skilled workers	189
7.3.4	TVET education stereotype	190
7.4	Stakeholders agency in dealing with conditions that shape their perceptions of TVET	191

Stakeholder Perceptions of TVET in Namibia

x

7.4.1	The agency of learners and trainees in TVET	191
7.4.2	Agency and the place of reflection for teachers	193
7.4.3	Stakeholder perception on their role to recommend TVET	193
7.5	How structure, culture, and agency interact	196
7.6	Chapter summary.....	202
8	IMPLICATIONS FOR NAMIBIAN TVET SECTOR: POLICY, PRACTICE, THEORY, AND FUTURE RESEARCH	203
8.1	Summary of the study.....	203
8.2	Recommendations	209
8.2.1	Create robust awareness of TVET and enhance career guidance.	209
8.2.2	Provide sufficient training tools and equipment for the basic prevocational curriculum in secondary schools 210	
8.2.3	Provide a unified structure of education.....	210
8.2.4	Develop and publish entry requirements for TVET programmes.....	210
8.2.5	Review the TVET curriculum regularly and address gaps to meet industry demands	211
8.3	Opportunities for future research.....	211
8.4	Limitations of the study.....	212
8.5	Contribution to the body of knowledge	213
8.6	Intellectual significance of the study	215
	REFERENCES.....	217
	APPENDICES.....	240

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Sampling	95
Table 5.2: Eigenvalues of the factors.....	122
Table 5.3: KMO and Bartlett's Test	122

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: The morphogenesis of culture (Source: Archer, 2003, p. 3)	42
Figure 3.2: The morphogenesis of structure (Source: Archer, 1995, p. 193)	42
Figure 5.1: Age of respondents	112
Figure 5.2: Gender of the respondents	112
Figure 5.3: Highest Grade Level.....	112
Figure 5.4: Courses in which respondents are enrolled	113
Figure 5.5: TVET trainee perceptions about the TVET education system in Namibia.....	116
Figure 5.6: Perceptions of college trainees about their experience of the TVET education system in Namibia.....	118
Figure 5.7: Perceptions of college trainees about their reasons for enrolling in a Technical Vocational Training Centre.....	119
Figure 5.8: Scree plot of the exploratory factor analysis	121
Figure 6.1: Network codes for TVET as Quality theme with grounded frequencies and the network using arrows	129
Figure 6.2: Network codes for Perceptions of TVET and Sustainability” theme with grounded frequencies	142
Figure 6.3: Network codes for TVET perceptions and parents’ socio-economic status theme with grounded frequencies	148
Figure 6.4: Network codes for TVET as a response to global challenges theme with grounded frequencies	152

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Data Collection tools.....	240
Appendix 2: Quantitative Outputs	240
Appendix 3: Qualitative Outputs	240
Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Approval	240
Appendix 5: Permission letter.....	240
Appendix 6: Consent forms	240

List of Acronyms

ATLAS ti:	Archive Technology Lifeworld and Everyday Language
AU:	African Union
CBET:	Competency Based Education and Training
CEP:	Cultural Emergent Property
CI:	Confidence Interval
COSDEC:	Community Skills Development Center
COSDEF:	Community Skills Development Foundation
CS:	Cultural System
EAGM:	Education for all global Monitoring
ED:	Executive Director
EFA:	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FET:	Further Education and Training
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GF:	Grounded Frequency
HHP:	Harambee Prosperity Plan
HSRC:	Human Science Research Council
ICT:	Information Communication Technology
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
KAYEC:	Katutura Youth Enterprise Centre
KBE:	Knowledge Based Economy
KMO:	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MBEAC:	Ministry of Basic Education Art and Culture
MHET:	Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation
MMR:	Mixed Methods Research
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NDP:	National Development Plan
NIED:	National Institute for Educational Development
NSA:	Namibia Statistic Agency
NTA:	Namibia Training Authority
NUST:	Namibia University of Science and Technology
NVTA:	National Vocational Training Act
PEP:	Personal Emergent Property

REC:	Research Ethical Committee
RPL:	Recognition of Prior Learning
SDP:	Skill Development Plan
SEP:	Structural Emergent Property
SPSS:	Statistical package for social science
SU:	Stellenbosch University
TESDA:	Technical Educational Skills Development Authority
TVET:	Technical and Vocational education and Training
UNAM:	University of Namibia
UNDP:	United Nation Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNEVOC:	International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF:	United Nations Children Education Fund
VTC:	Vocational Training Centre
WIL:	Work Integrated Learning

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background and rationale

Various governments worldwide prioritize technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a crucial means to enhance the social and economic development of individuals and nations (Aldossari, 2020; Hategekimana, 2014; Shikalepo, 2019). Furthermore, international organizations also advocate for the role that TVET can play in skills development and in reducing youth unemployment. UNESCO's TVET strategy for 2016-2021 pledges to support Member States, including Namibia, in promoting peace, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. The development of high-quality TVET programs through networking and collaboration among global TVET stakeholders should facilitate profitable youth employment and entrepreneurship. Additionally, it should promote comprehensive skill development opportunities that are fair and accessible to all members of society (UNESCO, 2018, p. 10).

The African Union (AU) also recognises the importance of TVET and recommends the integration of vocational training into the general education system (Africa Union, 2018). This is evidenced in the new strategic objectives of the African Union to revitalise TVET in Africa. First, the AU objectives aim to modernise and harmonise TVET in Africa and transform it into a mainstream activity for African youth development, youth employment, and human capacity building in Africa. Second, they aim to position TVET programmes and TVET institutions in Africa as vehicles for regional cooperation and integration. For socioeconomic development, TVET also contribute to improvements in infrastructure, technological progress, energy, trade, tourism, agriculture, and good governance. And thirdly,

they aim to mobilise all stakeholders in a concerted effort to create synergies and share responsibilities for the renewal and harmonisation of TVET policies, programmes, and strategies in Africa (Africa Union, 2018).

Namibia recognizes the importance of technical and vocational skills in its economic growth and development as a developing country. The Vocational Education Act (Act 1 of 2008) prioritizes vocational and technical skills as a critical component of the country's economic growth and development. Namibia Vision 2030 outlines the envisioned societal transformation that Namibia is committed to achieving, and the strategic steps to realize it. The vision statement highlights that Namibia aspires to evolve from a literate society to a knowledge-based society. In this society, the acquisition and renewal of knowledge play a central role, fostering innovation aimed at enhancing the overall quality of life. The transition to a knowledge-based society necessitates the presence of a populace that is not only in good health and well-educated but also equipped with a diverse set of skills and proactive capabilities. Consequently, a considerable emphasis is placed on the imperative of cultivating a high level of human resource development.

The country's TVET policy recognizes TVET as a source of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to drive productivity in a knowledge-based society of the 21st century (p. 9). The National Development Plans (NDP5) and the Harambee Prosperity Plan are examples of this political commitment. The Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation (MHETI), through the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), is committed to realizing Vision 2030 and highlights the importance of TVET in turning the country into a Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE). Please refer to the updated version of the 2005 Namibia Vocational Education Policy (VET), referred to in this study as the revised TVET policy of 2021.

Despite this recognition, TVET in Namibia is often considered less important than universities by parents, school leavers, and other stakeholders (Gessler & Peters, 2020; Hategekimana, 2014; Josua et al., 2022). Reports suggest that in Namibia stakeholders still prefer universities over TVET (ibid). In an article in the Namibian online newspaper on TVET in Namibia, the Higher Education Technology and Innovation Minister is quoted as saying that

...one of the greatest challenges TVET is faced with is the issue of quality and relevance in terms of labour market needs. That in turn has led to TVET having a low esteem and attractiveness... (New Era, 2012, p. 1).

With these seemingly contradictory views – the optimism of the government policy and the perceptions of ordinary people – this study aims to provide the first multi-methodological approach investigation of the stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia, and the conditions that shape such views.

1.2 The context of the study

This section provides a snapshot of the historical, economic, socio-political, cultural, and geographical context of Namibia in which this study is undertaken. In so doing, it offers perspectives on the major challenges facing the country such as unemployment and poverty, and outlines my personal interest in, and motivation for conducting this important study on TVET in Namibia.

1.3 Namibia and its setting

Namibia, despite being expansive, has a relatively small populace of 2.5 million, with over 400,000 residing in Windhoek. Its Human Development Index (HDI) in 2017 stood at 0.647, placing it in the moderate human development category, surpassing the Sub-Saharan African average of 0.537. However, the nation's Gini coefficient, an indicator of income

inequality, is notably high at 61.0, the second highest globally, just behind South Africa's 63.0. When factoring in inequality, Namibia's HDI drops to 0.422, marking a significant 34.8% decrease. Approximately 22.6% of the population lives below the income poverty line, surviving on \$1.90 per day, while 26.4% of employed individuals aged 15 and above subsist on less than \$3.10 daily. Furthermore, a staggering 45.5% of youths aged 15-24 are unemployed, and 33.4% are neither employed nor enrolled in any educational institution (Labour Force Survey, 2016; Trading Economics, 2017). The country's median age stands at 21 years, and the HIV prevalence among adults aged 15-49 is 13.8% (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

Namibia boasts abundant resources such as diamonds, uranium, zinc, tin, lead, tungsten, copper, silver, and gold, heavily relying on the export of minerals. Industrial output is limited, with half of the nation's foreign exchange earnings derived from mining, contributing approximately 12.5% to the gross domestic product (GDP) and constituting half of the industrial sector's GDP share (26.3%) (World Bank, 2019). The nation's reliance on tourism is on the rise, with 67% of the GDP attributed to services, while a mere 6.7% stems from agriculture. During periods of drought, which have been frequent in recent years, food scarcity and famine prevail, particularly in rural regions (Likando & Wolhuter, 2013). The agricultural sector, employing over 30% of the workforce, is heavily impacted. Namibia imports roughly 50% of its cereal requirements (Central Intelligence Agency; 2019).

Historically, Namibia has been economically reliant on South Africa. Notably, 61.4% of Namibia's imports originate from South Africa, predominantly comprising high-value products and various agricultural commodities (Gessler & Peters, 2020). However, this dynamic poses several challenges for Namibia. Primarily, the Namibian dollar is tied to the

South African rand, leaving it without full financial autonomy. Secondly, Namibia's ongoing recession since 2016 is closely linked to developments in South Africa (ibid).

Namibia's education system was designed along racial and ethnic lines, creating large disparities in both the allocation of resources and the quality of the education offered (Gessler & Peters, 2020; Hategekimana, 2014). There were no higher education institutions except for teacher training colleges before the political independence of Namibia in 1991. Before independence, the Namibian education system was of a missionary kind, as summed up by Ellis:

For its development...the country does not need "educated Negroes", but competent, intelligent workers. The main emphasis will therefore be on education for obedience, order, punctuality, society, honesty, diligence, and moderation, rather than academic learning (Melber, 1979, p. 20, in Ellis, 1984).

According to Ellis (1984), education remains an essential arena for political struggle, as control over education leads to control over political and social values, access to information and status, and the shape and composition of the labour force. Namibia inherited a highly stratified socioeconomic situation at independence, and it is currently ranked as one of the world's most unequal countries, with a Gini coefficient of 59.1 in 2015, second only to South Africa (World Bank, 2021). The education system inherited from South Africa by the government of liberation was skewed and distorted by colonial and apartheid systems, leading to issues of access, equity, quality, and democracy (Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005, p. 84). Additionally, the fragmented and unequal education and training system contributed to a shortage of skilled labour, inadequately trained technical teachers, lack of cooperation between government and industry, and lack of articulation within the formal education system (Naanda, 2010, p. 104). To address this apartheid legacy, a radical restructuring of the education and training system was required, including the TVET system.

However, the restructuring process was hindered by historical, political, and economic factors, and the transformation could not occur overnight due to pre-and post-independence legacies, including ideologies, beliefs, and values. Gatekeepers were safeguarding the existing system, and limited financial, human, and infrastructural resources (structures) posed additional constraints. As a result, the transformation of education was easy to declare but complex and challenging to execute. Upon gaining power in 1990, the first democratic government in Namibia aimed to reform the education system to address issues of access, equity, quality, and democracy, with the development of a comprehensive TVET system being a key area of focus to redress the injustices inherited from the apartheid system (revised TVET Policy, 2021, p. 9).

Namibia has made significant inroads in terms of enrolment in secondary and tertiary schools since independence, with a free education policy for primary and secondary levels and approximately 8% of GDP spent on education (ibid). The National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) centrally organizes educational research, curriculum development, and teacher professional development in Okahandja (NIED, 2010). While most schools are government-run, private schools are also part of the country's education system and thrive in Namibia (Ministry of Education, 2013). The country has several universities, including the University of Namibia (UNAM), which offers teacher training, nursing, engineering, medicine, and agricultural campuses distributed nationwide; the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST); the International University of Management (IUM); and a police training college (ibid.).

1.4 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia: Historical Perspectives and Evolution

Namibia lacks comprehensive studies regarding the historical evolution of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Therefore, this study heavily relies on research conducted in different countries across the globe, particularly in South Africa, whose educational ideologies were mirrored in Namibia during its colonial period and pre-independence. McGrath (2023) suggests the challenge of reconstructing an accurate depiction of precolonial skills development due to limited and fragmented sources. The existing literature primarily reflects an Afro-utopianist nostalgia, portraying an idealized and unchanging African communal past, disrupted by the impacts of colonialism (ibid).

In Africa vocational education under colonialism was typified by a focus on a small, elite system, often for the sons of chiefs. Some of these were in state schools, but much of the provision was through Christian missions, which also offered a more widespread elementary education in which literacy and religious instruction loomed large. Functionally, as well as supporting the development of faith communities, this system produced workers for colonial service (Amukugo, 1995; McGrath 2023). Most of the limited vocational education provided was initially linked to the practical needs of missions. This legacy is still very apparent in Namibia (Hategikimana; 2014, Josua et al., 2022).

Numerous accounts in the history of Namibia's TVET have highlighted the influence of colonialism on the perception of vocational education (Amukugo, 1993, 2005; Duncan, 2018; Hategikimana, 2014; Noble, 1977). However, recent studies, such as McGrath (2023), emphasize the importance of examining this issue not only from an educational perspective but also from a labour market standpoint. He emphasized that, in understanding the dynamics of vocational education, it is essential to consider insights from the African economic

historiography debate, which sheds light on the nature of African labour before the colonial era (Ibid). Austin (as cited in McGrath, 2023) highlights that the discourse on the colonization of Africa often gravitates toward two opposing political perspectives, one that glorifies colonialism, and one that condemns it. These perspectives are underpinned by differing interpretations of the precolonial African economy.

McGrath (2023) further continued by saying that, according to the conventional colonial perspective, the colonial regime is depicted as a savior that liberated Africans from ignorance, introducing them to Christianity, trade, and modern civilization. According to this view, African economies were stagnant prior to colonial intervention. In contrast, an opposing narrative argues that colonialism and the slave trade disrupted the trajectory of African economic development (Allais, 2020; McGrath, 2023).

1.4.1 TVET Education in Pre-Colonial Namibia: Traditional Foundations and Missionary Influence

In the pre-colonial era, Namibia, like other African nations, had well-established traditional educational systems predating the influence of missionaries and colonial settlers. These systems focused on nurturing manual, artistic, and intellectual skills, with a curriculum deeply rooted in cultural and traditional practices (Amukugo, 1995, Josua et al., 2022). Vocational education and training played a pivotal role, intending to pass on cultural values and prepare the youth for various societal roles. Practical skills, including construction, agricultural activities, food preparation, weaving, and leatherworking, were emphasized, forming the foundation of apprenticeship in traditional African education (Amukugo, 1993; Scholtz, 1973; Stals, 1967).

However, the narrative of European missionaries solely introducing formal education to Africa is contested. While the missionaries did bring a distinct form of formal education,

they incorporated their values and structures into the existing educational framework, emphasizing literacy and technical skills with the goal of Christian conversion (Amukugo, 1995). The missionary education curriculum stressed literacy for Bible reading and Christian teachings, followed by technical education to meet the practical needs of the mission stations (Noble, 1977).

In Namibia, missionary education encompassed basic literacy, Bible studies, and technical skills, catering to the demands of the mission stations. Industrial education was provided alongside academic schooling, with a focus on gardening, construction, and the use of hand tools (Noble, 1977). The establishment of an industrial school in Otjimbingwe, known as Augustineum, trained boys in agriculture and technical trades, while girls received instruction in domestic tasks (Amukugo, 1995).

1.4.2 Evolution of TVET Education in Namibia Under Colonial Influence

Namibia experienced colonial administration under the Germans from 1884 to 1914, followed by South African rule from 1915 to 1989. Missionaries initially controlled education during the German era, with Germans prioritizing religious education over literacy development to prevent Namibians from gaining awareness of the unjust practices of the colonial regime (Ashipala, 2020; Brunnette, 2006; Amukugo, 1993; Angula & Lewis, 1977; Stals, 1967). The German colonial administration set up limited educational structures, establishing only primary education and vocational training, while reserving secondary education for a select few sent to Germany (Angula & Lewis, 1977).

During this time, vocational training was available for both white and black Namibians, albeit separately, with whites attending vocational schools and blacks receiving similar training at mission stations (Amukugo, 1993; Noble, 1977). However, the Germans

systematically undermined the quality of vocational training for black Namibians to preserve their control and maintain a master-servant relationship (Noble, 1977).

Subsequently, as South Africa assumed control over Namibia, the educational system gradually mirrored the policies implemented in South Africa, reflecting the typical pattern observed in colonial territories (Amukugo, 1993; Odendaal Commission Report, 1964). Under South African colonial rule, Namibia was regarded as the fifth province of South Africa, leading to the implementation of a comprehensive education system akin to the Cape education system, with differentiated schools based on racial and linguistic lines (Christie & Collins, 1982; Melber, 1987). The South African colonial administration emphasized education for whites, particularly in the provision of vocational education, while neglecting the vocational training of black Namibians, leaving it in the hands of missionaries (Noble, 1977).

The apartheid period, initiated with the ascension of the National Party to power, introduced the Bantu Education policy in 1953, aiming to reduce illiteracy among non-whites (Brunette, 2006). Under this policy, vocational education was emphasized for black Africans, and efforts were made to establish technical and vocational training institutions in Namibia (ibid). Notably, the era preceding Namibia's independence saw the expansion of educational opportunities for Namibians beyond the country's borders, with many individuals seeking education in SWAPO schools in neighboring countries, aided by the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) based in Lusaka. Notably, schools like Loudima played a pivotal role, providing education to Namibians in exile, with support from the Namibia Association of Norway (Amukugo, 1993).

The policy on education, developed during the pre-independence period, comprised primary education, secondary education, teacher training, and higher education components.

Its emphasis was on ensuring universal primary education for nine years, and secondary education geared toward both general education and vocational skills necessary for national progress. Turner's 1993 report from the presidential commission on higher education in Namibia revealed the fragmented and insufficiently supported state of the TVET system post-independence. Technical subjects were inadequately provided at schools for black Namibians, predominantly imparting theoretical knowledge. Moreover, technical institutes and colleges, established a few years before independence, were not fully operational, suffering from low enrollment rates due to the challenges of English, Mathematics, and Science qualifications, and a dearth of qualified technical educators (Gessler & Peters, 2020; Josua et al., 2022; Naanda, 2010).

1.4.3 Education Reforms in Post-Independence Namibia: Focus on TVET Implementation and Evolution

Namibia achieved independence from South African rule on March 21, 1990. In the independent Namibian context, the inherited education system exhibited certain imbalances and shortcomings, contributing to a section of the population lacking adequate skills and literacy, consequently leading to a high unemployment rate (Gessler & Peters, 2020; Naanda, 2010). As is common, the prevailing political administration shapes the structure and content of the education system (Amukugo, 1993; Jansen, 1990). In light of the educational system, educational reform became an imperative task for the government to ensure an inclusive educational framework liberated from the influence of colonial and apartheid principles (Gessler & Peters, 2020; Hategekimana, 2014;).

These reforms encompassed the provision of technical and vocational education at all levels, from primary through tertiary education. Initially, TVET was recognized as a solution to the country's human resource and economic needs, although its implementation was

overshadowed by the primary goal of enhancing the nation's literacy rate. The TVET provision at the school level primarily focused on pre-vocational subjects, intending not to train students for specific trades but to instill a foundational understanding (Josua et al., 2022). At the secondary level, the curriculum underwent changes, with the shift from pre-vocational subjects to a single subject of Design and Technology, later reinstated following the 2011 National Conference on Education's resolutions (ibid). During the pre-independence era, TVET was predominantly offered at the school level, with some progress in establishing higher TVET institutions. However, the TVET system remained detached from the labour market realities and suffered from a centralized and inflexible curriculum dominated by traditional blue-collar trades.

The government has made considerable efforts to revitalize TVET since independence, introducing new policy reforms and legal documents governing TVET activities, including the National Vocational Training Act (NVTa) of 1994 and its amended version of 1996, which regulate the training of apprentices and vocational trainees, establish regulating bodies, and establish vocational training standards and training schemes (Gessler & Peters, 2020; Hategekimana, 2014; Naanda, 2010).

Despite the many reforms introduced since independence, the existing TVET system in Namibia has faced considerable challenges in responding to ever-changing economic conditions, leading to the development of a TVET Policy in 2005 that recommended the establishment of a body solely responsible for the regulation and funding of TVET in the country through MHETI, leading to the establishment of the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) to regulate and fund TVET education in the country (UNESCO, 2016; VET Act 1 of 2008; VET Policy, 2005, and its amended version of 2021).

The establishment of NTA has seen the introduction of a new TVET education curriculum approach called Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET). Implementing this system came with challenges and resistance from trainees, trainers, and industry stakeholders (Naanda, 2010; Hategekimana, 2014). Hategekimana (2014) further postulates that the resistance was fueled by reasons such as the CBET curriculum lacking science and technical subjects, trainers being unprepared to take over the new system, poor education standards, and the requirement for expensive infrastructure. The Bank of Namibia (2018) also observed challenges for TVET. The main challenges were isolation from the private sector, centralized management systems, limited institutional autonomy, and the lack of curriculum review. These challenges have been amplified by the low enrollments obtained in TVET institutions by prospective trainees who snubbed TVET in favor of university education (Polytechnic Task Force 2030, 2013).

Despite all the positivity about TVET, the system still faces some challenges such as a high dropout rate, which affects the retention and completion rates of TVET graduate output, and therefore the number of skilled workers (UNESCO, 2016). The acceptance of the reinvented TVET by the community has remained low (Josua et al., 2022; Naanda, 2010; Namibia Revised TVET Policy, 2021).

1.4.4 Shape and feel of TVET in Namibia

As reported above, the pre-existing vocational system, primarily industry-oriented and emphasizing apprenticeships, suffered from limited training providers and discrimination stemming from apartheid. Consequently, a policy directive was devised following independence, prioritizing four key development objectives: access, equality, quality, and democracy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

In 1994, the National Vocational Training Act 18 was crafted, yet it wasn't enacted until 1996. This act established the position of Chief Inspector within the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, responsible for overseeing apprenticeships, along with a tripartite vocational training board. According to the act, no person could employ an apprentice in a designated trade without the Chief Inspector's written approval, subject to the provisions of the Act or any other law (Republic of Namibia, 1994, p. 28). The act also specified penalties for non-compliance by employers.

Functioning as an advisory body to the Minister of Labour and Human Resources Development, the Vocational Training Board was tasked with setting minimum standards for vocational training, including the development of vocational standards and trade testing procedures. Its responsibilities extended to coordinating, encouraging, facilitating, and promoting vocational training activities across agriculture, industry, and commerce at all levels of vocational qualifications (Republic of Namibia, 1994, p. 12). These duties were later integrated into the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) in 2008.

Formulated in 1996 and implemented in 1998, the Namibia Qualification Act 29 laid the foundation for an outcome-based approach through the establishment of the Namibia Qualification Authority (NQA). The Act delineated the objectives of the NQA, including the establishment and administration of a national qualification framework, the setting of occupational standards, curriculum standards, accreditation of educational providers meeting certain criteria, and the assessment and recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education (Republic of Namibia 1996, p. 3).

In 2006, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) came into effect, comprising 10 levels with descriptors and credits. It allowed for the registration of qualifications and unit standards, both regarded as occupational standards (Republic of Namibia 2006, p. 56).

The NTA was assigned the responsibility of accrediting and registering training providers and their programs in 2012 (Republic of Namibia, 2012). On April 1, 2014, the Ministry of Education imposed a levy on employers, mandating those with an annual payroll of N\$ 1,000,000 or more to pay 1% of the annual payroll. A portion of this amount was allocated to administrative purposes, training grants, and key priority grants (Republic of Namibia, 2014a, 2014b).

The Ministry of Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation (MHETI) assumed the responsibility for overseeing Namibia's VET system, along with higher education and related entities, NQA and NTA. However, UNESCO's review report highlighted issues within the system, including blurred lines of responsibility between the NQA and NTA, a lack of autonomy for VET institutions, and insufficient engagement from the private sector in governance, curriculum development, and delivery (UNESCO, 2016, p. 13).

TVET programmes are offered at the primary and secondary education level. At the senior primary level, learners are able to take one of three pre-vocational subjects, i.e., elementary agriculture, design and technology, and home ecology, which also integrates entrepreneurial skills (Gesseler & Peters, 2020; Josua, 2021). At the junior secondary education level, TVET is introduced in the curriculum through a pre-vocational and technical stream. Students are required to take six core curriculum subjects and can choose three TVET related elective subjects, including agriculture, computer studies, design and technology, accounting, entrepreneurship, visual art, integrated performing arts, hospitality, and subjects covering metalwork and welding, woodwork, construction, and electricity and electronics.

At the senior secondary education level, students take a number of core curriculum subjects as well as some electives, including technical and vocational subjects. In Grade 11, students receive the National Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary and may

proceed to Grade 12, attend programmes at Vocational Education and Training Institutions or Higher Institutions of academic learning, or enter the labour market.

There are currently 98 registered Technical Vocational Education Training Providers in the country. Seven of those are State-Owned Public Vocational Training Centers commonly known as vocational training Centers (VTCs) that are funded by the Government through the Namibia Training Authority. The rest are privately owned. TVET standards are developed by Namibia Training Authority in accordance with experts drawn from the industry. They are then registered on National Qualification Authority (NQF) by the Namibia Qualification Authority (NQA). Currently, TVET is offered from NQF level 1-6, with many institutions still offering it up to NQF level 3 only.

TVET programmes at the tertiary level are offered at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). NUST offers a variety of programmes in management, engineering, health, and computing. Programmes are offered at the undergraduate level through a number of tracks. TVET programmes are also offered at the postgraduate level.

1.5 Statement of the problem

TVET is widely recognized as a means of reducing unemployment and promoting economic growth and development, but it is often perceived as the weakest link in education systems in many countries. Compared to universities or polytechnics, TVET's image, quality, standards, and outcomes remain uncertain. This is due to various factors, including the negative perception of TVET and its association with those who are less academically inclined. Despite the high unemployment rate among university graduates, secondary school students still prioritize academic routes, and TVET remains a secondary option.

In my 19 years of experience in the education sector, from a secondary school teacher to a senior education officer in the Ministry of Basic Education Art and Culture, and head of

training at a public TVET institution, I have observed the challenges that TVET institutions face in attracting students to register for their programmes. In Namibia most secondary school graduates prefer to pursue academic routes, even though university graduates remain unemployed. Additionally, parents continue to hold onto the hope that their children will attend university.

Therefore, this study is based on two related foci: the optimism of the Namibian government's policy regarding the promise of TVET, and the perceptions among stakeholders of the value and preferences that they have for TVET versus university-based academic education.

The main aim of this study was to explore stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia, and to identify the structural, cultural, and agential conditions that may explain public attitudes towards TVET in Namibia.

1.6 Main research questions

The main research question formulated for this research can therefore be stated in the following way: What factors shape stakeholder perceptions of Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) in Namibia?

1.7 Secondary questions

From the main research question, the secondary questions for this research study are the following:

- What are the structural and cultural conditions that shape the stakeholder perceptions of TVET?
- How, if at all, does stakeholder agency influence TVET perceptions?

1.8 Research aims and objectives

This study aims to understand the perceptions of stakeholders about Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) in the Namibian context. From this broad aim, this study had the following specific objectives:

- Understand the structural and cultural conditions that shape the perceptions of the participants of TVET in their communities.
- Understand how the agency of stakeholders influences their perceptions of TVET and how they use their agency to mediate the structural and cultural conditions they encounter.

1.9 Significance and anticipated contribution of the study

While the motivation to take on this study is personal to a certain extent, it was also important to think about why this work could be important beyond my interests. Thompson (2015) argues that a successful research study has to offer reasons why it exists by answering the following key questions:

- Why is this research important to our understanding of the world?
- Who needs this research and what will they do once they know its results?
- What will change or be different if this research is done?
- How does it stand to inform public policy?
- What are the implications of doing it?

These questions made me reflect on the contribution that I would like my research to make to the field of TVET, Namibia, and the rest of the world.

Therefore, this study is intended to contribute to the growing body of research that focuses on stakeholder perceptions of TVET in a variety of contexts (Mason, Mbambo, &

Pillay, 2018; Pangantihon & Pidor, 2019; Russo, Serafini & Ranieri, 2019). The study aimed to contribute to the theorisation of TVET by employing a social realist framework. Drawing on social realism as a theoretical framework, the intention was to see if the perceptions gathered could be related to structural and cultural conditions in Namibia that shape the perceptions of stakeholders of TVET. As indicated earlier, TVET has often been less acknowledged, as it is also raised in the Namibia revised TVET policy, (2021, p. 8). Thus, the findings of the study may be of interest to government leaders, policy makers, curriculum developers, TVET managers, TVET graduates, and the general public in terms of how TVET is perceived in the country.

1.10 Brief overview of the design and methodological approach of research

This study is situated within a pragmatic research paradigm. The study uses a pragmatic explanatory sequential design of mixed methods to pursue a quantitative-qualitative sequence (QAUN-QUAL), where the core component is quantitative and the supplementary component is qualitative (Creswell & Clark 2018, p. 25). The study used mixed-method research (MMR) (Creswell & Clark, 2018) to gauge perceptions of TVET. Qualitative data were used to complement quantitative data to generate robust descriptions of participant experiences, thoughts, and perceptions on how TVET is perceived by its stakeholders in Namibia (Creswell, 2014, p. 182).

1.11 Chapter outline

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the study and provides its rationale. A description of the context of the study is provided, as well as its goal. The research problem that the proposed study intends to address, is presented. The chapter ends with a description of the questions that guided the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter provides a critical synthesis of the literature on stakeholder perceptions of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It describes what research has been done on stakeholders' perceptions of TVET. It then identifies the limitations of the research on the perceptions of TVET.

Chapter 3: In this chapter, the theoretical and analytical framework are explained in reference to Archer's social realism, which uses analytical dualism to examine the interplay between the distinct strata of structure, culture, and agency. I present Archer's theory of social realism, focusing on her three realms of structure, culture, and agency with the aim of understanding how agents exercise their agency to deal with structural and cultural factors or powers and how they make choices to respond to conditions produced by the social structures and cultural settings in which they find themselves.

Chapter 4: In this chapter, the methodological plan for the study is described. I explain the research design used, the rationale for choosing the pragmatic research approach, and how I went about collecting, recording, and transcribing the data. I also explain how the key informant interviews and group discussions were conducted.

Chapter 5: In this chapter, the research findings are presented within the social realist ontology, with the focus on analysing the interplay between structure, culture, and agency, and how they shape stakeholder perceptions of TVET. Qualitative data are used to clarify the issues raised in the quantitative data.

Chapter 6: This chapter presents the qualitative data of the study, which provide the context of the investigation and identify the structural and cultural conditions that influence the perceptions of TVET stakeholders in Namibia. Therefore, the chapter presents the narratives of the subjective perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders about the structural and

cultural conditions that gave rise to their views on TVET as presented in Chapter 5. The findings presented in this chapter were those derived from the themes emerging from the qualitative data analysis using the ATLAS.ti 22 data management software, and only presents the results of the study.

Chapter 7. This chapter provides an integrated discussion of both data chapters (5 and 6), and how they relate to concepts discussed in Chapters 1-3. It provides the basis for the conclusions and recommendations that follow in the final chapter.

Chapter 8: This chapter summarises the main findings of the study as interpreted in the context of Archer's analytical dualism framework.

1.12 Limitations of the study

The first challenge that I encountered was a time constraint, given that this is an explanatory sequential mixed-method design where I first had to collect data for the quantitative phase, to build the qualitative phase. I used a large amount of money to travel from site to site covering ten sites of academic learning to distribute and collect the questionnaire.

Furthermore, this study was carried out during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) era, a global pandemic that has been a focal point throughout the world. I also had difficulties travelling to collect data. However, I dealt with these by using online means for data collection and using Life Skills teachers as proxies to help me distribute the questionnaire, while I just had to collect them afterwards.

The third challenge was accessibility; those who occupy positions of power and privilege were hard to access (Strunk & Locke, 2019). I planned to interview the executive official in the Ministry of Basic Education, but this did not materialise. Part two of my research study sought to use key government officials such as Ministers and the Executive

Director. To resolve this, I tried to schedule my interviews to suit the diaries of the interviewees and tried my best to exercise patience. In case one of the interviewees who dropped out, my sampling procedures allowed me to pursue the next person through snowballing procedures.

In Chapter 2 to follow, I expound on the theoretical framework I chose, i.e., Margaret Archer's social realism theory.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

To explore stakeholder perceptions of TVET, I used Margaret Archer's (1995, 1996, 2000, 2003, & 2007) social realism theory. I particularly drew on her concepts of structure, culture and agency, as well as analytical dualism (Archer, 1995). Therefore, this chapter explains the tenets of social realism as a theoretical framework as they are deployed in this study. I further explain why social realism was chosen as the appropriate theory to explore stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia.

Social realism as a theoretical framework allows for the examination of factors (structural and cultural systems) and how these shape the perceptions and experiences of TVET stakeholders. In this case, the aim was to examine what, how, and why structural and cultural conditions shape the understanding of stakeholders about TVET. Additionally, social realism offers a lens on how stakeholders use their agency to respond to the structural and cultural conditions they encounter during their engagement with TVET. Therefore, the purpose of the study was not just to describe the perceptions of the stakeholder about TVET, but to explain what these perceptions and experiences are, and why.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first part briefly discusses the debates about structure, culture, and agency. The second section introduces social realism and its key domains while I address the concept of conflation, as laid out by Archer. The third section offers Archer's response to the problem of conflation, a discussion on analytical dualism, and a foregrounding of the importance of examining the complex interplay between structure, culture, and agency. In this section, I also add Archer's notion of morphogenesis to situate the

understanding of agency in response to structural and cultural properties. I then proceed to discuss the concept of reflexivity as a key to the responses and experiences of stakeholders to structural and cultural conditions that shape their attitudes and behaviour towards TVET. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the relevance of Archer's framework to my research study.

2.2 Structure, culture, and agency debate

The structure, culture, and agency debate has been ongoing for many years. The central argument that energises this debate rages particularly between structure and agency, and which one has more power to shape human behaviour (Archer, 2003). In other words, does social structure determine human behaviour, or does human behaviour/action/agency have primacy over structures (ibid)? This debate managed to create divisions in philosophical thinking and to create opposing explanations about how society works (Lipscomb, 2006).

Sociologists such as Giddens and Bourdieu have been accused of linking social structure to agency, denying each causal power. For example, Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration emphasises the duality of structure and agency. He postulates that structure and agency cannot be separated from one another because neither is independent, but rather complementary to each other. Giddens argues that structures cannot be independent of actors, nor can they determine behaviour. Rather, these are sets of rules and competencies on which actors draw, and which they can collectively reproduce (Giddens, 1976).

Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory is also accused of conflating structure and agency. For Bourdieu, social structures are embedded in, rather than determinative of, individual behaviour (Bourdieu, 1993). Hence, Bourdieu attempts to find a balance between agency and structure. He sees structure and agency as "complementary forces – structure influences human behaviour, and humans are capable of changing the social structures they

inhabit” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 127). Margaret Archer (2010, p. 234) disagrees with both Giddens and Bourdieu, accusing them of committing what she refers to as the fallacy of conflation, which is discussed in detail later in this chapter (Section 2.3.1 **Error! Reference source not found.**).

2.3 Margaret Archer’s Social Realism Theory

Archer’s social realism has its roots in Bhaskar’s critical realism (Danermark et al., 2002). Fundamentally, Archer developed social realism theory as a response to the problem of structure and agency. Her argument is that the world is divided into two, i.e., the parts and the people (Archer, 1996, 1995). The “part” is divided into two, that is, structure and culture, and the “people” are representing agents. For this reason, Archer (1995) argues that the social world is shaped by three domains, i.e., structure, culture, and agents. This is the basis of her theory and her attempt to understand how the social world operates. Archer (1995, 1996) argues that the three domains are naturally intertwined with each other but cannot be conflated because each has independent causal powers that are irreducible to one another. Thus, Archer argues that the role of researchers is to examine the interplay among the three domains and answer the question regarding the way that structures and culture condition agency, and vice versa (ibid.). Archer thus recommended that, for research, this interplay can be examined through analytical dualism methodology, to avoid committing the fallacy of conflation (Archer, 1996).

As indicated above, Archer foregrounds the relationship among the concepts of structure, culture, and agency. This is because, despite these domains being intertwined by nature, Archer argues that they can be analysed separately, individually, and independently (Archer, 1996). This distinctiveness shows that each component has causal power and properties that cannot be reduced to the other, as Giddens and Bourdieu have done in their

theories (see discussion in Section 2.2 above). That means that both the structure and agency have independent powers, which, if exercised by the agent, can bring about a change to the structure or agency, or retain the status quo (Archer, 1996). Hence, separating structures and agency allows for cross-examination to see how they (structure and agency) use their powers to influence each other.

Archer is against the tendency of some sociology theorists to conflate the parts (structure, culture) and the people (those who hold positions or ideas within structures). She terms this the fallacy of conflation (Archer, 1996, pp. xiv-xv). The point of departure for Archer is that structure, culture, and agency belong to different strata, and this allows them to influence, but not determine, one another (Archer, 2007).

This stratified view of social reality is useful in identifying structural properties (for example, the education system, TVET system, curriculum, policy guidelines, language, Namibian examinations, learning areas, roles and positions, teachers, and parents), and cultural properties (ideas, values, and beliefs held by stakeholders about TVET), and how they shape each other in a Namibian context. The parts represent the structural and cultural conditions that human beings as social agents face as they engage in their daily lives. These conditions are not of the agents' own making, and hence cannot be avoided (Archer, 1995, 1996; Carter & New, 2004).

In other words, the structure and culture that Archer describes as parts create enablements or constraints; conditions that the people (agents) experience at the moment when they exercise their agency (Archer, 1995, 1996). For example, Namibia's education system can be classified as a structure that creates an enabling and constraining environment for students once they decide to enrol in TVET or at university.

The significance of social realism lies in trying to understand the relationship between structure, culture, and agency from the point of view of the agent. This is important in a study like this, which aims to gain an understanding of stakeholders' perceptions of TVET. I need to understand what the structural and cultural conditions are that shape the perceptions of stakeholders and how the stakeholders used their agency to deal with the conditions they experienced in dealing with TVET.

2.3.1 Archer and the problem of conflation

One of the key issues Archer attempts to address in her theory is the problem of conflation, i.e., conflating the parts with people. Archer mentions that there are three ways sociologists conflate structure/culture, and agency, and these include upward, downward, or central. Archer rejects any of these forms of conflation, arguing that if one does, they are committing a fallacy of conflation (1996: xv). According to Archer (1995, 1996, 2003, 2004), conflating structure, culture, and agency prevents the possibility of examining the interplay between them and how they exert their causal powers to influence each other.

According to Archer, upward conflation accords agency power over structure. In this case, the emphasis of research is placed on agency, to examine how it shapes and influences social structures (1996, p. 46-71). Thus, structures are seen as epiphenomena of agency (Archer, 1996, p. ivx). In other words, structure and culture are viewed as emanating from agency, resulting in "upward conflation of agency in structure" (Archer, 1996, p. ivx).

In downward conflation, the structure is given primacy over agency. This means that human behaviour or action is primarily determined by the social structures that people may encounter in their surroundings. These enable or constrain them in achieving their goals. Therefore, structures have become the focus of research. Research in education often tends to

focus on structures and how they shape people, with little acknowledgement of their agency in dealing with structures.

Archer argues that under the central conflation, structure and agency are treated as mutually constitutive. This again precludes examining the interplay between them (Archer, 1995, 1996). Structure and agency are seen as intertwined with structures shaping agency, and vice versa. As mentioned earlier, Giddens' theory of structuration and Bourdieu's practice theory are often cited as examples of sociology theories that have committed central conflation (Archer, 1996, p. 72-96). Consequently, when structure and agency are treated as the same, it becomes difficult to examine them separately; to investigate "the circumstances or conditions" (1996, p. 80-86) under which one can exert more influence than the other.

For this reason, Archer disagrees with research that does not acknowledge that structure and agency are analytically and ontologically separate with distinctive causal powers in the form of Structural Emergent Properties (SEP), Personal Emergent Properties (PEP), and finally Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP) capable of influencing each other. By focusing on the perceptions of TVET stakeholders only, this undermines the role of structure/culture and agency in shaping these experiences and perceptions about TVET in Namibia. Therefore, Archer considers this as a "one-level" explanation, based on a homogeneous view of the social world, whether this may be the psychology of the upward conflationist, the sociology of the downward conflationist, or the social psychology of the central conflationist (1995, p. 105). Sibeon (2004) elaborated on the consequences of conflating structure and agency, arguing that:

Collapsing the distinction between subjective/action and structure makes it difficult to account for unintended and perhaps unwanted cultural objects and structures; we are prevented from studying cultural objects and the "parts" of social systems, and relations between them, in their own right,

independently of the subjective intentions of those involved in creating or maintaining them (2004, p. 63).

Therefore, a study such as this, that draws on social realism, aims to delink structure and agency, or culture and agency, rather than sinking the difference between the parts (organisational or ideational) and the people, who hold the positions or ideas within them (Archer, 1996, p. xiv). It is through the separation of structures and agency analytically, as Archer suggests, that one will be able to see how different structures, culture and agency interact, and notice the exceptional powers that each possesses. This is where analytical dualism fits in. It enables researchers to examine and understand what structures, culture, and agency influence each other, and why.

2.3.2 Archer's analytical dualism as a solution to conflation

As mentioned previously, Archer (1996, p. xv) disagrees with any form of conflation (see the discussion in section 2.3.1 above) and thus for analytical purposes she favours the separation of structure, culture, and agency. For this reason, Archer suggests the use of analytical dualism as a methodology to separate structure, culture, and agency for analytic purposes, while retaining their interrelationships (Archer, 1995; Danermark et al., 2002). It is through this analytical distinction that we are able to examine how their interplay results in structural, cultural, and agential elaboration through morphogenesis (Archer, 1995).

According to Archer (1995), analytic dualism is based on two premises:

- i. The social world is stratified, such that the emergent properties of structures and agents are irreducible to one another, meaning that in principle they are analytically separable.
- ii. [Given that] structures and agents are also temporally distinguishable (...it is justifiable and feasible to talk of pre-existence and posteriority when dealing with specific

instances of the two), and this can be used methodologically in order to examine the interplay between them and thus explain changes in both over time (p. 65).

The quotation explains what analytical dualism is; that structure, culture, and agency are separate but at the same time complement each other in a cause-and-effect relationship (Archer, 1995, 1996). For example, people have their perception of reality and their surroundings, which are influenced by structure. However, people become agents of the creation of that perception. Therefore, without the structure, it is impossible for people to perceive because it cannot come from a void. This dual relationship which exists between structure and agency is neither top-down or bottom-up, but rather, reciprocal (Archer, 1996). When the interaction between structure and agency is at play, they produce consequences that are either intentional or not. Thus, perception is created due to the interactions between and among groups and systems, and each perception comes from the degree to which the person(s) are close to the power of influence in the community and society (Archer, 1995).

Therefore, the main role of analytic dualism in research is to enable exploration and investigation of the relationship between structure and agency, which has been underplayed in the existing literature. By applying analytical dualism methodology, this research recognises the interdependence of structure and agency (therefore, without people, there would be no structure) and acknowledges that they (structure and agency) operate separately and in different periods (Archer, 1996).

This study analyses the structure/culture and the agency of stakeholders separately to understand the interaction between them. By engaging in such an analysis, the researcher gets an opportunity to understand what and why stakeholders have certain perceptions about TVET in Namibia. Employing this kind of analysis can contribute to a growing body of

research on the perception of TVET by stakeholders beyond the usual explanations offered in the literature.

As indicated above, Archer (1995) accords independent power to agency, culture, and structure. Thus, Archer (1995) introduces the concepts of Personal Emergent Properties (PEP), Structural Emergent Properties (SEP), and Cultural Emergent Properties (CEP). Archer allows for a separate investigation of emergent powers and generative mechanisms such as structural emergent properties (SEPs: curriculum, policies, and so on), cultural emergent properties (CEPs: beliefs, ideas, and so on) and personal emergent properties (PEPs: agency) that may shape the stakeholder perception of TVET in Namibia. Through doing so, according to Archer, it is possible to give observed interpretations of how structural and agential phenomena interlink over time, rather than simply stating their theoretical interdependence (Archer, 1995).

Archer (1995) calls this sequence morphogenesis (see 2.3.6 below). To avoid excessive voluntarism and unwarranted determinism and allow for a clear distinction through analytical dualism within the morphogenesis approach, it can be shown that social structures emerge (structural or cultural elaboration) through social interaction, but that constraints also come to the fore via persistent structural properties that multiply within society (Archer, 1995). The last point is significant because, according to Archer, some structures, despite the best intentions of actors, simply resist change. In this study, stakeholders are part of structural and cultural systems and are born into contexts in which they have no control over the pre-existing powers found in these socio-cultural settings.

2.3.3 Structure domain and its properties

According to Archer (1995, 1996), the domain of structure entails roles, policies, systems, institutions, and things such as materials resources, socioeconomic systems, gender,

race, class, ethnicity, social institutions like marriage, family, and committees, among other things. Therefore, the presence and influence of these structures form and induce people to have a perception towards any form of interaction that exists in each system and structure. Danermark et al. (2002) note that a structure is composed of objects which exist within the system, and each structure is part of another bigger structure (p. 78). For example, TVET is part of the education system in Namibia but is also shaped by global trends around education, unemployment, economy, etc. It is noteworthy that there is agreement in the literature on what constitutes structure. Much has been written about it as opposed to culture, that I will explain later on.

Archer (1998) postulates that structures predate human beings. Put differently, human beings are born into existing structures which are not of their own making, but nevertheless condition them. Carter and New (2004) expanded the idea by noting that when human beings are born into these pre-existing structures, they start to discover and create their own perceptions of the structures they are exposed to. That is why many people tend to have different opinions on the same subject. They can change their perceptions on the same subject over time as they become exposed to the different structures that govern their systems. As a structure, TVET pre-exists stakeholders who are involved as players within the system and whose actions serve to perpetuate the structure or modify it in the form of structural elaboration. Finally, structures help the creation of perceptions, and the existence of these structures at times rely on the perceptions that have been created because of their existence. This means that the change agents who become human beings have power and dominion over all structures, even those that pre-existed to either reproduce or transform them.

In the simplest form, structures "...pre-exist features of the world into which we are born (anteriority); they are relatively enduring, and they have enabling and/or constraining

powers” (Carter & New, 2004, p. 9). Structures, therefore, not only come first and/or possibly condition agency to the extent that people can be either constrained or enabled by them, but they can also be reproduced or transformed as a result of interaction with human agency (Archer, 2007). According to Archer, “the emergent powers or properties of structures (SEP) are only activated when agents interact with them in terms of their own causal power through the mechanism of human reflexivity (internal conversations) in which agents subjectively prioritise their concerns, projects or practices” (Archer, 2007, p. 4). I explain reflexivity in more detail later in this chapter.

2.3.4 Culture Domain and its key properties

Archer (1996) views culture as systems of meaning which include ideas, values, theories, beliefs, discourse, language, and forms of knowledge, rituals, traditions, common sense, and ontology that human beings, societies, or communities ascribe themselves to, and are articulated through homilies. Like structure, elements of cultural systems (CS) may be conceived as emergent properties, called cultural emergent properties (CEP) (Archer, 2000). For example, language is considered a cultural emergent property with its own enabling and constraining power to affect things in the world (Archer, 2000). Thus, the influence of cultural systems (CS) is mediated through discourse, and discourse through language (Archer, 2000). Archer further states that “our words have the causal power to affect things in the world of matter” (2007, p. 157). The perceptions (whether positive or negative) held about TVET, as discussed in Chapter 2, influence the uptake of TVET by parents, students, and other stakeholders. Cultural level analysis involves exploring the kind of ideas that operate in society, their relationships, and the power they have over people’s actions. In this study, the analysis of cultural conditioning requires one to examine ideas, theories, and discourses about TVET and the power they have over stakeholders’ actions.

Cultural emergent properties (CEP) unevenly distribute cultural resources and symbolic power such as ideology and language. Employing this cultural concept is relevant to this study, as it allowed me to identify the ideas, beliefs, theories, ideologies, and values (emergent relational properties) articulated as discourses by TVET stakeholders, which have and still shape their perception of TVET, and to determine how they are related.

Language plays a central role as it facilitates interactions between and among objects and human beings in a particular context. In this regard, perceptions towards objects or other members of the society or community exist if there are differences that exist between people. These differences can be visible or socially constructed (Archer, 2000).

The use of this cultural concept is pertinent for this study because it helps to identify why and how people of the same geographical location tend to have different views towards a single subject. It allowed me to identify ideas, beliefs, theories, ideologies, and values (emergent cultural properties articulated as perceptions by stakeholders of TVET Education in Namibia). Therefore, in this domain, human beings are at the centre of analysis, as the ability to create and sustain perceptions rests exclusively on them.

2.3.5 Agency domain and its key properties

As mentioned above, social realism rejects the conflation of agency with structure and culture and acknowledges that people have causal powers (PEP) to shape social reality. Agency refers to human beings' ability to perceive their social roles, positions, and perform their daily routines while protected by perception (Archer, 1995, 1996). For example, it is the choices stakeholders make in their daily lives that either reinforce existing structures and cultures or transform them.

Like structure and culture, agency also has its own properties and power. The most distinctive of them is reflexivity, which humans use to respond to constraining or enabling

situations they encounter (Archer, 1996, 2007). In this regard, human beings are not passive and at the mercy of sociocultural structures (Archer, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2007). Rather, agency should be viewed as “reflective, purposive, and innovative” (Archer, 1995, p. 249). As Case explains, agency is “where the individual acts with intentionality” (2013, p. 31). People therefore have their own emergent powers (PEP), which are reducible to those of structure and culture (SEP and CEP) (Archer, 1995).

Although structural and cultural systems (SS and CS) create constraining conditions for agents, they are reflexive actors. This means that as reflexive beings, agents are capable of deciding what they like and dislike, whether they agree or not, to study or not, etc. For example, the stakeholders in this study are not passive but reflexive actors who have the power to make decisions about their lives. Therefore, a social realist theory is mainly interested in what motivates, for example, the participants and respondents in this study have, to hold certain perceptions about TVET or act the way they do towards TVET in a Namibian context.

For this reason, Archer (2000) classifies “people” into three: person, agent, and social actor. These three strata are irreducible to each other because they all have independent causal powers (Archer, 1995, p. 253). Mutch (2004, p. 433) explains that people are “biologically embodied individuals, emergent from but not reducible to their material constitution” and are “involuntarily placed as agents...as a consequence of involuntary positioning, as a result of demographic factors such as age and gender”. The person is who we are. For example, we are biologically defined as either female or male and do not choose to be born in certain contexts. Thus, Archer explains that people are placed in social structures “involuntarily and emerge from, but are not reducible to, the material conditions that shaped them” (1995, p. 201). Due to this irreducibility, people have the power to change

or reproduce the conditions they encounter through their activities of daily living. They are able to respond to these conditions by using what Archer (1995) refers to as an internal conversation.

Archer (1995, p. 277) further divides agents into two types, i.e., “primary, and corporate agents”. Primary agents are seen as “collectivities sharing the same life-chances” (Archer, 2000, p. 261). These are groups that share common life experiences within the social structure. For example, students in a TVET training institute can be classified as primary agents because of the way they are placed in that setting. However, Archer points out that primary agents have causal power (passive) but are not able to exercise much agency because of how they are positioned in society. Therefore, they are people “to whom things happen” (Archer, 2003, p. 343) because they are often unable to act or articulate their interests. That is, they are involuntarily disempowered, which could be caused by socially scarce resources. It is worth noting that we all start out as primary agents occupying one place in a social context (Archer, 2000).

However, corporate agents represent a group of people with common interests who work together to transform society (Archer, 1995). Unlike primary agents, corporate agents are organised around particular goals and act collectively in groups to achieve a goal. For example, students in South African universities organised themselves to start the Rhodes and Fees Must Fall movement. Archer sums this up well when she explains that “when social agents who lack the personal power in their individual capacity to make structural changes in their life circumstances join together with other social agents who have a common vested interest to create collective organisations, they can achieve together what they cannot bring about alone” (2007, p. 74). In other words, corporate agents are confident in their own needs and can organise themselves to pursue their vested interests. Through interactions with

others, corporate agents can have access to resources. They can plan and strategise to achieve their desired outcomes.

In summary, corporate agents have (1) articulated the objectives of themselves and others that they aim to achieve, and (2) organised their activities to achieve these goals. Such agents “include self-conscious vested interest groups, promotive interest groups, social movements and defensive associations” (Archer, 1995, p. 265). Primary agents, on the other hand, lack both dimensions, and as indicated above, are “un-coordinated in action and unstated in aim” (Archer, p. 266). Hence, corporate agents are then organised into interest groups conscious of what they want, they make it official, and organise themselves to attain their goal (Archer, 2017, p. 25): “Their common denominators are articulation and organisation”. Consequently, they are strategically involved in actions forming and reforming structures; that is what they struggle for. For example, both trade unions and employer organisations try to reshape the labour market structure, although it is usually in opposite directions; they also try to introduce or tear down rules and regulations in the form of laws or agreements (Karlsson, 2020).

The last part of the triad is actors or social actors. Archer (1995) defines social actors as “individuals who have been able to develop a strong social identity which is often associated with a particular role or position in society” (p. 277). These individuals are able to exercise their agency by virtue of their more powerful position, which infuses them with the authority to do so (Archer, 1995). For example, government leaders, teachers, and employers in the industry could be considered social actors because they occupy a powerful position. As a social actor, a person elects to involve themselves in either “role making” or “role taking” (Archer, 2003, p. 121). Furthermore, the social context in which agents are born and have no control, will greatly influence the type of actor they can choose to become (Archer, 2003).

For example, students became social actors when they took part in the Fees Must Fall movement. They were able to invest time and energy and act in a distinctive manner (Archer, 2004). As such, Archer and Morgan (2020) explain that agents, singular and collective, as primary or corporate agents, by aggregation or relationality, are the ultimate prime movers of societal transformation. Archer points out that agency has the power “to articulate common interests and organise for collective action – and thereby generate social movements and exercise corporate influence on decision making in society” (1995, p. 278).

Agency is found in groups of people, and therefore perception is created by the interaction of people or groups (*ibid.*). Therefore, Archer’s theory is based on the fact that people make perceptions from their interactions but are structurally and culturally punctuated. Although perception is created through interaction, individuals begin to identify with those who share particular interests (Archer, 2003). Finally, individuals tend to be change agents with their position of power they wield in a society. Their influence on society tends to shape the way people perceive a certain subject. Thus, if leaders give their opinions on a particular matter, agents have the power to exercise their choice to either identify themselves with such an idea, or not. Accordingly, individuals with their powers create perception; power creates perception. It is important to contextualise the social structures, cultural systems, and the role of human agency in the creation of perception. These domains shape the way perception is created, maintained and changed over time to preserve society’s reality. Although people are born within existing structures and cultural systems, they exercise their agency to create their perceptions outside of the way in which they marvel at the objects, systems and the environment that surround them (Karlsson, 2020).

Archer (1995) recommends that when social phenomena are to be examined, social structures, cultural systems, and the casual and emerging powers of human agency should

first be considered. According to her view, structures, culture, and agency are relatively enduring and possess distinct properties and powers of enablement or constraint. Social structures and cultural systems have pre-existing features, and, as I already stated, people are born into these. Hence, they have the power to enable or constrain, while people have the power that is relevant to agency.

Archer's (1996) contention is that her unified theoretical approach allows researchers to give a full account of "how discursive struggles are socially organised and of how social struggles are culturally conditioned" (p. xxix). Archer's analytical framework, as discussed earlier, with its separate (but interlinked) domains of culture, structure, and agency, was used to identify the emerging properties at play when agents, in this case stakeholders, interact with TVET education in the country. Understanding analytic dualism is important to understand how researchers can employ it to understand the complexity of social action, as was the case in this study.

2.3.6 Morphogenesis and Morphostasis (M/M)

Structure, culture, and agency have been argued to be ontologically distinct from each other but at the same time, possess causal powers that make them irreducible to each other (Archer, 1995, 1996). Thus, Archer (1995, p. 15) emphasises that a social realist research study requires a methodology premised on the principle of analytical dualism "where explanation of why things social are so and not otherwise depends upon an account of how the properties and powers of the "people" causally intertwine with those of the "parts" (1995, p. 15). For this reason, Archer's (1995) theory introduces the notion of a morphogenetic approach embedded in analytical dualism, which requires the examination of the interaction between structural emergent properties (SEPs), cultural emergent properties (CEP), and personal emergent properties (PEP).

Archer (1995, p. 161) argues that for analytic dualism to take effect, a morphogenetic approach must be applied to the “practical analysis of vexatious society”. According to her, isolating structural and/or cultural factors which provide a context of action for agents, makes it possible to investigate how those factors shape the interactions of agents and how those interactions, in turn, reproduce or transform the initial context. Significantly, it also allows one to examine the relationship between parts and people over time. Given the scope and focus of the current study and its nature, it was not possible to apply Archer’s morphogenesis approach. However, I provide this brief description of the process for explanatory purposes.

Archer (1995, 1996) makes a distinction between morphogenesis and morphostasis to explain how social change or reproduction occurs as a result of human action. The term morphogenesis refers to “a change (-genesis) in the shape of things (morpho-), a change in agency, or culture or structure” (Archer, 1982, p. 458)). Morphostasis, as the name suggests, refers to “a scenario where no change occurs” (1996, p. xxiv). In other words, morphogenesis is a process that is used to explain social change or stability (morphostasis) in a structural or cultural system. Thus, social realism as an underlying philosophy affords the opportunity to explain how agents cause change (morphogenesis) to structure, culture, and in the process get transformed (causing morphogenesis of agency), or to reproduce the status quo (morphostasis) (Archer, 2000).

Behind the M/M model lie two propositions of analytical dualism, namely, “that structure necessarily predates the actions which transform it and that structural elaboration necessarily post-dates those actions” (Archer 1995, p. 90). As such, the model contains three stages: (1) At T1, represents existing structures which emanate from the past interaction between different agents. (2) In the period T2–T3, there is an interaction between agents connected to the structure in question. (3) Finally, the outcome in T4 can either be that the

structure is reproduced (morphostasis) or transformed (morphogenesis). Stages can be represented as (1) structural conditioning, (2) social interaction, and (3) structural development, thus stressing the interplay between structure and agency. The reason for the model thereby requires that there are two different types of agent: Primary Agents (see discussion in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**), the agency of which results in structural reproduction or morphostasis, and Corporate Agents, the agency of which results in structural transformation or morphogenesis (Karlsson, 2020).

In short, Morphogenesis has four-time (T1) dimensions. T1 - conditioning, T2 - T3 – interaction/actions, and T4- reproduction or transformation or elaboration (Archer, 1995; 2003). Figures 1 and 2 show the place of social and cultural conditions in Archer's morphogenetic approach and highlight the phase of transformation or reproduction, respectively. The current study examines the conditions that lead to action as well as socio-cultural interaction, thus locating itself at T1 and T2.

Crucially, significance is given to the timescale through which structure and agency themselves emerge, intertwine, and redefine one another, since this is the bedrock of the explanatory format employed in accounting for any substantive change in social structure (Archer, 1995). M/M is quintessentially temporal, and while the notion that temporality is important might seem obvious or trivial, the failure to adequately incorporate temporality is a serious problem in social theory and applications (Archer & Morgan, 2020). Archer (1995) explains that the breakup of temporal sequences into T1 to T4 where she argued that

¹ T stands for time

“temporality is not an option but a necessity”, there is a flow to time, a historicity to reality, but also an analytical value in breaking this into phases. Briefly, T1 to T4 refer to three temporal sequences of phases. Each phase is accompanied by a term which clarifies its key aspects (existent conditioning, interaction, elaboration) and she summarises this in a diagrammatic form “The Basic Morphogenetic Diagram”

Structural conditioning

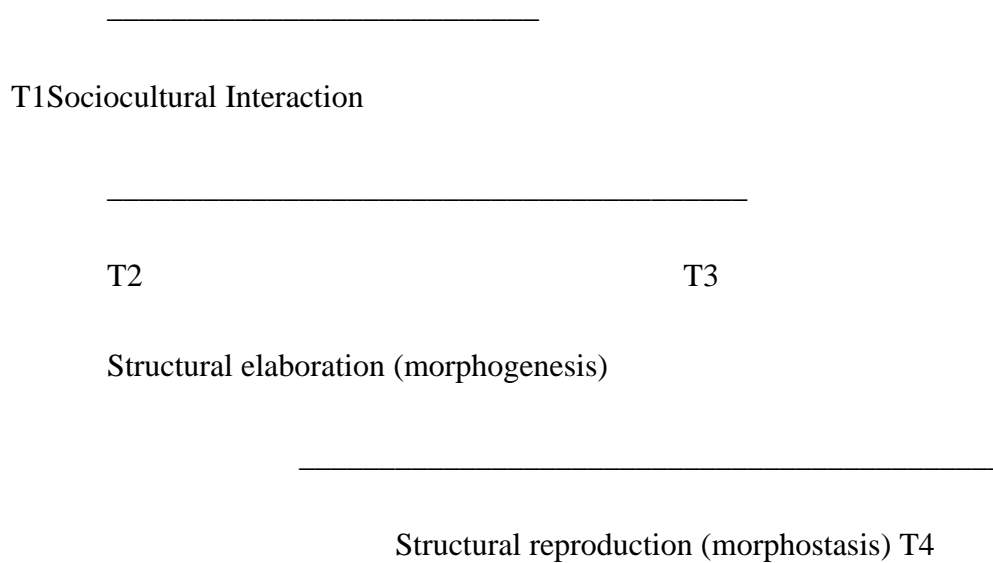
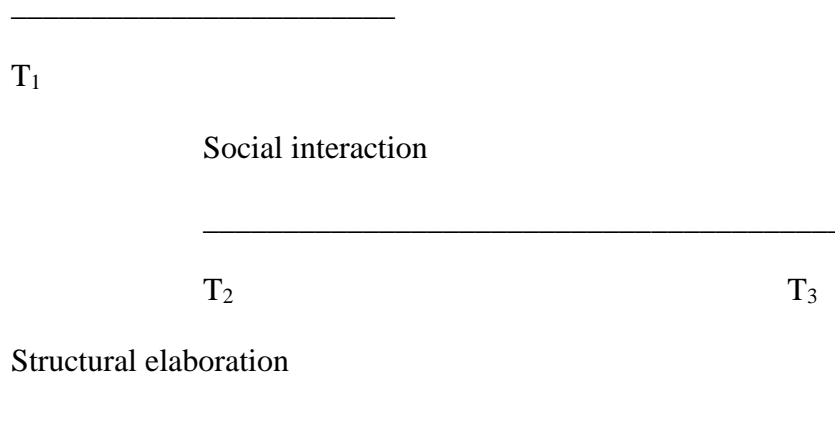


Figure 2.1: The morphogenesis of culture (Source: Archer, 2003, p. 3)

Structural conditioning



T₄

Figure 2.2: The morphogenesis of structure (Source: Archer, 1995, p. 193)

In short, Archer was setting out a sequence of changes and exploring the interactions to consider causes, types, and degrees of change, and whether the consequence could be described as morphostatic or morphogenic, and T₄ becomes a pivot (Archer & Morgan, 2020). Eloquently, Archer states that at any given T₄, something radical happens, not only to structure, but also to agency. In cases of macroscopic change, this affects the “people” through the transformation of four “parts” or levels of social order: systemic, institutional, role array, and positional (the life chances of different sections of the population). This is the “double morphogenesis” in which the agency is transformed itself, through “regrouping” in the transformation of the structure they bring about. T₄ thus becomes the new T₁ of the next M/M cycle (Archer & Morgan, 2020).

Therefore, the structures have a time scale as shown above, and they all manifest temporal resistance and do so mainly through taming/conditioning the context of action (Archer, 2010). At T₁, Archer explains the pre-existing structures which existed over time. When these pre-existing structures interact with agents, they generate conditions that constrain or enable action at T₂. The initial structural influence is not immediately apparent because time is required to change any structural properties. Structural influences extend beyond T₂, and thus it is important to gain insight into whether this is because they temporarily resist the collective pressure to change because they represent the vested interests of the powerful (Archer, 2010).

Importantly, the action initiated at T₂ occurs in a context not of its own making, but rather has a pre-existing historicity. The consequence is that it is not possible or desirable to assert that any structural property after T₂ is attributable to contemporary actors not wanting

or not knowing how to change it, because knowledge about it, attitudes towards it, vested interest in retaining it and the objective capacity for changing it have already been distributed and determined by the T2 stage. Failing to understand and analyse these may lead to claims being made and conclusions drawn that do not necessarily animate the complete story (Archer, 2010).

As I mentioned earlier, if the action is effective, then the transformation produced at T4 is not only the eradication of a prior structural property and its replacement by a new one; it is the structural elaboration of a host of new social possibilities, some of which will have gradually come into play between T2 and T4 (Archer, 2007). Therefore, morphogenetic analysis explains the timing of the new facilitating factors and can explain the beginning of a new structure. Simultaneously, structural elaboration restarts a new morphogenetic cycle as it introduces a new set of conditional influences upon interactions which are constraining and facilitating. T4 is thus the new T1 and the next cycle must be approached analytically, conceptually, and theoretically. The change in the structure at T4 will then result in new actions for the agents to decide-, reflect on, and decide whether create new strategies for a new project. And the cycle will continue over and over (Archer, 2007; Archer & Morgan, 2020). This is what Archer refers to when she states that changes in the social structure itself require us to theorise about it in different ways, since our subject matter has altered (Archer, 2010).

In relation to this study, at T1, there are structural conditions which have existed for a long time that create conditions that enable or constrain the agents at T2. An example is TVET policies, curricula, and admission requirements, just to mention a few already identified in Chapter 2. If these structures interact with the cultural properties in T2, which can be the values, attitudes, cultural beliefs, and ideologies of agents (stakeholders), they

might generate conditions that can either enable or constrain the agents and thus shape their perception of TVET. On the other hand, between T2 and T3, there are two independent influences – one temporal, the other directional – which can speed up, delay, or prevent the elimination of prior structural influences. To elaborate on the current study, (i) the commitment of the stakeholders to TVET could reduce the time taken to change the behaviour of the students and thus reduce the negative perception of TVET, thus improving the image of TVET, (although not entirely changing it due to the need for personnel to prepare, disseminate and guide in teaching); (ii) lack of enthusiasm or ability to participate in skills training, funding and lack of willingness to participate in TVET and learn among trainees can delay the process and damage the project. Simultaneously, stakeholders, although partly conditioned by their achievements, can exert a directional influence on the future cultural definition of how TVET is perceived in the country, thus affecting the substance of elaboration in T4.

The above means there are pre-existing structures in the context of TVET, such as TVET Act, national and international strategies or agenda, curriculum guidelines and educational policies, just to mention a few. These structures have been there for a long time, regardless of how agents think about them. Being beyond the reach of the agents, such structures are considered beyond change. When these pre-existing structural properties interact with agents' theories, ideas, and beliefs, they can generate properties that enable and/or constrain agents (in this case, stakeholders such as prospective TVET trainees, parents, trainees, TVET employers, graduates, and national leaders), and thus cause agents to act on this enablement or constraint at T3 and, thus, at T4. Their actions could reproduce (morphostasis and maintaining the status quo) or elaborate (transform or change) the structure.

Archer states that, to examine a morphogenetic cycle of any nature, it is important to understand that “the starting point (T1 as present time) is at all times situated historically; it is at all times conditioned by history as we are all born into and can only live embedded in an ideational [and structural] context which is not of our making” (1996, p. xxv). Hence, to begin to comprehend any particular morphogenetic cycle, it is necessary to start with an examination of how things manifest in the cultural and structural domains; what they are at present (Archer, 1996). Archer further contends that this is necessary because ‘systemic properties as a result shape the situations in which later generations of agents find themselves and bestow vested interests on individuals according to the positions they occupy’ (1998, p. 82).

The emergent properties which characterise sociocultural systems imply a discontinuity between initial interactions and their product, the complex system. Action, of course, is continual and essential both to the continuation and further elaboration of the system, but the subsequent interaction will be different from an earlier action because it is conditioned by the structural consequences of that prior action (Archer, 2003). Hence, the morphogenetic perspective is not only dualistic but sequential, dealing with endless cycles of structural/cultural conditioning, social/socio-cultural interaction, structural/cultural elaboration, and reproduction, thus separating the dialectical interplay between structure and action (Archer, 2003).

While analytical dualism insists on an artificial separation of the “parts” from the “people” to clearly understand their interplay, there is a naturally fundamental relationship between structure and agency. The actions of people (agents) cannot occur without a pre-existing set of structures (including ‘shared meanings’) (Archer, 1995). Therefore, it is important for a researcher “to understand not only how actors are able to exercise agency in a

particular situation, but also what the factors in that context are which enable or constrain this action” (Sayer, 2000, p. 26). This is the main focus of this study.

Interests and resources may have been historically unevenly distributed in terms of the current social structure and, as such, impact the way people are able to react to their circumstances. However, because people have their own personal emergent properties (PEP), causal powers, and internal conversations; they are able to respond creatively and imaginatively to find ways of using what material and cultural resources they have at their disposal to their best advantage (Archer, 1995, p. 70).

Furthermore, Archer (2003) asserts that “since to condition entails the existence of something that is conditioned, and because conditioning is not determinist, then this process necessarily involves the interplay between two different kinds of powers: those pertaining to structures and those belonging to agents” (p. 3). Archer, therefore, proposes that an adequate conceptualisation of conditioning must deal with the interplay between those powers.

Firstly, this involves a description and analysis of the manner in which structural and cultural powers impact agents, and secondly, how agents use their own powers to act to reproduce or transform in particular circumstances (Archer, 2000).

In summary, the morphogenetic cycle indicates that social structures (SS), cultural systems (CS), and agency are separate phenomena that can activate or hinder agency. The agency, in turn, can then either reproduce social structures or transform them (Archer, 2003).

2.4 Reflexivity /Stakeholder internal conversation

As mentioned earlier (Sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, and 2.3.5 above), Archer (2003) argues that agents possess powers and properties which are distinct from those pertaining to social forms. These powers help agents think, deliberate, believe, have

intentions, love, reflect, and, in the process, take action. Thus, the causal power of social forms is always mediated through agency. However, it is not always clear what the mediatory process entails. Archer (2003) argues for a thorough analysis of the word “through” before mediation starts. This unpacking, she proposes, remains far from complete (Archer, 2003, p. 3) because at a generic level, the word “through” is replaced by the process of social “conditioning”.

Human beings, according to Archer, are reflexive by nature. They use their reflexivity to negotiate and navigate structural and cultural conditions that create enabling and constraining situations for them. Archer (2003) defines reflexivity as “the power human beings possess and the ability to monitor themselves in relation to the circumstances in which they may find themselves and is exercised through a process of conscious reflexive deliberation during which people engage in internal conversations (self-talk) with themselves about themselves, their situations, behaviour, values, and aspirations” (Archer, 2003, p. 23). In short, Archer characterises reflexivity as the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa” (Archer 2007, p. 4). Furthermore, she elaborates that our “internal conversation” is not exclusively cognitive (we use visual imagery), not infallible, or even realistic. Neither do we all practice reflexivity in the same way. There are different dominant modes of reflexivity (communicative, autonomous, meta-, and fractured; Archer, 2003), although each day most of us practice all of them, depending on the situation and our knowledge in relation to it (Archer & Morgan, 2020).

Archer (2003) asserts that what is central to human beings are not meanings, but “doings”. Of course, other animals are also involved in “doing”, but she further postulates that humans are distinctive because implicit in their actions is conscious intention, and,

during their activities from birth, they begin to develop self-consciousness, a precondition for reflexivity. As they engage in practice, humans develop emotions and personal and social identities (Archer, 2003). The former identity is not forced on them from outside; rather, it is an emergent property of individual human action. According to (Archer, 2003), in the process of self-creation, humans can ultimately engage in an internal conversation. As they develop a conscious “I” who acts and a self-conscious “Me” who experiences that action, it is possible for selves to consider the society around them, their place in it, and their actions (Archer, 2003). Archer (2003) further explains that people, as she called them “selves”, are not just simply victims of social groups, but are able to judge themselves and adapt their perspectives and practices. Archer (2003) asserts, “... social identity is necessarily a sub-set of personal identity” (p. 120). For her, personal identity has a priority and authority over group or social identity. Because personal identity, which is the product of an internal reflexive conversation, is independent of social circumstances, it is a vital aspect of the transformation of society.

2.5 Social Realist Perspectives viz-a-viz the perception of TVET

I contend that the social realist perspective can best explain the foundation and basis on which stakeholders can have a positive or negative dimensional perspective towards TVET. If agents occupy a certain niche within the realm of interaction with the structure (the basis for the formulation of TVET within Namibia), their perceptions can either be problematic or facilitate shaping the impact institutions can have on the society. It is important to note that, since the structure (TVET system) has its own ways and means to justify its existence and course of action at times, stakeholders (agents) tend to influence its activities so that they become answerable to the stakeholders as the institution seeks relevance and importance in the society. The stakeholders’ perceptions towards TVET education and institutions bring to light what Archer (2003) describes as human perceptions that are never automated but are

purposefully used to influence the manner in which institutions and systems should serve their needs.

The concept of human beings as change agents in Archer's world means that people should not be treated as biologically different beings, but they are agents if they are collectively placed in their respective categories that can influence the change of a system. Therefore, social actors act in homogenous entities but within the contexts that make a meaningful impact for the end they want to see, and they do create perceptions. Therefore, perceptions of people, although they have an impact, have less impact than perceptions formed from identity.

This in-depth look at human agency is quite useful for this study because it places stakeholders in the right and correct categories so that the impact of their perceptions can be observed and correctly interpreted. For this study, structural properties include, but are not limited to, the VET Act, policy guidelines, curriculum, infrastructures, resources, and national and international TVET agendas. Cultural properties include the values, beliefs, and customs that stakeholders might have on the role TVET is expected to fulfil, achieve, or provide deliverables over time, and agency is the ability of the stakeholder to exercise their agency to participate in the affairs of TVET across Namibia. Archer's social realism is beneficial for this study in that it provides explanatory, methodological and analytical tools to frame and explain the phenomenon from yet another perspective, distinctive from that of the modern literature.

Archer's concepts of structure, agency, and culture are useful when trying to analyse the underlying mechanisms and causal powers that make it easy or difficult for stakeholders to view TVET the way they do. The significance of Archer's theory of social realism lies in trying to understand the relationship between structure, culture, and agency from the agent's

point of view. I used Margaret Archer's theory of social realism to interrogate the ways in which emergent powers and properties in structural and cultural areas (Archer, 1995), in the context of Namibia, have shaped human agency and how stakeholders consciously mediate them through their thoughts and actions.

2.6 Summary

This chapter presented a theoretical framework that underlies the study. As indicated, Archer's social realism theory was introduced as a framework that offers explanatory, methodological, and analytical tools to examine the phenomenon under study. I elaborated on the key tenets of her theory to highlight their relevance for this study. In the next chapter, I critically synthesise the reviewed literature on stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia and beyond.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical synthesis of the literature on historical development and models of technical vocational education and training (TVET). The chapter locates the study within the current research on TVET and highlights its potential contribution to the field. In the first section, I describe the historical development of TVET and its importance to economic development and society. Second, I review the international perspectives on TVET educational systems/models. This section gives insights into countries with the best TVET Education systems and practices such as Singapore, Germany, Australia and Rwanda. Third, I go ahead to show how TVET has evolved in Namibia, focusing on the historical development of TVET post-independence. This section evaluates the changes and implementation of TVET by the democratic government post-1990. Fourth, I evaluate the research that has been conducted on stakeholder perceptions of TVET, followed by the strengths and limitations of this body of research. The chapter concludes by showing how my research attempts to address some of the limitations of the existing research under review.

3.2 The historical development of TVET and its importance to economic development and society

TVET is defined differently worldwide (Bowen, 1981; Law, 2008). Various countries categorize what is discussed as TVET in this study under different terms, including Vocational Education and Training (VET), Training and Further Education (TAFE),

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE), Further Education (FE), and Career and Technical Education (CTE). Despite these varying terminologies, they generally encompass the same sectors and discussions explored in this study. The core principles and practices governing TVET remain consistent. Thus, this study adopts the universally accepted term, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The differences in education systems globally shift the dimensions and adoption of TVET in developed, middle, and developing countries (Lotz-Sisitka, & McGrath, 2023; McGrath, 2023). These scholars argued that VET Systems are not identical but are influenced by to the context-specific effects of colonialism and aid dependence. African VET systems have sought to mimic VET in the industrialized world. Regardless of context, VET institutions are widely understood as important partners in economic development, expected to deliver responsive curricula and engage relationally with employers and work environments (ibid).

At the time of this study, TVET had recently gained more attention because of the proliferation of poverty, unemployment, and advancement in technology (Kanwar, Balasubramanian & Carr, 2019; Wedekind et al., 2021). Hence, to a certain extent, poverty and unemployment have been the driving force behind the increasing uptake of TVET by people seeking skills to be employable, and as pathways out of poverty. For example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) report (2020) indicates that many young people are unemployed around the world because of the growing mismatch between education and skills needed for one to be employed.

Wedekind et al., (2021) took a critical aim at the limited approach of TVET education, the lack of much needed relevance, and the mismatch between learners and the labour market. In this regard, they call for the need to adopt a multidimensional and holistic

intervention between Industry and TVET institutions, various community stakeholders, and partners to develop a plan that bridges the gap between academic learning and the labour market. As a result, an inclusive engagement between institutions, policymakers, industries, and various bodies is much needed to allow an easy transition of learners from higher education to TVET and then to industry. This means that the adoption of TVET education is needed at all levels of learning in the academic learning environment.

Many countries around the world are recognising TVET as a route to eradicating unemployment and poverty. For example, in the sub-Saharan region, education policy and multisector partners have acknowledged the importance of TVET in balancing education sector production and labour market demands (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020). Wedekind et al., (2021) also stated that “across Africa, vocational education and training (VET) is viewed by policy makers and international development agencies as a solution to pressing social and economic concerns” (p. 2). However, dominant approaches to VET in Africa are flawed; this was informed by a number of critiques of traditional VET systems as being focused on the formal economy, insensitive to local context, and unable to address the challenges emerging from climate breakdown, new technologies and migration ((McGrath et al., 2020; Wedekind et al., 2021).

In addition to the above, the rapid advancement in technology has also fueled the need for TVET as the demand for a skilled workforce increases. For example, there is a demand for technical and soft skills as the world becomes increasingly digital (Kanwar, Balasubramanian & Carr, 2019; Makgato, 2019).

In addition, the advancement in technology has reshaped the workforce environment and continues to do so as the emergence of COVID-19 has shown (Makgato, 2019). TVET can respond to these changes in the world and the increasing demand for new skills required

for the current job market climate (Denhere & Moloi, 2021; Makgato, 2019). The World Bank (2021) report, and the OECD (2021) acknowledge and highlight that TVET can play a major role in responding to an increasing demand for skills. However, Japan International Cooperation Agency (2007) cautions about the overproduction of graduates by TVET institutions, which might lead to new types of unemployment. The International Labour Organisation (2007) agrees and refers to this as technical unemployment which accounts for the poor productivity of those already employed (ILO, 2007).

The role of TVET in driving global economic progress through skill development is unquestionable (Denhere & Moloi, 2021; Makgato, 2019). A UNESCO-UNEVOC Study on the trends shaping the future of TVET teaching, also highlighted it is important to understand that TVET is a significant tool for training and development of human resource skills, which is critical to industrial development and expansion (Subrahmanyam, 2020). For example, Goel et al., (2011) observed that TVET in India contributes to the country's economic growth through an adequate supply of well-trained and skilled workers. This is why TVET has been widely recognised as worthwhile by various stakeholders; it empowers people economically and socially (McGrath & Powell, 2013).

However, Essel, Agyarkoh, Sumaila, and Yankson (2014) argue that in Ghana TVET graduates and institutions in developing countries often face stigmatisation because the public regards them as inferior to mainstream academic institutions. This has also been observed in Saudi Arabia (Aldossari, 2020). In their study conducted in the USA, Macha, Mackie and Magaziner (2018) revealed that on a global scale, 27% of parents regard TVET as useless, and 22% perceive it to be for people who are not smart. Abu-Ghaida and Thacker (2015) argue that a 50% drop in vocational education enrolment is due to the perception people hold about TVET.

In alignment with the previous authors, Okocha (2010) explains that the general population views TVET education as an avenue that leads to so-called dirty jobs. For this reason, TVET is often undertaken by people who have failed high school (Essel et al., 2014). Hence, the potential for TVET to change society has been underappreciated, as discussed above (Kane, 2009). Jaymalin (2018) writes about the lack of appreciation for TVET in the Philippines education system. This led to the establishment of the Technical Educational Skills Development Authority (TESDA) which supervises the higher and tertiary education levels (Jaymalin, 2018). The intention was to rebuild the image and status of TVET in the country and beyond (Jaymalin, 2018).

Despite various global efforts and engagements to improve its educational significance, people still hold negative views about TVET (Ibrahim, Rahman & Yasin, 2012). Thus, if TVET is to fulfil its potential, interventions are needed to engage society (Ajzen, 2005). One way to change the negative image of TVET is through the provision of quality services to clients (Sisyuk, 2018). A study by Sisyuk (2018) explains that there are no meaningful studies to show why students mostly label TVET education as low quality, and what drives the loyalty of students to TVET institutions. Therefore, this study is timely and aims to contribute to the conversation about people's views on TVET.

To address the socioeconomic ills of society, vocational education is one of the methods that should be prioritised (Egbewole, 2013). TVET, as indicated in previous sections, can offer everyone the same opportunity to gain notable skills and knowledge regardless of social caste and to be counted as valuable members of their community (ibid). As such, TVET as a tool can be used to improve one's social standing and economic contribution (McGrath, 2012). McGrath (2012) concludes that TVET has a plethora of

learning methods that lead someone to full participation in today's economic activities to achieve social solidity and individual self-esteem.

The world has transformed into a knowledge- and information-based economy, leading to a plethora of challenges (Calderon, 2009). This has led to an acute demand for a well-trained and skilled labour force (Denhere & Moloi, 2021; Drucker, 1998; Makgato, 2019;). Kearns & Papadopolous (2000) argue that despite the various achievements made to improve people's lives, unemployment remains at an all-time high, especially in sub-Saharan African countries. This, according to Kearns and Papadopolous (2000), has led to the need for more research on education, unemployment, and job markets. It has been established that high unemployment levels among young people lead to high crime rates and other covert activities (Denhere & Moloi, 2021).

Atchoarena & Grootings (2009) argue that because of such increasing youth unemployment around the world, some reforms are taking place at various levels of organisation and government. As indicated previously, TVET has been recognised as one of the important tools that can be used to combat youth unemployment by government leaders, the private sector, and public-private partnerships, especially in Africa (ILO, 2007; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006).

Jacinto (2009) studied the ability of TVET to ameliorate youth poverty and unemployment in South America. He found out that it is indeed a pathway to improving young people's employment situation (Jacinto, 2009). Similarly, Kane (2009) discovered the nexus between TVET and the socio-economic recovery of a society that has been gripped by war or armed conflict in the context of Liberia. Rajput (2009) reported that there has been a dramatic shift in the Indian labour force and demand since the introduction of TVET in the last decade of the 20th century.

TVET has been widely considered one of the interventions that enable competency and is implementable at various stages of a country and industry (Collins, 2009; Guthrie, 2009). TVET's flexible nature allows different learners to be assimilated into the system, as well as pragmatic learning, and modes of delivery that are easy for learners and instructors (Law, 2008). Because of its flexible nature, TVET witnessed a surge in the number of learners who use the distance learning mode because of its efficiency (Neal, 2011). This allows those that are limited by their job demands and geographical location to enroll, leading to the use of modern-day online learning platforms that add versatility to the institution (Neal, 2011).

Even though TVET has been acknowledged as important for industry and communities (Law, 2008), and has a flexible nature of implementation (Neal, 2011), how it has been implemented in various systems is somewhat different (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). For example, the dual system has gained prominence of late where it is done based on schools and the workplace (Euler, 2013). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2010) noted that a dual model is being followed in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and Norway. Barabasch, Hang & Lawson (2009) postulated that the Japanese and German models have been widely adopted as they are touted to have the ability to smoothly allow the transition from school into the labour market.

TVET can act as an avenue to combat cultural and socioeconomic deficiencies and eradicate all forms of inequality, egregious poverty, and high levels of unemployment (Brewer, 2013). When properly implemented, TVET can lead to a high economic boom and increase per capita income (Law, 2005; Lawy et. al, 2010). Pongo et al. (2014) established that in the context of Ghana, young people who are often trapped in a vicious circle of poverty and unemployment, lack the desired labour skills. However, Adams (2011) believes

that the high levels of poverty and unemployment of young people are the result not only of a lack of skills, but also of joblessness amid economic growth. He argued that young people lack technical and entrepreneurial skills that enable self-employment initiatives (ibid).

(Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005&2004) propose that there is a need for broadening TVET education to cover the areas of entrepreneurship, technical skills, and business ideas for all learners. If and when this is done and as the economic base expands, economic growth and poverty alleviation can be achieved. The eradication of unemployment means higher government expenditure on amenities and other grants.

McGrath (2012) looked at TVET in the Namibian context and recommends that there is a need for strong investment in the belief that TVET can spur economic development. This sentiment was long ago echoed by Kraak (2008), who argues that the Namibian government should support and help learners secure their livelihoods that would spur societal equity, economic growth, and transforming communities. Therefore, the Namibian TVET education system aims to provide young people with skills and knowledge, and to address the disparities that have been perpetuated in the community for a long time (Kraak, 2008). Hartl (2009) postulates that vocational education is the wheel that could steer the development of a nation and its stability over time.

Bennell et al. (2006) argue that TVET offers a prime opportunity for young people, especially those from the lower echelons of society, to extricate themselves from quagmire situations, look for better opportunities, and further their studies and social wellbeing. TVET has also been appraised for its ability to contribute to the transformation of society. It can provide transitional skills that enable people to get quick employment, or industry to fix employment gaps that affect their operations, as well as personal employment through venturing into business activities (Festus, 2011). Akoojee (2012) concurs that TVET is one of

the important drivers of economic growth and general social mobility. Kraak (2008) notes that TVET becomes relevant and important in bridging the gap between the presence of a high unemployment rate in most African countries and the shortage of a labour force with intermediate skills.

Depending on the country, people have different experiences with TVET, but it largely depends on the national strategy for vocational education (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). In countries like Germany, TVET is highly respected and is regarded to venture into technical fields leading to high-paying jobs and research degrees (Brockmann, Clarke & Winch, 2008; Hirche, 2012). However, in the African context, in countries such as South Africa and Uganda, the negative perception of TVET emanates from the racially segregated apartheid government that excluded black Africans from professional studies (McGrath, 2023; Papier, Needham & McBride, 2012; UNESCO, 2016). Palmer (2007) observed that in Ghana, TVET is available formally and informally, but it has been considered as a low priority for people because it is often undertaken by those who could not make it to universities.

In societies where TVET is not fully implemented, it is recommended to steer young people from engaging in illicit activities and crimes that affect the general functioning of society (Oketch, 2007). By the same notion, McGrath (2012) put forward the idea that vocational training is mainly advantageous for young people who are often disenchanted by the prevailing national socioeconomic ills and imbalances that push them to engage in criminal activities. Kraak (1991) explains that vocational training helps young people in times of economic hardship because it can keep them busy and, in the process, prepares them for a brighter future when industries start recruiting human resources. Baraki and Kemenade (2013) coined the term educated employment. This implies that some young people should be

trained and remain as labour force reserves. When opportunities arise, they can be employed (Baraki & Kemenad, 2013).

Maigida, Saba, and Namkere (2013) observed that there were a considerable number of graduates who chose to run their own businesses after graduating from TVET. To this end, TVET remains important in all economic activities, as it contributes to the national economy in two ways, i.e., self-employment and paid jobs (Maigida, Saba & Namkere, 2013). The same scholars argue that vocational training and entrepreneurial education dictate the labour forces in the job market, the general well-being of graduates and their families, and holistic societal development (Maigida, Saba, & Namkere, 2013). For example, if entrepreneurship is treated as the core of TVET, it can harness the full potential of graduates to run successful businesses (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008).

Scholars like Gleeson and Keep (2004), Goel (2011) and Gapultos (2017) found that the presence of entrepreneurship education in vocational education has the propensity to open many small businesses that form the pinnacle and indicator of the economic development of a country. There are also a considerable number of scholars such as Seamus and Papier (2011), and Powell (2012), who argue that skills acquisition driven by TVET education and policymaking should include an economic blueprint that encompasses the opening of viable businesses and readily available opportunities for all. The 21st century has been dubbed the century of knowledge, technology, and information. Therefore, graduates should be savvy and multiskilled so that they fit in various sectors of the economy (UNESCO, 2016) (see the previous discussion in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 above).

Odoi and Abdulkarim (2010) argue that there is a strong link that exists between relevant skills availability and the presence of material resources in the fight against abject poverty at an individual and societal level. For example, in the Nigerian context, TVET is

recognised as any disciplinary approach(es) that occurs after completion of general education where learners are exposed to studying technology, and acquiring relevant skills and relevant pertinent knowledge that enables individuals to be active participants in the economic sphere (Odoi & Abdulkarim, 2010). Hollander and Mar (2009) summed it up when they recognised TVET as an institution that prepares people for self-employment and a sense of belonging in society.

The reviewed literature as indicated above indicates that one of the strategies that can be used to bring about peace and stability in a country is a strong investment in TVET and entrepreneurship and creating an enabling environment for such to flourish (Kane, 2009). As such, TVET and entrepreneurship lead to skills acquisition and opportunities. Therefore, governments should invest in such initiatives to address people's fears before they start to demand them (Rauner & Maclean, 2008). People's insecurities are addressed when they believe that they are engaged in worthwhile activities that are supported by their government (Adams, 2007). I support the idea of self-reliance, equal and available employment opportunities, and wealth creation to address people's insecurity that drives them to undertake some activities that negatively affect society. I agree with Festus (2011) who posited that if a nation has many people who are equipped with vocational skills, it has a chance of being competitive on the global map in business ventures and the supply of competitive labour, which in turn addresses society vices and insecurity.

Egbewole (2013) recognises security as a state or emotional feeling of being safe from all forms of harm. Security issues extend to far-and-wide areas of property, people, community, and society (Egbewole, 2013). Dasuki (2013) is of the view that the presence of security in an environment means that there is predictability of one's safety and that all people can do their business without disturbances, fear, injury, and danger. To address the

socio-economic ills of society, vocational education is one of the methods that should be prioritised (Egbewole, 2013). TVET, as indicated in previous sections, can give all people an equal opportunity to gain noteworthy skills and knowledge regardless of social caste and be counted as valuable members of their community (Egbewole, 2013). As such, TVET, as a tool, can be used to improve one's social standing and economic contribution (McGrath, 2012). McGrath (2012) concludes that TVET has a plethora of learning methods that lead someone to full participation in today's economic activities to achieve social solidity and individual self-esteem.

3.3 International perspectives on TVET educational systems/models

As highlighted in the introduction, various models have been adopted by governments globally in designing and creating policies that support TVET (ILO, 2007; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). Depending on the philosophy and thrust of government, some models are designed to deal with impending or existing unemployment among young people. Some models are geared towards the general population that could not be successful in academic education (Law, 2008). This section discusses the TVET models that have been used in Singapore, Germany, Namibia, and Rwanda and how they have contributed to national and social development.

3.3.1 The Singapore TVET model

TVET was almost non-existent in Singapore, before the nation got its independence and sovereignty in 1965 (Law, 2005). The government realised that the nation's traditional service, commerce, and trading industries would not keep up with the rate of young people graduating from high schools and universities. Therefore, the answer to that was the diversification of the economy through the opening and promotion of various industries. From the time of independence until the 1970s, the government placed emphasis and

investment in the promotion and universalisation of primary and secondary education with a focus on technical training for learners to acquire basic vocational skills. The dawn of 1980 saw the government shift the focus of technical education to secondary schools, universities, polytechnics, and TVET centres.

When Singapore gained its independence, it was haunted by the challenge of creating jobs (Law, 2005). The government shifted the economic model from import substitution to expansionist industrialisation to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and manufacturing that required more labour supply. Therefore, the government had to ensure that the workforce that would be employed in the manufacturing industries would have a skilled enough workforce that would propel innovation. Thus, the government expanded the TVET framework and philosophy leading to the opening of more vocational centres across the country.

Like any other growing economy, there were new skills that needed to be certified in Singapore. The newly formed National Trade Certificate (NTC) was tasked with the responsibility to ensure that there was a nexus between training institutions and industry (skills assessment or audit). With those in motion, the engineering field boomed with training opportunities in the areas of electrical and electronics engineering, heavy duty machinery, and vehicle engineering, which started at the semi-skilled level, or the NTC-3 level of certification. These fields had competency and skills audits that required all adults working in the same industry to be publicly and regularly certified.

When the government opened the Economic Development Board (EDB) in the 1970s, whose main duty was to attract FDI, it managed to attract various overseas companies in the country. It managed to sign memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with various companies such as Philipps of the Netherlands, Tata of India, and Rollei of Germany (Law, 2008). They

agreed to open a consortium that helped in the training of manpower in their operations in what was then termed the Joint Government Training Centres. The idea was expanded and reached government departments, leading to the formation of government-to-government exchange programmes where companies from France, Japan, Germany, and the US joined to meet or train specialised skills that local companies and vocational centres could not satisfy.

Due to all these emerging changes and needs, the TVET system had to be changed. This led to the opening of the Vocational and Industrial Training Board (VITB) in 1979 and was broadened to cover the areas of expansion of TVET institutions, development of new courses, quality checks, and improvement in all areas of vocational education. This led to the certification of new courses in auto technology and precision engineering. The emerging needs of the economy and industries led to the need for reforms in the development of curriculum, trainer training, and media, which had to be used to build national trust and confidence in TVET.

Over time, it was realised that some skills had become trivial and unimportant. People whose skills had been deemed outmoded were to be retrained under the national framework of Continuing Education and Training (CET) where some had to be upgraded, and some reskilled, especially those who had acquired lower education. From 1983 to 1987, the government passed three CET programmes, i.e., the Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST), Work Improvement through Secondary (WISE), and Modular Skills Training (MOST) (Law, 2005). The BEST and WISE programmes aimed to improve adults who had joined the labour force but had not achieved a primary and secondary school pass in the areas of English language and mathematics, respectively. Adults had to attend classes in various ways depending on the nature of their jobs and company, but most of them attended their school at vocational centres, their parent companies, nearest schools, union centres, and call

centres of the Ministry of Defence (ibid.). MOST aimed at reskilling adults who were already working through the provision of technical skills that would see them upgraded to the next job grades but was done using the distance learning approach.

In the following years, the Singapore TVET system evolved to become one of the best models in the world as it gained attestation and evaluation from various foreign companies and governments. By 2007, it was one of the best vocational training models in the world due to its innovations in the industry, commerce, and the service sector (Law, 2008). This led to higher enrolment from overseas and internally, as people regarded it as equal to, or more valuable than, academic education. Most of the school learners who had failed academic learning have managed to progress into careers through vocational education. Thus, the perception of the public has helped to change the image of TVET. Today, the Singapore TVET system is dubbed a practical, mind-blowing and “heart-on-the-career system” that fosters confidence and trust among the hearts and minds of people as it provides relevant, improved skills, and directly adds value to the nation and the international community (Law, 2008).

3.3.2 The German Dual model

Globally, there are some countries like Germany that have managed to combine vocational training with high-end skills development in the national education and training programme. Like the Switzerland TVET model, the German model is dual; it is employer-led, where youths have the chance to reach the pinnacle of their careers in a bid to avoid frustrating academic education. Berger and D’Ascoli (2012) argue that the four-year programme starts with two-year academic programmes and the last two years are led by the employer who introduces graduates to the reality of the industry. Hyslop (2012) testifies that the German TVET model is employer-led where vocational training happens at the

workplace, and theoretical aspects are learned at the technical school. Hence, it is evident that in Germany, vocational institutions are swarmed with graduates who are full-time workers but in various stages of learning that are always on-going. This is why Barabasch (2012) terms it the dual model.

There are core principles and elements that qualify the German system as one of the most successful TVETs in the world (Euler, 2013). Some of the principles that are inherent to its dual system are the following:

- The German society places great value on vocational education, as they perceive it to be important to the national development of the country (social, economic, and individual). It is an incentive to employers who maximise on making the workplace readily available for learners and workers to get exposed to all training and opportunities. The value placed on the vocational education training (VET) by the society means that its vocational education is not for those who drop out of academic education, but rather attracts the best of the intellectuals that the society can provide.
- The German TVET can equip a highly skilled workforce that quickly adapts to various systems. Most of the graduates are skilled in more than one area and can further their studies in other new areas.
- In this dual model, it is the responsibility of both the government and the training industry to develop the curriculum and provide training resources and funding for vocational education. In this system of duality, the government's main responsibility is for the employability of all trained graduates, while industries focus on the quality of training and the duties of learners.
- Full involvement of the government in the development of the curriculum means that all training methods and standards exist in a codified system that is nationally universal.

The notable contribution of TVET in socioeconomic development in Germany led to the system being extended to other areas that had been left out (Euler, 2013). Trainee programme learners who are enrolled in universities from arts to engineering, can now join the system, if they have attended a cumulative 12 years of academic education. Finally, for example, a trainee who is enrolled as an apprentice at a vocational school to be an artist can graduate with that qualification and will also qualify as an engineer because s/he is enrolled at a technical university. Thus, a graduate can graduate with two qualifications in four and a half years, with both academic and vocational qualifications.

3.3.3 The Australian model

Like the previous two models discussed, the Australian TVET also focuses on the provision of skills needed by the labour market, thereby linking learning to work (Australian Government, 2006). As regulated by law, training providers who aspire to offer TVET programmes, as well as those offering nationally recognised qualifications, are required to register with the relevant authority such as the Australian National Training Authority. A key feature of the Australian national training system is that it is industry-led, competency-based, nationally consistent, and quality assured, and there are currently efforts underway in Australia to reform the national training system to make it demand-driven and responsive to the ever-changing needs of business and industry (Mitchell, 2006). After completing compulsory secondary schooling, students are issued with an upper or secondary certificate or VET certificate. They then have the choice to proceed to higher education or VET, join adult and community education centres, or take up an apprenticeship programme. Technical and Further Education (TAFE) are the largest providers of VET programmes and are mainly owned and administered by state and territory governments (Australian Government, 2006).

In Australia, only registered training providers such as schools, TAFE Colleges, or institutions working in close partnership with registered training organisations, can provide industry-specific training programmes leading to accredited vocational qualifications (Misko, 2006; OECD, 2003). Accredited training providers working in partnership with schools, technical and Further Education Colleges, as well as private training providers, are registered to provide training in certain fields or occupational areas, while apprenticeships are offered in specific trade and craft occupations. Although there has been considerable criticism regarding apprenticeships or traineeships (Smith & Wilson, 2003), there are proponents that believe that such traineeships provide trainees with opportunities to enter the labour market and that such programmes are useful (Cully & Curtain, 2001).

3.3.4 The Rwandan model

Rwanda became independent from Belgium on 1 July 1962 and was recognised by the United Nations (UN) on 19 December 1963. However, the former date is recognised as the official one. Rwanda is a landlocked country located in the Great African Rift Valley in East Africa. It is bordered by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the north-west, Uganda in the north, Tanzania in the north-east, and Burundi in the south. According to PSB Frontline (2004), Rwanda has two major ethnic groups, the Tutsi and Hutu. The Hutu, which are the majority, are historically and traditionally poor cattle herders. The Tutsi minority are the wealthy agrarians who rule the majority Hutu. In 1994, the nation experienced a genocide that claimed more than 800,000 lives in the space of 100 days (PBS Frontline, 2004). Some people became internally displaced persons (IDPs), while others took refuge in neighbouring countries. This led to a major scarcity of human resources, as many people were now residing in the countryside, away from the towns and cities where industries are located.

By the turn of the 21st century, it became evident that a robust economy hinged on a vibrant manufacturing sector and agriculture, which is a well-mechanised and thriving service sector. However, Rwanda lacked a skilled labour force that could work or operate machinery in agriculture, farms, or manufacturing industries (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). This called for a highly skilled and educated labour force that could propel the economy and stabilise a society that had been ravaged by gross abuse of power and deep-seated poverty. The answer to this socioeconomic malaise was the opening of vocational education sites throughout the country that would train people in all skills that were in demand in the labour market.

In Rwanda, TVET is regarded as a systematic approach where trainees are equipped with indispensable skills and know how to increase their capacity and abilities so that they can perform effectively in the labour market. When the Rwandan government reformed various societal sectors in 2008, TVET was not spared. Massive restructuring occurred. The result was the establishment of the Workforce Development Authority (WDA). Through the Ministry of Education, the WDA would oversee all vocational and technical training in the country (Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, 2008). The branch also coordinates all private and public vocational training centres by setting standard operating procedures, guidelines, designing the curriculum, the programmes to be offered, accreditation of all training institutions and assessments, and various frameworks that facilitate parallel and vertical partnerships with the government and private players (Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Labour, 2009)

TVET is a flexible system in Rwanda, where it can be offered formally or informally. However, it must result in one being able to gain the skills required to be employed or start up their own business (employment creation) (Law, 2008). Therefore, the main philosophy of

TVET in Rwanda is to gain skills without much emphasis on whether it is formal or informal. In Rwanda, TVET has three main categories.

- Vocational training encompasses both vocational training and continuous vocational education, but much emphasis is placed on skills and knowledge acquisition so that trainees can be masters of their trade.
- Technical education is focused on equipping trainees with theoretical understanding, skills, and knowledge of their field. These trainees go through a structured learning process as they prepare to transition to other tertiary institutions for further education.
- Continuing education is a cyclical form of training where trainees are mainly equipped with skills that enable them to observe labour market changes so that they continually upskill or upgrade to vocational training or technical education. Most trainees are exposed to information, communication, and technology (ICT) and how it can be used in today's digital world, in the labour market, workplace, and further learning.

It is important to note that these categories are defined along the lines of eligibility requirements as envisaged by the national guidelines and frameworks. These guidelines clearly spell out the duration of training per category, even though the thrust of vocational education in Rwanda is to equip young people with skills in both formal and informal education cycles (Republic of Rwanda, 2008). Vocational education is provided to those who have completed their primary education and those who are in tertiary education. To date, TVET in Rwanda is still an emerging phenomenon. Although the nation is gaining traction on the economic front, some people still view it as making a smaller contribution to national development due to the lack of enough investment (Powell & McGrath, 2014).

What appears to be omnipresent in all these models is the foregrounding of TVET as a route to achieving economic development, skills and knowledge acquisition, technological acquisition, and innovation and employment creation (UNESCO, 2016).

3.4 The evolution and historical development of TVET in Namibia

The Namibian technical and vocational education and training is governed by the NTA, which gives such institutions powers to create structures that include various bodies and to employ staff members who are qualified for their positions but fall under the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation (UNESCO, 2016). This holistic approach to governance facilitates a strong partnership between the government, industry, and institutions in ensuring that the learners receive quality education; all players are included in the organisation (Naanda, 2010).

The NTA is responsible for sourcing and raising funding for trainees within the guidelines and norms gazetted by the central government (Naanda, 2010). In creating funding coffers, important details are also factored in, such as the type of the programme(s), enrolment figures, programme cost of delivery, resources, materials, and equipment needed for the training and completion of the programme, through the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) (VET Act, 2008).

The Namibian government recognises that TVET can help ease the acute shortage of skills in manufacturing industries, address employment mismatches, and help young people who are largely unemployed (Naanda, 2010). The FET Act was enacted in 1998 to address all necessary reforms. This Act focused on the structures and programmes that were offered to realise human resource issues and socioeconomic transformation of the Namibian society (McGrath, 2012). Despite all these efforts, the early years of the reforms faced several notable challenges because lecturers and instructors lacked incentives that would lead to high

staff turnover, low enrolment, poor student performance, institutional and labour related issues, and an acute lack of funding (Nzimande, 2013). These structural and institutional challenges drew the criticism of stakeholders and society.

To stimulate public interest, the NTA resorted to funding students through bursaries for those who could not self-finance (Naanda, 2010). It also established various partnerships with other players, including potential employers (NTA, 2020). To attract young people, e-learning platforms were established so that learners can access learning materials at home or at work.

The education sector was reformed to accommodate the transformation of TVET institutions into Vocational Training Centres. (UNESCO, 2016). The sector proposed several changes to address the obstacles that hampered institutions, including staff training, recruitment, and retention, linking and partnering with potential employers, student support, curriculum development, and the development of all necessary infrastructure. (McGrath, 2012). These measures and adjustments sought to revamp the sector so that it could be recognised as productive institutions that contribute to national socioeconomic development. If these challenges were not addressed, TVET would remain a second-class choice for prospective students. Parents would not allow their children to enroll in these institutions, and employers would not employ graduates because of the perceived poor-quality education that they might have acquired, leaving them poorly skilled.

A similar situation was observed in South Africa. For example, Needham & Papier (2011) indicate that when the Further Education and Training (FET) Act of 1998 was enacted in South Africa, it was intended to facilitate the reform of TVET institutions so that they could become centres of skills development of choice for prospective students. Ntlatleng (2012) also determined that the FET colleges in South Africa faced other challenges that were

historically connected to the white monopoly discrimination against black Africans, as well as the patriarchal African society that prioritised male children to be trained ahead of females, further deepening societal disparities. Over time, those perceptions were addressed. However, it became a mammoth task to eradicate the perception that they are institutions that train people from poor, poverty-stricken, and rural areas, those who had failed in formal education, or were rejected at universities (ibid).

Namibia became independent from South Africa in 1990. However, her TVET institutions and quality of education could not manage to achieve the quality of the labour force required in industry (Heidegger, 1997, Naanda, 2010). Due to a lack of cutting-edge skills, the majority of businesses and organizations in Namibia have not flourished or achieved their full potential (UNESCO, 2016). This skill gap has largely been placed on the poor education system, which has globally ranked 118 out of the 148 countries that were assessed (Heidegger, 1997). This necessitated immediate action to address the disparities in order to save the economy, which was threatened by the poor output of companies. In 2008, the Vocational Education and Training Act (VET) was introduced to coordinate the establishment of a robust organisation that would supervise skills acquisition in all vocational training institutions (UNESCO, 2016). As a result, the government moved to create the Namibian Training Authority (NTA), which led to initiatives to improve the TVET education system in vocational training centres (Amukugo, 2017). As the coordinating body, the NTA has a strategic plan that places TVET as a pillar in skills training throughout the country (VET Act, 2008). It is mandated to enable and improve the quality of vocational skills that are facilitated to all learners and for the benefit of the industry (Amukugo, 2017).

3.5 Namibia TVET training approaches

Soon after independence, the Namibian TVET education system was characterised by two training approaches: the old legacy modular system of the Namibia Trade Testing Centre (NTTC) (after independence 1990-2007 with the establishment of NTA in 2008), and the current competency-based education and training (CBET) that was adopted to replace the modular system.

3.5.1 The modular system

Before the advent of Competence-Based Education Training (CBET) in Namibia, there was NVET which operated in a traditional system. The traditional system called for rudimentary ways of learning through arranged courses. The OAS Hemispheric Project (2006) observed that in the traditional learning approach, each course is scheduled to have three taught hours each week. These courses were evaluated on a formative basis and assessments were done continuously.

Ornestein and Hunkins (2009) postulated that there is a striking difference between CBET programs and NVET, where the former has more emphasis on skills development and acquisition, the latter which is traditional has more emphasis on the evaluation of the programs. They further noted that NVET places much attention on diagnosis, formative, and summative, which are all time bound. Evaluation is done in CBET but is mainly focused on assessing and observing the competence of trainees when placed in a work-like environment with much emphasis on efficiency and following prescribed guidelines and methods (OAS Hemisphere Project, 2006). DeiBinger and Hellwig (2011) note that CBET fares well ahead of NVET because it gives trainees ample time to acquire skills in a learning set-up and be given the chance to do practical before the actual assessment is carried out.

3.5.2 Competency Based Education and Training (CBET)

According to Guthrie (2009), there are four learning types other than CBET that are used in technical vocation education and training, and these vary according to the expected learning outcomes. These are constructivism, behaviourism, experientialism, and cognitivism. Namibia has adopted the CBET Model as a basis or philosophical foundation of training within the TVET. The idea behind CBET is that learning should be measured by students demonstrating that they are competent and that they have mastered their competencies, rather than focusing on the time spent in the classroom.

As a background to CBET, it is imperative that a distinction is made between Competency-Based versus Subject-Based Curriculum. Although CBET has been practiced in Namibia since 2005, it was not until 2008 when the Namibia Curriculum Framework was crafted, with the aim that deficiencies in the education system would be addressed. The main factors that influenced the adoption of CBET as a teaching strategy in Namibia included participation in CBET workshops, effective supervision, access to teaching aids, availability of incentives, weekly teaching load, and the number of students per class (Naanda, 2010). However, its introduction in Namibia came with numerous challenges. It faced resistance from trainers and students, as well as other stakeholders (Naanda, 2010). It appears that the same principle applies to TVET, which has a much greater impact when combined with CBET. Therefore, vocational training and skill acquisition are contingent upon whether reinforcement is negative or positive, resulting in positive or negative performance (Naanda, 2010).

According to Amukugo (2017), there are many providers of vocational training in Namibia such as Public Vocational Education and Training Centres (VTCs), private vocational training providers, non-government organisations, private commercial companies,

state-owned parastatals, government ministries, and on-the-job trainers. However, they rarely coordinate and complement each other.

Although there are many TVET providers in Namibia, Namibian TVET still lacks certification that goes beyond the current NQF level five certificates, with level three being offered across the country (UNESCO, 2016). This emanates from the perennial lack of trainers who can offer advanced courses and the legal framework that cannot cater for higher-level studies in the vocational education system (Amukugo, 2017). There is a general lack of institutions that offer further training beyond level three in the areas of engineering, technicians and artisans who would then become trainers in vocational centres (Rauner & Maclean, 2008). In addition, there is a chasm between training institutions and industries that are intended to absorb these graduates. (Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005). This all results in a tangible gap and silo approach between academic institutions and vocational institutions; they seem to compete, rather than complement one another in creating and equipping graduates with skills that can improve the quality of their lives, society, and economy.

Another development in the TVET system in Namibia was the re-introduction of the apprenticeship program. In September 2020, the Namibian government took a major step toward breathing life into its TVET institution (UNESCO, 2016). It formulated the Procedures and Guidelines for the Implementation of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Policy in TVET institutions (VET Act, 2008). It outlined the implementation procedures for the WIL policy, the workplace approval process, and the entry requirements to the apprenticeship training, among other requirements.

According to the WIL policy, apprenticeship is a systematic way in which the learner accumulates skills for a certain line of trade through learning and work. This culminates in academic learning, but under the supervision of a knowledgeable and experienced person

(VET Act, 2008). At the implementation level, the policy (NTA, 2020) seeks to provide guidelines and regulations where it clarifies that an apprentice is also a worker who is still under training. This means that for an apprenticeship to be recognised, the employer should be registered with the NTA. The two parties should have a binding apprenticeship agreement that states the minimum remuneration as gazetted by the NTA (UNESCO, 2016).

In some countries, they regulate apprenticeships in total or partially, in sectors of the economy to make them structured, systematic, and formal. This is done mainly with legal instruments that detail contract terms, time to be spent, core skills and competences to be achieved, and required assessments, among other things, which mainly culminate in the issuance of a certificate (Hilal, 2012).

Oketch (2007) complimented the approach by noting that it best serves the interests of the poverty-stricken and marginalised groups of society where competition for better opportunities is stiff. In Namibia, work integrated learning is divided into three components: Apprenticeship, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and industrial attachment (commonly called job attachment).

This rationalisation is performed to prevent arbitrage and exploitation by employers, as there is typically an excess of untrained workers who are interested in training.

3.6 Perceptions of TVET among stakeholders

Many scholars have demonstrated in various ways how stakeholders perceive TVET (Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018; Serafini & Ranieri, 2019). As such, the literature shows that despite the improvements made in the TVET system, stakeholders perceive TVET negatively, with only a handful having more positive notions about TVET (Makochekanwa, Mahuyu & Pindiriri, 2016). In conclusion, the literature shows that there are two sides of perception: positive and negative. The next section discusses these in detail.

Nzimande (2013) acknowledges that although TVET has become one of the commonplace concepts in the higher education literature globally, the phenomenon has gained little traction in South Africa. Traditionally, TVET was considered an after-school institution and was known locally as Further Education and Training (FET) (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). Powell & McGrath (2013) note that by then, they were regarded as institutions that complete and polish students in their respective fields of endeavor. However, the global changes that occurred in vocational education forced the government to change the institution to meet international standards, guidelines, and practices (NTA, 2020; VET Act, 2008). According to Nzimande (2013), it signaled the need for a realignment that was due to reconcile formal education with vocational training, to meet the needs of employers. Finally, there was a consensus that TVET would contribute to national socioeconomic development, peace and stability, and poverty reduction. These were useful in addressing inequalities and enhancing and championing the ethos of the democratic developmental state (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006).

3.6.1 Negative stakeholder perceptions of TVET

Despite the positive perceptions about TVET as highlighted above, there are some people who still believe TVET is inferior to university education because it acts as a stepping stone to university, and not as an end in itself (Rauner & Maclean, 2008). For example, students who failed Grade 12, or those whose Grade 9 performance cannot guarantee better results when they reach Grade 12, were advised to enroll at a vocational training Centre (Papier, Needham & McBride, 2012). Therefore, TVET institutions are used as an access point for those who may want to go to university. Seamus and Papier (2011) explain that students tend to enroll in TVET centres to enable their eligibility at the university. Among all this, the subsequent literature will assess the perception of stakeholders towards TVET. The

literature review points to several challenges that contribute to a negative perception of TVET. Many studies (Alavi, Sail & Awang, 2013; Hussein, Mohamad, Hassan & Omar, 2017; Tagickiverata, 2012) identified that some stakeholders have a negative perception of TVET. The reasons for such negative perceptions were attributed to the following factors identified in the reviewed literature.

3.6.2 TVET is inferior in relation to academic education

There is a considerable body of research on stakeholder perceptions of TVET which shows that graduates of TVET institutions are being discriminated against, compared to those from academic streams (Aldossari, 2019; Awang, Alavi, & Ismail, 2011). According to Okae-Adjei (2017), TVET is often perceived to be for the less fortunate in society. Researchers such as Essel et al. (2014), Ngure (2015), and Kumar, Mandava, and Gopnavali (2019) share similar views on the stigmatisation of TVET. They attribute the stigmatisation of TVET to colonial and postcolonial education, which foregrounds the need to increase the number of white-collar workers and intellectuals. A similar study by Ngure (2015) carried out in Kenya through a survey questionnaire with 116 stakeholders also investigated their perceptions of TVET. Both studies reveal that there is a negative perception of TVET in society. These negative perceptions are caused by factors such as the failure of the technically orientated tertiary institution to lead to industrialisation and low entry requirements, which influence discrimination against TVET graduates, hence leading to low social status.

Again, a study by Haileselassie (2002) conducted in Ethiopia also revealed that skilled people were despised, insulted, and discriminated against. These were even considered sinners and, as such, they were viewed as low caste; so much so that one cannot allow their daughter or son to marry a person from such families.

Elsewhere in Asia, Alavi, Sail, and Awang (2013) conducted a study on the perception of TVET in Malaysia. They report similar findings about TVET graduates being discriminated against, even though the image of TVET among Malaysians remains resilient. Adolsari (2019) also echoes similar views in his study carried out in Saudi Arabia. He found that due to wasted manpower and weak prerequisites set in selecting students in the TVET system, TVET graduates and institutions were not foregrounded in communities.

3.6.3 TVET produces weak market labour outcomes

Apart from the negative perceptions discussed above, other researchers (Bappah & Medugu, 2013; Okae-Adjei, 2017; Okwelle & Oyonmike, 2014) further revealed factors such as the association of a TVET background with worse labour market outcomes compared to general education as a contributor to negative perceptions. Others state that TVET is for low achievers, and it is a second-choice educational career, or it is an education to cater for dropouts and graduates from such institutions, lacking the skills to lead industrialisation (Adjrah, 2014; Ayub, 2017; Essel et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the literature also identifies factors such as low entry requirements of TVET institutions as a contributing factor to the weak labour market (Ngure, 2015; Pangantihon & Pidor, 2019). This has been echoed by researchers such as Molale and Gomba (2016), and Russo, Serafini and Raineri (2019) who assert that for many years, TVET has been considered as a career path for the less academically endowed and those who attain a low pass grade. Consistent with these scholars were Ngure (2015) and Ngati (2016), who unequivocally posited that the negative perception was fueled by low qualification requirements for admission into TVET programmes.

Tagicakiverata (2012) conducted a study with a total of 422 junior secondary pupils to investigate their perceptions and attitudes about TVET in Fiji. Another set of interviews and

focus groups were conducted with 85 adult participants, including senior government officials, school administrators, teachers, and parents. The results revealed that parents, teachers, and students shared similar negative ideas that TVET was for school dropouts and school failures. Jobs they associated with TVET were manual labour jobs, contrary to their desired white-collar career aspirations they had for their preferred pupils and children. Like the results of this study, a study by Pangantihon & Pidor (2019) conducted a survey of 350 students of TVET and conducted interviews with 17 students and 17 trainers in the Philippines with the aim of raising TVET attractiveness by revealing the quality of service and the corporate image of Technical Vocational Institutions (TVI). The study revealed that different stakeholders still regard Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as second-class education despite being recognised as a tool for empowering people for sustainable livelihoods and social-economic development.

In Europe, Russo, Serafini, and Ranieri (2019) investigated the attitudes of 26,840 European citizens aged 15 and over, in 26 countries toward vocational education and training (VET) using Eurobarometer data supplemented by OECD and TALIS. Attitudes were measured in two different ways. First, by a general measure reflecting attitudes towards VETs in the country and second, by a self-reported measure of personal attitudes towards VET, based on the likelihood of recommending it to young men and women. They found that the general attitude towards VET is influenced by the quality of the learning environment and the ability of VET to connect with the world of work. This positive attitude towards VET is found to be at risk because the interviewees associate a VET background with worse labour market outcomes when compared to general education.

3.6.4 TVET has a lower status in society

In continuation with what has been discussed above, the literature reveals that parents tend to negatively influence students' perceptions about TVET (Okae-Adjei, 2017; Aldossari, 2020; Aziz et al., 2020). For instance, parents tend to discourage their children from pursuing TVET programmes because they lack societal prestige and have fewer financial incentives compared to white-collar jobs. In relation to the above, teachers also painted a negative image of TVET (Pierre, 2012; Okwelle & Oyomike, 2014). Teachers' negative perception of TVET was due to the negative symbolic value of its accreditation and the associated low-level status of TVET graduates in their communities. As a result, negative views about TVET reduced its social status and prestige in communities. This is also reinforced by family and peers, which makes many students refrain from enrolling in TVET programmes (Ayub, 2011; Tagicakiverata, 2012; Awang, Hair, Sail & Alavi, 2013). The upshot is that these negative perceptions resulted in most secondary school students not to pursue TVET as their first choice because they believe that jobs in this area offer fewer financial gains and incentives than white-collar jobs (Aldossari, 2020).

Another study conducted in Malaysia by Esa, & Kannapiran, (2014) on the perceptions of male and female secondary education students towards TVET reveals that most student respondents have negative attitudes towards TVET. This is the result of students' excessive need to pursue university, family, poor image associated with vocational education, and white-collar jobs are reserved for academics or any of the professions.

3.6.5 Socioeconomic status of parents

Students' willingness to participate in TVET has been found to be closely related to the prevailing social and economic status of their families (Aziz et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2019; Odora, 2011). Thus, the provision of VET and the poor social background are

particularly strong in countries with high-income inequality. Furthermore, the school system in these countries also plays an important role in the process of social stratification, and therefore VET schools are more likely to admit students who suffer from delinquency; they often come from disadvantaged backgrounds (Russo, Serafini, & Ranieri, 2019). In the same vein, Polesel (2010) conducted a study on TVET in Australia and found that young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to pursue this route than those from wealthier backgrounds. The above findings relate to findings from a study conducted in Pakistan by Ayub (2017) that revealed that less educated parents with lower income and occupation levels were more inclined to encourage their children to pursue TVET.

In some Asian countries, TVET is considered to provide opportunities for poor families with lower social prestige (Hassan et al., 2019). For example, a study conducted by Awang, Alavi, and Ismail (2013) in Malaysia showed that despite greater returns from vocational education, perceptions of TVET generally remain negative. Correspondingly, Aziz et al. (2019) also mentions the low social prestige of TVET in Pakistan and posits that parents had a statistically significant role in influencing students' decisions to enroll in such programmes. In this case, less educated parents with lower income and occupation levels were more inclined to encourage their children to pursue VET. However, the study conducted by Esau (2018) in South Africa with five TVET students contradicted these findings, revealing that despite the financial hardships of the families, all said that they enjoy the encouragement and support of their parents and guardians. The study reveals that parents helped their children enroll in TVET programmes and continue to play important roles beyond the classroom.

3.6.6 A weak post-school articulation system

Studies reveal that there is a lack of horizontal and vertical articulation between TVET and other components of the education system, and this hampers the vision of a lifelong continuum (Haileselassie, 2002; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ngati, 2016). In this sense, there is a substantial distinction between the academic and vocational education fraternities. As such, those who pursue vocational education are negatively perceived in society compared to university students (Ngati, 2016). An unwillingness by high education stakeholders to clearly articulate the value of TVET compared to traditional education, and to promote an integrated view of education has also led students to put less value on TVET (McGrath, 2010).

A survey by Ngati (2016) conducted with 406 stakeholders investigating their perception of TVET practices in Botswana reveals that there is minimal stakeholder participation, limited resources to effectively implement programmes, and inadequate instructional methods. This all hinders the relative effectiveness of the systems. This is coupled with the difficulty of recognising TVET qualifications and the fragmentation of the current TVET system.

3.6.7 Inherent weaknesses in TVET institutions

There is a considerable body of research that reveals that there are general challenges in TVET institutions, and that this fuels the negative perceptions of stakeholders towards TVET (Aziz et al., 2019; Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018; Polesel, 2010). These challenges are identified as curriculum deficiencies in TVET programmes (Atari & McKague, 2015; Ndiwu, 2015; Ngati, 2016), TVET colleges that are equipped with outdated and old equipment trailing behind in machines and equipment found in industry, and that their training programmes emphasise theory more than hands-on practical skills (Mokochekanwa,

Mahunu & Pindiriri, 2016). Other issues mentioned are the poor linkage of TVET to industry and/or weak partnership between industries and TVET institutions (Adjrah, 2014), the unfair trend of inappropriate categorisation of TVET graduates in the field and the continuous chain of TVET leadership crisis (Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ngati, 2016), low entry requirement that influences discrimination against TVET graduates (Aldossari, 2020; Ngure, 2015), inadequate system and management or staff training, and the difficulty with the recognition of TVET qualification within governments. These factors all contribute to the negative perceptions of TVET by the stakeholders (Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018; Ngati, 2016).

Furthermore, the literature also notes that TVET trainers have encountered numerous challenges and undesirable practices in the implementation of TVET programmes. For example, a low enrolment rate still exists because TVET programmes are difficult to promote because most students prefer degree programmes (Essel et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2019; Tagicakiverata, 2012).

3.7 Positive perceptions of TVET among stakeholders

Scholarly work by Needham and Papier (2011) shows that the past decade has seen a positive change of perception towards vocational training in South Africa. Many people have demonstrated that TVET gives them an opportunity to gain practical skills, unlike universities that offer only theoretical problem-solving skills. In this case, TVET is perceived as an institution that can help anyone pursue their career of choice, accumulate skills, and venture out on their own (Ardyanfitri & Wahyuningtyas, 2016). Powell and McGrath (2014) echo similar sentiments, arguing that prospective and current students choose vocational education over university even though they qualify to enroll in the latter. What is common in all these studies is that respondents cited “practical knowledge” that differentiates vocational

education from formal education, which is more preferred in the job market (Needham & Papier, 2011). Although there is a substantial body of research on stakeholders' negative perceptions of TVET as discussed above (see Adjrah, 2014; Ngati, 2016; Okae-Adjei, 2017), there were positive views about TVET (Esau, 2018; Kumar, Mandava & Gopanapalli, 2019; Pangantihon & Pidor, 2019). This positive perception was found to be associated with the following factors.

3.7.1 Perceptions of the contribution of TVET to socioeconomic development

Most studies report that stakeholders explicitly accept the notion that there is a nexus between TVET and economic development (Aldossari, 2020; Pangantihon & Pidor, 2019; Pierre, 2012). For example, some reported that TVET provides the industry with the skills required and assists the family with financial incentives (Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ndiwu, 2015).

In their study conducted in India, Kumar, Mandava, and Gopanapalli (2019) identified factors that affect an individual's participation in vocational training and the impact vocational training has on wages at an individual and sectoral level. They found that formal vocational training is associated with higher wages, especially in the primary sector (Kumar et al., 2019). In addition, their study revealed that formal vocational training is associated with positive economic returns; therefore, it makes sense to invest in vocational training.

Similarly, Pangantihon and Pidor (2019) claim that TVET is significant in the development of human resources in the country. For example, they explain that TVET creates skilled labour and enhances industrial productivity, which improves the quality of life of its citizens. Furthermore, they also note that TVET has a remarkable contribution to the country's economic growth through the provision of suitable manpower according to the needs of industry, society, and the world. Tagicakiverata (2012) and Ayub (2017) concur, arguing that

TVET plays an important role in the sustainable economic development and growth of any country.

3.7.2 Perceptions of the contribution of TVET to gainful employment

Although some employers rate TVET graduate levels of employability skills as average and below their expectations (Adjrah, 2014; Ngure, 2015; Odora, 2011) and other employers, especially TVET graduate employees indicate that formal vocational training yields higher wages (Kumar, et al., 2019; Pongo, Awang et al., 2011). For example, research has revealed that TVET has been helpful in communities in terms of securing suitable employment and positively impacting social and economic status. Despite the positive attributes associated with TVET, as indicated above, there is a disjuncture between the employability skills of TVET graduates and their preparedness for employment. Some employers, as indicated in previous discussions, regard TVET graduates as adequately prepared to be resourceful and self-reliant, lacking the required communication skills, problem solving, and critical thinking skills (Okae-Adjei, 2017).

These discussions offer some insight into how different stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, and employers) perceive TVET. The discussion shows how TVET is positioned and the role it plays in society in terms of its contribution and economic growth by providing suitable manpower to meet the needs of industry, society, and the world. Despite the negative perceptions about TVET as highlighted in the previous section, its role as a tool to grow the national economy cannot be underestimated. As such, Yusuff and Soyemi (2012) cement the above discourse by arguing that for TVET to be a key to sustainable economic development in the country, there is a need for changes in public perception and the image of TVET.

3.8 Limitations and strengths of the literature reviewed.

In summary, this review of the literature has highlighted three key limitations in the existing literature on stakeholder perceptions of TVET.

First, most of the reviewed studies focus primarily on gauging the historical development of TVET (Aldossari, 2019; Okae-Adjei, 2017; Russo, Serafini & Renieri, 2019). As such, the historical range is more from developed countries than from developing countries and Namibia, without exception.

In the existing literature, it is noteworthy that only a limited number of studies were found that employed Archer's Social Realism theory. Most studies reviewed on TVET focus on the political and economic dimensions tied to the connections between policy and practice in the sector; rarely exploring how and why stakeholders hold the perceptions of TVET that they do, nor how this influences their thinking and decision making when working or experiencing the sector. This highlights a significant gap in the application of a social realism as a theoretical paradigm, which could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping stakeholders' perceptions of TVET, particularly within the context of Namibia.

Third, these kinds of studies are rarely done in Namibia, which is probably the reason I struggled to find literature focusing on the Namibian context regarding stakeholder perceptions of TVET. Foregrounding the role of German colonialism and South African apartheid might provide deeper insights into what shapes the Namibian perception of Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Studies discussed in the previous section on the stakeholder perception of TVET were conducted in different countries across the globe. Most of these studies used a mixed-methods approach to research, which involves both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. According to Creswell (2005), they complement each other when used in combination, and

provide a more complete picture of the research problem. The method of data collection used also responds to the questions initially posed, and the samples used were also sufficient to generate rich data.

3.9 Summary

This chapter provided a discussion on the discourses that shape TVET globally and how these shape stakeholder perceptions. As such, the social and cultural discourses on TVET that circulate in the respective communities would thus shape how stakeholders understand TVET. As discussed above, TVET is perceived negatively by stakeholders for various reasons. However, there are positive attributes attached to TVET. These mainly refer to its role in contributing to economic and social development. The next chapter presents the research design and methods of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe and justify the methodology of the study focused on stakeholder perceptions of Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) in Namibia. Zikmund (2003, p. 65) states that “[A]fter the researcher has formulated the research problem, a research design must be developed.” Creswell (2014) points out that research designs are types of inquiry using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide a specific direction for procedures in research design. Put differently, the purpose of the research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial research questions. Therefore, it is necessary that the design be true to the theoretical orientation of the study.

Therefore, this chapter outlines the methodological orientation of the study, foregrounding the rationale and decisions behind the research methodology and the research process I carried out, including the data collection strategies used in the study. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis process, ethical considerations, and the significance of the study.

4.2 Methodological orientation

The study used mixed-method research (MMR) (Creswell & Clark, 2018). A mixed methods research approach (MMR) involves collecting and analysing data using quantitative and qualitative data techniques within a single study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The rationale for adopting a mixed methods approach was that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient by themselves to capture the complex social, cultural, and even

political contents underpinning a phenomenon such as the stakeholders' perceptions of a subject like TVET in the context of a developing country like Namibia. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the research problem (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Furthermore, mixed methods offer both the flexibility of the qualitative approach, structure, and generalisability of the quantitative approach. By complementing the quantitative data with qualitative data, I was able to generate thick descriptions of participants' thoughts, and perceptions about TVET in Namibia (Creswell, 2014, p. 182).

Within the mixed-method approach, I used a pragmatic explanatory sequential design as a methodological paradigm to this study pursuing a quantitative-qualitative (QAUN-QUAL) sequence where the core component is quantitative, and the supplemental component is qualitative (Morse & Niehaus 2009, p. 25). In this study, quantitative data were collected and analysed first, while qualitative data were collected and analysed later. Qualitative data were used to elaborate on quantitative results obtained in the first phase of data collection (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Clark, 2018).

According to Creswell and Clark (2018, p. 69), "a pragmatic mixed method is only interested in (1) the consequences of research, (2) the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods, and (3) the use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problems under study." Using such a pragmatic approach study, gave me the leverage to extract a sample that is financially feasible, and logistically doable, given the limited resources available. Furthermore, pragmatism does not subscribe to any philosophical or methodological tradition, but rather uses the methods best suited to answer and provide insights into the research question. The pragmatist views reality as both singular (e.g., there

may be a theory that operates to explain the phenomenon under study) and multiple (e.g., it is important to assess varied individual inputs into the nature of the phenomenon as well). It draws on many ideas, including employing “what works” using various approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

A pragmatic approach was best suited to answer the research question on stakeholder perceptions because it helped clarify research concepts and hypotheses by identifying the practical consequences of their expression (Rylander, 2012). As explained by Lawrence-Brown (2014), the research problem has a central place in pragmatism, with all research endeavours being considered to understand and address it.

The quantitative data of the study helped identify the potential predictive power of selected factors that shape the perceptions of TVET by stakeholders and purposefully selected the informants for the second phase. Then a qualitative multiple case study approach was used to explain why certain factors, identified in the first phase, were significant predictors of stakeholders’ perceptions of TVET. Therefore, the quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem, while the qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained the statistical results by exploring the views of the participants on TVET in more depth.

Priority was given to the qualitative approach because it focused on in-depth explanations of the results obtained from the quantitative data. This involved extensive data collection from multiple sources and a two-level case analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative and qualitative phases are connected. The first phase is to select participants for qualitative case studies and develop the interview protocol based on the results from the questionnaire (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska & Creswell, 2005). The results of the quantitative and qualitative phases are integrated during the discussion of

the outcomes of the entire study (Creswell et al., 2003). The next section explains the design procedure for the explanatory sequential mixed method that I followed.

4.3 Methodology

The first step was to design a quantitative component of the study. The first phase included piloting the tools before actual data collection. After the pilot, the tools were cleaned based on the findings of the pilot study. Then I embarked on the actual collection and analysis of the quantitative data for the main study. In the second step, I connected to a second phase; the point of integration for mixing and identifying specific quantitative results that called for additional explanations and using these results to guide the development of the qualitative strand.

The results from the first phase of data collection were used to develop qualitative research questions, sampling procedures, and data collection protocols. As such, the qualitative phase is related to, and depends on the quantitative results. In the third step, I implemented the qualitative phase by collecting and analysing qualitative data. Finally, I interpreted to what extent and in what ways the qualitative results explain and add insight into the quantitative results, and what is learnt overall in response to the purpose of my study.

4.3.1 The Quantitative Component

I used a survey questionnaire to facilitate the rapid collection of information from a large number of respondents in a short space of time. Questionnaires were used to gather data on the personal and environmental factors that influence the participants' perceptions of TVET.

At this stage, I wanted to determine how TVET is perceived by its prospective trainees (Grades 11-12 secondary school learners) and first-year TVET trainees. I also

collected information about the demographic profile of the learners, including age, gender, and region of their origin, their educational performance, assessed using the highest school leaving qualification, and the national senior certificate results for learners who have attained this level of education. I also asked for information on career guidance, and sources of information they receive during their Life Skills lessons. Most importantly, I asked about their reasons for enrolling in TVET and their career expectations after graduating from the Vocational Training Centre (VTC). I based these questions on my experience as a TVET Practitioner and from surveys conducted on the perceptions of TVET from the reviewed literature related to my research question and objectives.

4.3.2 Population and sampling

My target population for the first phase was Grades 11-12 (prospective TVET trainees) who were in their final year of secondary education, and first-year TVET trainees in Vocational Training Centres (VTCs). The total population (N) of the study was 1564 learners at four selected schools and 2800 first year trainees, giving a total population of N=4364. The sample for this part of the study consisted of 360 Grade 11-12 learners and 270 first-year TVET trainees (N=570) as illustrated in Table 4.1 below

Table 4.1: Sampling

Category	Population	Sample Size
Grade 11 – 12	1564	270
1 st Year TVET Trainees	570	270

4.3.3 Purposive Sampling

I employed purposive sampling to choose participants. The Grade 11-12 students were selected from four different secondary schools spanning the regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Otjozondjupa, and Erongo. Likewise, the TVET trainees were specifically chosen from seven public vocational training centers representing various geographical areas, namely Oshana, Ohangwena, Otjozondjupa, Kavango East, Zambezi, Omusati, and Omaheke. These seven vocational training centers were deliberately picked as they represent the primary state owned public TVET institutions, commonly recognized as Vocational Training Centers (VTCs), within Namibia. I deemed these groups of participants to be the most suitable population for eliciting their perspectives and firsthand experiences regarding TVET in Namibia.

4.3.4 Stratified Sampling

In order to ensure that the selected sample accurately represents the diverse characteristics of the overall population and facilitates more precise analysis and generalization of the results, the application of stratified sampling was instrumental. This method was particularly useful due to the presence of subgroups within the population that demonstrate distinct behaviors or attributes that needed to be accounted for in the sample. As such, the four secondary schools forming the focus of this study were categorized into distinct strata based on the following criteria: (1) whether the school offers a pre-vocational curriculum and a general basic education curriculum, and (2) its geographical accessibility, including both rural and urban settings. The choice of schools from both rural and urban areas was deliberate, aimed at capturing the perspectives of learners regarding TVET within both of these contexts. Moreover, the utilization of purposeful stratified sampling was employed to enable effective comparisons, facilitating an examination of the differences in the perceptions

of TVET between learners following basic pre-vocational/technical subjects and TVET curricula (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

4.3.5 Methods

The questionnaire was the primary method of data collection for the quantitative part of the study. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was developed to collect data. I used a questionnaire because of its ability to facilitate rapid collection of information from a large sample in a short space of time. I gathered information from high school learners regarding their envisioned career paths following the completion of either grade 11 or 12. Specifically, I inquired about the rationale behind their career preferences and the guidance they received in this regard. This exploration of students' career aspirations, the reasons underlying their choices, and the influence of career guidance serves as a crucial backdrop for identifying the determinants that shape their perceptions of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Analyzing these factors can reveal how students' career goals and the guidance they receive contribute to their attitudes and viewpoints regarding TVET. Whereas from TVET trainees I wanted to know from this group of participants the reasons why they chose to enrol in the TVET programme and their experience of TVET thereafter. Hearing their TVET experiences helped to understand the data from the secondary school learners. The questionnaires were used to collect data from secondary school learners on the demographic profile of the respondents and the factors that influence the perceptions of the respondents about TVET, access to career guidance and the sources of information available, what they consulted about TVET careers, their reasons for enrolling in TVET institutions, and their career expectations after graduation.

For the TVET trainees' questionnaire, I created a questionnaire on the Stellenbosch University RedCap platform and sent the link to the trainees' emails. After the completion of

the questionnaire by the TVET trainees, I used RedCap to export data to SPSS for analysis. For the secondary school learners, questionnaires were printed out for learners to self-administer with the help of a Life Skills teacher acting as my proxy.

4.3.6 Methods used to recruit participants

I initially proposed to hand-deliver the forms and collect them later, but due to the challenges posed by COVID-19, I was unable to do so. In-person research had been cancelled by the university ethics committee. The steps discussed below were followed to select participants.

4.3.6.1 Recruitment of prospective TVET trainees (Grade 11-12 learners at the four selected secondary schools) questionnaire

First, permission was sought from the Executive Director's office of the Ministry of Basic Education, Art, and Culture to conduct research in the four selected schools (**Appendix 4A Permission letter**). After the Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture granted me permission, I proceeded to request permission from the Regional Education Directors of the regions where the four schools are located. Thereafter, I was able to negotiate permission with the principals of the selected schools and the Centre Managers of the VTCs. The school principals gave their consent, which allowed me to conduct research with Grade 11 and 12 learners (**Appendix 4BC, letter of consent from the gatekeepers**).

Second, I made phone calls to school principals, asking for help receiving my questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to the school principal by email. I had made arrangements with all Life Skills teachers at the four schools to distribute to learners and oversee the completion of the questionnaire. I also asked the Life Skills teachers to help explain the content and give clarity where the learners needed it and collect the questionnaire after they had completed it. Third, I collected the completed questionnaires on the agreed set

date from the principal's office. All this was done to minimise direct contact with learners and prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection.

4.3.6.2 Recruitment of first year TVET trainees to participate in the study questionnaire

First, permission was sought from the General Manager of Human Resource Services at the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) to conduct research with first-year trainees at the seven Public Vocational Training Centres fall under the custodianship of the NTA. Second, I wrote to the TVET Centre Managers of the seven Public Vocational Training Centres to get consent to distribute an online questionnaire to first-year TVET Trainees. Since I work in the TVET sector as a Head of Training, I asked other Heads of Training at the public VTCs to provide me with a list of trainee emails where I can share the consent form and the link to the questionnaire generated from the SU RedCap platform.

4.3.7 Risk Mitigation Strategy

According to the Stellenbosch University (SU) Research Ethics Committee (REC) guidelines, my study is classified as a medium risk study. The study involved research with minors, that is, secondary school students aged 16-17. Therefore, it was classified as medium risk (**Appendix 4C Approved ethical clearance**). Based on this, I had to obtain approval from the parent of the minor children and from the learners themselves before I administered the questionnaire (**Appendices 4D Parent signed consent form and Appendix 4E assent form signed by a minor participant**). Since it was carried out during difficult times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the REC discouraged contact research. It was recommended that data should be collected virtually by available means.

I then had to devise a strategy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to my participants (Grade 11 and 12 secondary school learners, and first year TVET Trainees). As part of measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, I tried by all means not to personally get in direct

contact with participants. However, Namibia still struggles with a low level of network coverage, lack of ICT tools, and low literacy levels, and some schools are in remote rural areas without electricity and internet connectivity, making it difficult to administer a questionnaire virtually in secondary schools. As such, I wrote to the school principals asking them permission to arrange for the Life skills teachers to stand in as my proxy. I asked the principals to give me the cell phone numbers of the Life Skills teachers and I called them directly requesting them to assist me in distributing the questionnaire to the learners and collecting after completion. All Life skills teachers from the four selected schools agreed and offered to oversee the distribution of the questionnaires.

In addition to helping with the dissemination of the questionnaire to learners, Life Skills teachers were also asked to participate in the study because they play a key role in learners' decisions about their careers. Therefore, they played four major roles in my study: (1) participated in the study as a key informant, (2) oversaw the implementation of the questionnaire, were tasked with explaining and clarifying the content where learners needed it and collected the questionnaire back from learners after completion (3), it is not expected that this research should cause learners any risk and discomfort. However, if at any time the learners feel distressed, they may feel free to withdraw and if it happens after they have participated in the study, the Life skills teachers were also asked to extend their support, should any learner feel the need for counselling following their participation in the study, and (4), they were also asked to provide assistance in identifying staff members at their school who have children doing Grade 11 or 12 at the school or elsewhere in the country and provide their telephone/contact details.

To make it easy for the Life Skills teachers, I allocated cell phone credit/voice- and data vouchers to enable them to call me directly should they and the learners need further

support during the data collection process. I went through the questionnaire telephonically with Life Skills teachers to make sure they understood its content before they disseminate it to the learners. I also informed them to make it clear to learners that the form is to be answered individually and anonymously and their response should not be shared just for the learners to feel free to answer and be certain that their responses would not be disclosed. Because of those roles Life Skills teachers played, I asked them to sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect the responses of the learners and not to use their responses against them. Teachers who administered the questionnaire were also informed that learners should also feel free to withdraw if they become uncomfortable during the completion stage of the questionnaire.

Although the questionnaire was to be administered to 16-17-year-old learners who are minors, it was not expected that this research could cause learners any risk or discomfort. Furthermore, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that learners will not be asked questions that are invasive and somewhat triggering. The study mainly sought to understand the opinion of the learners about TVET, if they would be interested in going to TVET and if going to TVET is part of the discussions during career guidance lessons and the type of career path they wish to pursue after Grade 11 or 12. Emotions are not expected to arise from answering these questions. However, had emotions arose from participating in the questionnaire, they would have been referred to the Life Skills teacher who is also a trained school counsellor. I arranged with the Life skills teacher/school counsellor to extend their support should any learner feel the need for counselling after their participation in the study.

For the completion of the questionnaire, I used a total of ten combined academics and TVET learning sites. From each secondary school, I purposely selected two classes of 30 learners doing Grade 11 pre-vocational curriculum, and randomly selected one class of 30

learners in Grade 12 general education. Of the seven public VTCs, one was purposively selected to be used as a pilot, and from each of the remaining six, I purposely selected one class of first-year trainees following any one of the nationally offered qualifications.

4.4 Data analysis

I used a statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software to analyse quantitative data. SPSS enabled me to come up with descriptive statistics, graphs, and charts showing how TVET is perceived by secondary school learners (prospective TVET trainees) and by first-year TVET trainees. These statistical analyses contributed to an understanding of how TVET is perceived by prospective trainees and first-year trainees in Namibia.

The data analysis was informed by the conceptual framework of social realism presented in Chapter 3 and used as a guideline in the research findings. Archer's theory of social realism states that "the concepts of structure, culture and agency help analyse decisions and activity in a given context" (Danermark et al., 2002). Social realism as a conceptual framework allowed me to analyse the factors influencing the perceptions of various stakeholder groups about TVET. I performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to reduce the underlying factors before performing a further multivariate analysis and thereafter conducted a multiple regression analysis to address the research objectives and research questions. Through social realism, I explored how stakeholders use their agencies to respond to the cultural and structural conditions they face when they engage with TVET.

4.4.1 Measures of validity and reliability

I pilot tested the questionnaires with 5-10 TVET trainees and secondary school learners who were asked to voluntarily participate. This group of participants did not participate in the main survey. I did this to establish the validity of the content of the scores on the instrument and to improve the questions, formats, and scales. The feedback of the participants enabled

me to make modifications to the questionnaire before distributing it to the larger sample that was being studied.

4.5 The qualitative part of the study

This second phase data collection acted as a follow-up to the findings of the first, quantitative phase. This part of the study sought to answer research questions asking “why” TVET is perceived the way that it is. These questions emanated from the results of the quantitative phase.

4.5.1 Population and sampling

The population for the qualitative phase consisted of key informants from the TVET sector, employees of TVET graduates, schoolteachers and parents of the learners and TVET trainees. I did not want to spend more time getting the same response; therefore, I decided to select a small sample that was still able to saturate the data. My sample size was 17 participants; a group of six parents of secondary school learners and TVET trainees combined, 11 key informants, i.e., two employers of TVET graduates, the Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation (MHETI), the Deputy Executive Director of this MHETI, the Acting Chief Executive Officer (ACEO) of Namibia Training Authority (NTA), four secondary school Life Skills teachers, and two TVET Managers from NTA.

For this part, I used a purposive sampling technique to recruit six parents. Key informant sampling was also used to purposefully select 11 key informants. The sampling of key informants was used purposefully because it enables the recruitment of key informants based on their personal skills and their position in society (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). I hoped that the key informants would be able to provide more information and deeper insight on why TVET is perceived the way the respondents in the quantitative phase of the study relayed it.

In Namibia, every secondary school has one teacher recruited to teach Life Skills. They offer counselling and career guidance to learners. As such, I used convenient sampling to recruit four Life Skills teachers in the four selected secondary schools. I hoped that only four Life Skills teachers will saturate the data for this phase. I also applied the snowball sampling method where participants are selected on the basis of their ability and availability, especially in circumstances where one of the interviewees declines the interview, and there might be a need to recruit the next respondent (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

4.5.2 Methods

I planned to use open-ended key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGD) as primary data collection methods for the qualitative phase of the research with open-ended face-to-face interviews with each key informant. However, this changed to virtual interviews to mitigate the further spread of COVID-19. I used an interview protocol with questions and recorded answers during the interview, and asked questions like “what is your opinion of TVET Education in Namibia?”, and “Who would you consider as a prospective TVET Trainee?”. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Focus group discussions were organised to discuss with the selected group of parents in one of the secondary schools. Parents were selected because they play an important role in their children’s career path and therefore would have an opinion on TVET. The question was whether they would recommend it to their own family as a career choice. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed as soon as the discussions were completed.

I had proposed to conduct a lesson observation with four Life Skills teachers responsible for career guidance at the selected four secondary schools, with the hope that direct observation of teaching sessions might shed further light on how they may influence secondary school learners to further their studies in TVET. However, due to COVID-19, this

also changed, because the university research ethics committee had prohibited face-to-face interviews to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Thus, I settled on using focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents. This occurred in the Erongo Region due to the proximity and accessibility to the school by the parents. KIIs were proposed to occur in regions where they work; however, this too changed to online session, to curb the spread of COVID-19.

4.5.3 Data analysis

The data analysis process was aided by using the computer programme, ATLAS.ti 22. This software enables a researcher to organise, sort, and search for information in the text or image of the transcribed data. I went through each line of sorted and stored text and quickly assigned codes to as many categories as I could. A total of 11 primary documents were uploaded to ATLAS.ti 22 in preparation for data analysis (one acting CEO, one Deputy Executive Director in the Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation, two employers of TVET graduates, three life skill teachers, two TVET managers, one focused group interview with six parents, and one minister). The audio recordings of the participants were transcribed and loaded into ATLAS.ti 22 for analysis. All the generated codes were grouped into themes according to their meaning and response to the main research question: “What factors shaping stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia?”.

Once the generated codes were finalised, axial coding was introduced to determine the various interrelatedness between the codes. Axial coding provides a framework or template that allows users to organise and synthesise data into more coherent categories and subcategories. It also provides various features that enhance the potential of emerging concepts (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). These relationships include associated with, part of, caused by, and contradicts with each other. I linked the generated codes to create a relationship between them in the various themes. This process was carried out in ATLAS.ti

22. Some of the codes included in the network diagram were independent and had no common characteristics with the other codes. A network diagram is a visual representation of your data that allows you to connect various elements. It can also help to express relationships between quotes and code concepts (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). Grounded frequencies inform how often a code has been applied or assigned (Scott & Medaugh, 2017).

The data were then organised into convergent and divergent themes from the participants' perspectives, allowing me to comprehend and explain these patterns and themes (Chapter 6). I used narrative passages/text to convey the findings of the analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

4.5.4 Measures of validity (trustworthiness)

Three techniques were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. Firstly, I provide a detailed account of the focus of the study, clarification of the researcher's bias/researcher's role, the informant's position and the basis for selection, and from where data will be collected. Second, triangulation was used, where data were collected through multiple sources (i.e. interviews and document analysis). This strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings. Both the participants and the researcher's perspectives on the phenomena were incorporated as a form of data triangulation to increase the internal validity of the study. Finally, I used member checking, where informants served as a check on the accuracy of the transcripts of the interviews. The ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretation of the informants' reality and meaning ensured the truth value of the data.

4.6 Ethical considerations

To safeguard the interests of the research participants, I applied for ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Stellenbosch (see **Appendix 4C**). This study only started after ethical clearance was granted. In accordance with university

regulations and to ensure good research practice, interactive consent was sought from each participant in each setting (Strunk & Locke, 2019, p. 24). I adopted a multilevel form of consent, which included written and oral consent. Participants were made to understand that they can withdraw at any time. Furthermore, receiving informed consent means that a researcher also helps participants understand not just what they consent to by participating in the research project, but also discusses the ramifications of participating in the research study.

As mentioned above, I asked permission from the Office of the Executive Director (ED) (formerly known as Permanent Secretary [PS]) in MBEAC to administer a questionnaire to Grades 11-12 in the four selected secondary schools and to conduct interviews with Life Skills teachers. I also asked for permission from the Chief Executive Officer of the Namibia Training Authority through the General Manager for Human Resources and Services to navigate the parameters of TVET institutions to engage TVET trainees. Furthermore, consent was sought from both participants in the interviews and focus group discussions to obtain permission to participate in my study. Participation in the study was voluntary and no participant was coerced to participate in the study.

4.7 Intellectual significance of the study

There is an extensive range of studies conducted on stakeholder perceptions of TVETs in developed countries and some developing African countries. In Namibia, the few available studies on stakeholder perceptions of TVET have been limited to those in receiving institutions (private sector employers and government) and among graduates of these institutions. This is the first study on perceptions of TVET among final year secondary school learners and their career guidance/planning teachers from sending institutions (schools) who may or may not enrol in these TVET institutions in Namibia. It also used those already in TVET institutions recruited to provide counterpoints. This is also the first study conducted in

the country to provide an understanding of the prospects of TVET in light of Archer's work on the structural, cultural, and agential conditions that shape attitudes among young people, especially of school age. This extends beyond the specificities of Namibian conditions.

4.8 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was characterised by lockdowns and restrictions. This limited me to interact with the study participants to conduct direct observations and direct group discussion to help understand the lived experience of the participant. The second challenge that I faced was accessibility, as those who occupy positions of power and privilege may be hard to access as it was reported by Strunk & Locke (2019). My study sought to use executive directors in the Ministry of Basic Education Art and Culture, but my effort to access her remained futile maybe due to her busy schedules or sheer unwillingness to meet with a researcher. This in turn, undermined my attempts to collect data that could help me understand why secondary school learners view TVET the way they do.

CHAPTER FIVE

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF TVET IN NAMIBIA: QUANTITATIVE ACCOUNTS AMONG VTC TRAINEES AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN NAMIBIA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the survey results on the perceptions of TVET by VTC trainees and school learners about the value and utility of technical and vocational education and training. As detailed in the methodology chapter, two questionnaires were administered: one to first year VTC trainees and the second, to secondary school learners in grades 11 and 12. The questionnaire included an exploration of the background of students, aiming to understand the socio-economic and educational context from which the respondents originated. This provided critical insights into the factors that could shape their perceptions of TVET. Additionally, an assessment of the level of awareness of TVET was conducted to identify knowledge gaps and misconceptions among the participants. Understanding their initial awareness served as a foundation for tailored educational programs. The questionnaire also probed into the perceptions of TVET to uncover any existing biases or stereotypes, enabling the implementation of targeted interventions. Furthermore, the investigation into the influences on the students' perceptions of TVET allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the external and internal dynamics guiding their viewpoints. Moreover, exploring the understanding of potential career pathways associated with TVET provided insights into the students' career aspirations and their alignment with the practical opportunities offered by TVET programs. Lastly, the examination of preferences and choices shed light on the factors

influencing the decision-making process, providing a holistic understanding of how personal inclinations shaped the students' perceptions of pursuing a career in the field of TVET.

The results are therefore presented in two different sections: A and B. The chapter concludes with an integrated summary of the findings from the two survey questionnaires.

5.2 Section A: Perceptions of TVET among state owned VTC trainees

This first section is presented in four parts and focuses on the results obtained from the respondents to the TVET trainee questionnaire. While the first part presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents to the study, the second part provides the results on trainees' perceptions of the TVET education system and the programmes in Namibia. The third part focuses on the results of the exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) for the perception items. The final part presents the results of the regression analysis, discussing which factors influence the perception of TVET from the perspective of the VTC trainees.

5.3 Response Rate

In the study conducted, respondents were divided into two categories: Grade 11-12 students and 1st Year TVET trainees. The total population of Grade 11-12 learners was 1564, while there were 570 1st year TVET trainees in the population.

Table 5.1: Response Rate

Category	Population	Sample Size	Total Reached	Response Rate %
Grade 11 – 12	1564	270	141	52.2
1 st Year Trainees	570	270	209	77.4
Total	2134	540	350	64.8

For the Grade 11-12 category, a sample size of 270 participants was selected. Out of these 270 individuals, 141 responded to the survey. This indicates a response rate of 52.2%. In the 1st year TVET trainee's category, a higher number of individuals, specifically 209 participants, responded to the survey. This results in a response rate of 77.4%. This higher response rate suggests that the 1st Year TVET trainees were more inclined to participate in the study compared to the Grade 11-12 students. The literature, as indicated by Johnson, Timothy, & Owens (2013), generally agrees that a response rate of over 60% is considered good and lends credibility to research findings. Similarly, Babbie (1990) asserts that a response rate of 60% is good, while anything above 70% is considered very good. As demonstrated in Table 4.1, the overall response rate of 64.4% in this study clearly indicates a very good level of participation, which enhances the acceptance and credibility of the quantitative findings.

5.4 TVET trainees' demographic

The study sample comprised of 145 first year trainees enrolled in six state-owned VTCs. The characteristics and location of the VTCs have been described in the methodology section. The following are the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

5.4.1 Age of the TVET respondents

Most of the TVET trainee respondents (19%) were 23 years old. The second largest group was 22-year-olds (15.2%), followed by 24- and 25-year-olds (12.4% and 11.7% respectively). The results presented in Figure 1 show that the least represented group of participants was 35 and 38 years old, which is less than 1% of the sample (0.7%).

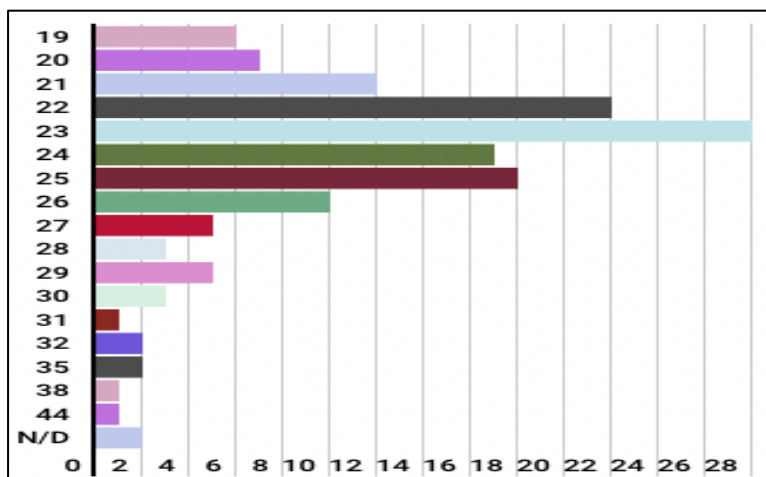


Figure 5.1: Age of respondents

5.4.2 Gender and highest grade level of respondents

The study revealed that 55% of the respondents who participated in the survey were male, while 45% were women. The findings also revealed that most of the VTC trainees (86%) successfully attended Grade 12.

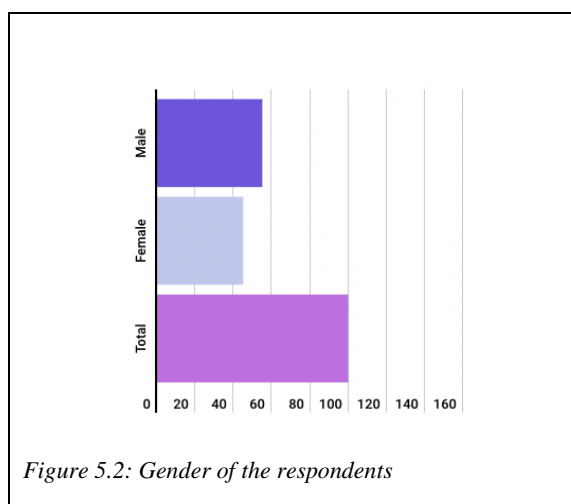


Figure 5.2: Gender of the respondents

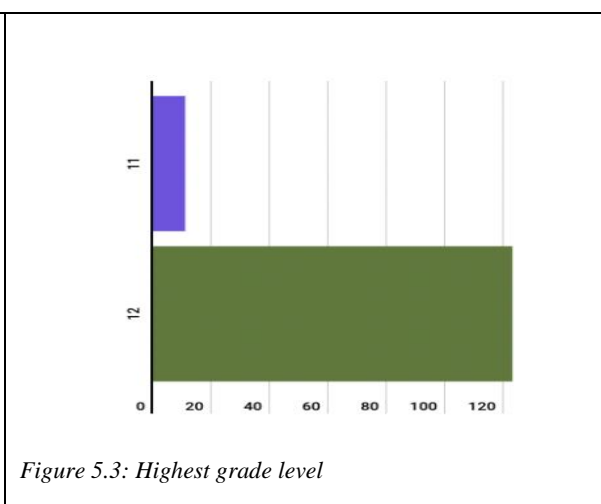


Figure 5.3: Highest grade level

5.4.3 TVET course enrolments

The finding revealed that Namibian TVET trainees still focus their attention on traditional courses, rather than on the new high-priority skills that the country encourages in the Skill Development Plan 2 (SDP2), such as agriculture and ICT (Figure 4). For example, most of the respondents were studying towards qualifications in Hospitality and Tourism

(29%), followed by respondents enrolled in the Electrical General course (20%). A small number are enrolled in the Boiler Making, Food and Beverage, Horticulture, and Crop Husbandry courses (1%), with students from the Office Administration, Welding, Plumbing, Solar equipment, and Wholesale and Retail making up the middle of the graph.

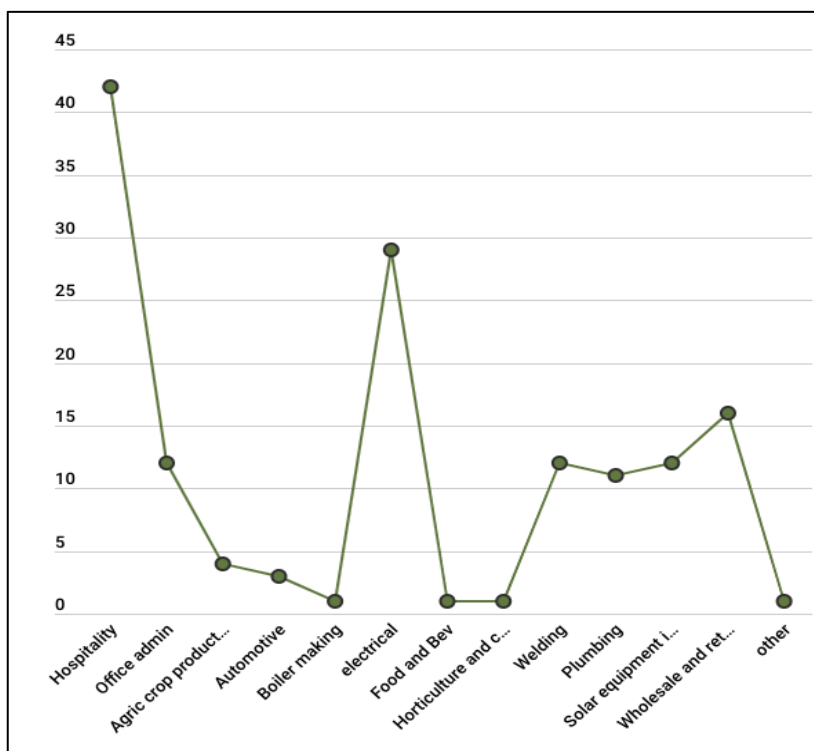


Figure 5.4: Courses in which respondents are enrolled

5.4.4 Perceptions of TVET among VTC trainees

I conducted descriptive statistics on the target sample of participants to establish an overview of the experience and perceptions of the VTC trainees. This was established to describe the basic features of the data and to provide simple summaries of the sample and the measures. The following are the descriptive results of the variables carried out to determine trainee TVET perceptions.

5.4.5 Perceptions of state owned VTC trainees about the value of TVET in Namibia

One of the most important and counterintuitive findings of this research is that TVET trainees actually report positive perceptions about technical and vocational education. For example, most of those in training (62%) disagreed – some strongly – that TVET jobs represented “dirty types of skills” that are deemed inferior to the more prestigious academic or professional skills gained through a university (Fig. 5). Only a small minority (34%) had a less positive impression of jobs in the TVET sector. The mean and standard deviation scores of 4 and 1.05 suggest that there are two sides to perceptions regarding how TVET jobs are perceived in the country: one that sees it as providing dirty jobs, and those that do not hold this view.

A slightly smaller number of trainees, although by a small margin (44%), did not believe that jobs acquired with technical and vocational qualifications would be difficult and exhausting work (Fig. 5). To be sure, there is a sizeable proportion of respondents who felt such jobs would indeed be tiring (48%), but the mean and standard deviation scores of 3.9 and 1.33 indicate that there is a decided split in opinion on the extent to which TVET jobs are taxing on employees.

Although this study found that a considerable number of TVET trainees believe that these jobs are tiring, there is a strong perception that it is easy to get a job with a TVET qualification (80%). This was represented by mean and standard deviation scores of 4.1 and 0.99 (Fig. 5). This kind of message resonates well with Namibia, whose national development plans consider TVET as a vehicle to reduce youth unemployment.

Namibian VTC trainees feel overwhelmingly positive about studying at a TVET college (81%), with a small number of respondents being uncertain (4%) or having expressed

negative feelings about the matter (15%). The overall mean and standard deviation scores for these statements were 4 and 0.05, respectively.

A significant number of VTC trainees disagreed with the perception that universities were better options than TVET (62%). Only 28% believe that universities are better. This was summarised by the means and standard deviations of 2.6 and 1.2, respectively. These results challenge findings from the research done in countries such as Fiji and some European countries (Russo, Serafini & Ranieri, 2019; Tagicakiverata, 2012) asserting that students consider universities to be better options than TVET. However, VTC trainees who responded to the survey questionnaire in this study believe that TVET qualifications are overlooked compared to those of universities (51%). Only 38% of the sample disagreed, and 10% were uncertain. This was summarised by mean and standard deviation scores of 3.18 and 1.24.

TVET is not seen as a waste of time. This opinion prevails amongst college trainees, despite their mixed perceptions about TVET qualifications being frowned upon or that TVET jobs are tiring. Positive perceptions are important: that it is worthwhile to complete a TVET qualification and that one can actually become a professional in TVET. Most college trainees (88%) disagreed that it is difficult to be professional in TVET (mean = 1.84; SD = 0.85). Concerning the opportunity to grow professionally, nearly all VTC trainees (97%) are optimistic that, with their TVET qualification, they could still grow professionally (Table A.1, Appendix A). Of the sample, 50% agreed, supported by 47% who strongly agreed (mean = 4.41; SD = 0.78) that with TVET qualifications they can grow professionally.

VTC trainees (95%) also believe that they can still advance to university after TVET studies, with only 4% being pessimistic about the prospect, as elaborated further by the mean (4.43) and standard deviation (0.78).

The VTC trainees also revealed that they would not hesitate to recommend others register for a career in TVET. This can also be seen as the positive perception they have of the institution. Of the sample, 78% said that they were likely to advise others to study in TVET programmes. Only a combination of 15% of the respondents indicated that they would not advise others to do the same. This is a positive shift in the TVET trajectory.

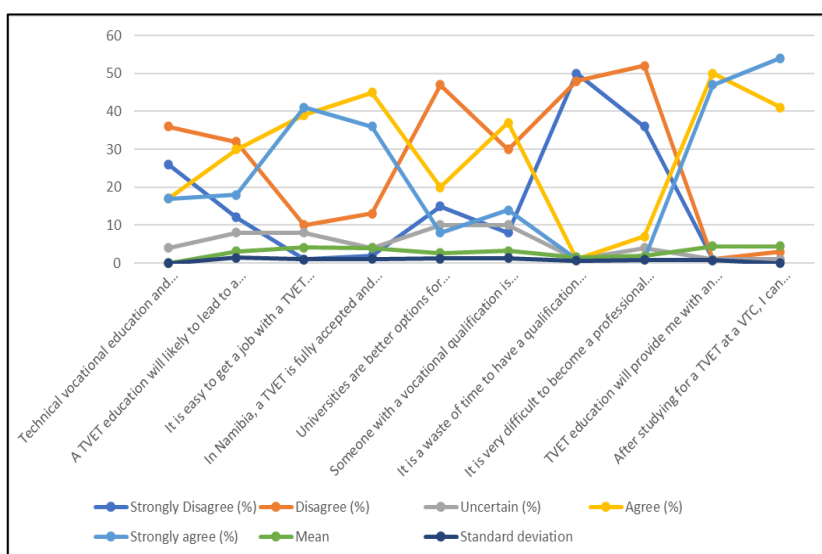


Figure 5.5: TVET trainee perceptions about the TVET education system in Namibia

5.4.6 Perceptions of VTC trainees about their experiences of TVET in Namibia

The TVET trainees were satisfied with the type of education they received at the Vocational Training Centres (VTCs). They believe that VTCs offer students a high-quality education (80%, mean = 4.12; SD = 0.85). This important perception explains the increase in enrolment in TVET programmes. Additionally, the TVET trainees themselves were optimistic that they were equipped with entrepreneurial skills that they needed to start their own business. Most VTC trainees agree strongly (96%, with mean and standard deviation scores of 4.49 and 0.68) that these skills equip them to establish their businesses and help grow the country's economy. Only a small minority are skeptical (2%), and another 2% are unsure whether they feel equipped enough for a business start-up.

This research finding not only reported a positive perception among VTC trainees about the quality of training and entrepreneurial skills, but also showed that most of the trainees (74%) experienced sufficient training tools and equipment at VTCs as adequate (with a mean and standard deviation of 3.86 and 1.11, respectively). Only 19% disagree with this view. This is a positive direction for Namibia, contrary to other literature that reports negative perceptions about TVET; that they offer inferior quality training with old and obsolete tools and equipment (Tagicakiverata, 2012; Essel et al., 2014).

Interestingly, the results of this study show more positive perceptions about the type of TVET education the respondents receive. Most (94%) of the trainees believe that the TVET trainers in VTC are skilled and knowledgeable in their respective occupational areas (mean = 4.34; SD = 0.63). They were also impressed by the subject content and that the VTCs are well managed (Fig. 6). In fact, VTC trainees admired the management of VTCs (88%); an overall mean (4.13) and SD of 0.78 were obtained.

Supporting the findings that TVET trainees trust and admire the work of VTCs' management, 68% also agree that VTCs have sufficient consumables to conduct training and assessment. Furthermore, the majority of college trainees are satisfied with the relevance of the subject content to the curriculum objectives in the VTCs (Table 5.2). This shows a positive shift in attitudes toward TVET, which has been burdened by a negative perception emanating from factors such as poor curriculum, unskilled trainers, poorly managed centres, and inadequate resources (Awang, Alavi, & Ismail, 2011; Aldossari, 2019).

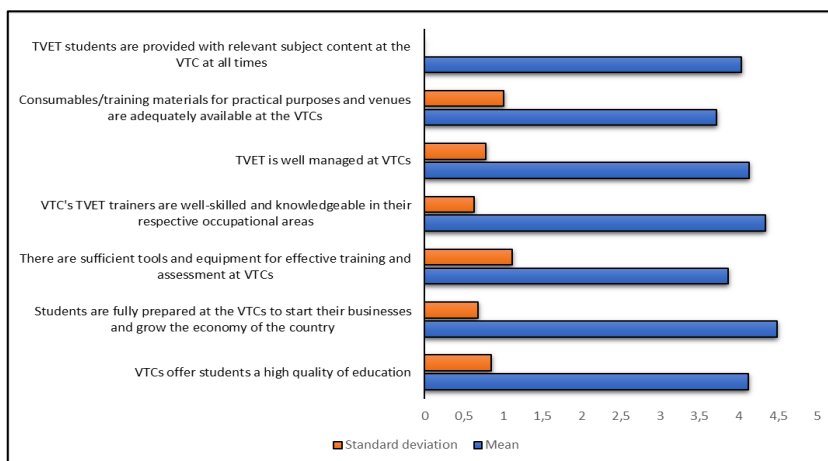


Figure 5.6: Perceptions of college trainees about their experience of the TVET education system in Namibia

5.4.7 The reasons VTC trainees give for enrolment in a VTC

Most Namibian TVET trainees enjoy some degree of agency in making their own decisions about their career choices. It was evident that most college trainees enrolled in the TVET VTC of their own choice (80%), as opposed to the direction of their parents (8%) or qualified for an NSFAPF guaranteed loan (10%).

Trainees also indicated strong admiration for TVET (55%). Only 31% of the sample disagreed, while 15% of trainees were uncertain if they joined because of admiration for TVET or not. This is a positive move in the TVET trajectory and is reflected in the overall mean score and standard deviation of 3.39 and 1.25, respectively.

After high school, TVET was the first career option for most of the respondents. Of the trainees, 51% disagreed with the idea that they opted for TVET as a last choice because they were not accepted at other institutions of higher learning. Only a combination of 27% agreed that they opted for TVET because they did not receive admission to other higher learning institutions.

Most VTC trainees did not register at the VTC only to pass time. Table A.2, **Appendix 5A** shows that 49% disagreed with this notion. Still, there is a significant

percentage, although a minority (39%), who indicated that they enrolled for TVET programmes just to pass time.

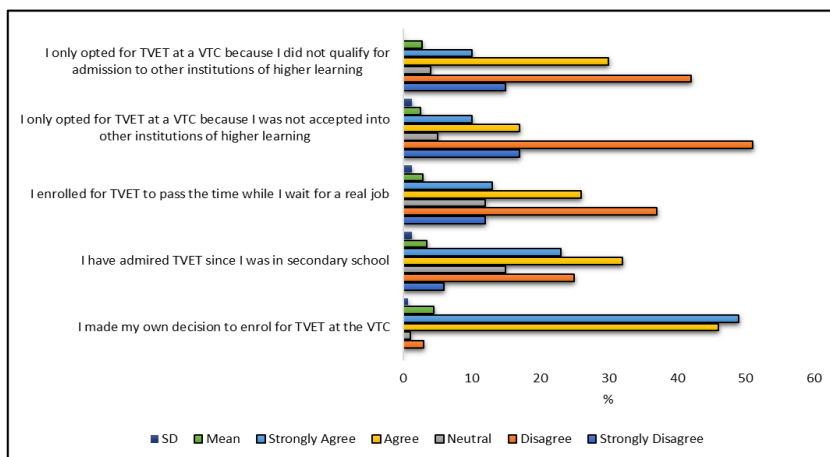


Figure 5.7: Perceptions of college trainees about their reasons for enrolling in a Technical Vocational Training Centre

5.4.8 State owned VTC trainees' perceptions about the value of TVET in Namibia

A key finding is that Namibian college trainees recognise and appreciate the value of TVET. According to Table 1, 51% of the trainees did not choose TVET as a last resort after being rejected by other higher education institutions. However, a sizable portion (27%) agreed that they chose TVET for this reason.

5.4.9 Exploratory Factor Analysis results (EFAs)

Exploratory factor analysis, as a technique used to reduce many variables into a few factors (Filed, 2009), is used to determine the underlying latent variables (factors) in relation to the objective of the study. This is so that the structure of the relationship between the variables, objectives, and respondents can be identified. To carry out the EFA analysis, a total of 34 variables (**refer to the TVET trainee questionnaire in Appendix 5B**) were used. Furthermore, EFA was carried out to reduce the data to a smaller set of summary variables and to explore the underlying theoretical structure of the phenomena. EFA was carried out as

a confirmatory pre-analysis before multivariate analysis to remove other insignificant factors (variables) to be included in the multivariate analysis. This action is explained in more detail below. It was therefore important for the researcher to condense the sections where Likert scale question structuring was utilised.

In light of the above, exploratory factor analyses were performed for the items that were used to measure stakeholder perceptions about the TVET education system in Namibia. This section has 14 measuring elements (variables). An EFA was conducted to reduce the underlying factors before a further multivariate analysis was performed. The pattern matrix of the analysis of the first principal axis factor identified three perception factors. These factors were labelled as follows: factor 1 = perceived quality of TVET education, factor 2 = perceived negative stereotypes of TVET; and factor 3 = perceived value of TVET education (**Table A.5 in Appendix A**). Factors that generated eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained for further multivariate analysis, because “significant amount of variation in the data could be explained this way” (Field, 2009. p. 647). A parallel analysis was used to determine the number of factors. Figure 5 clarifies the number of factors that determined the number of eigenvalues of the scree plot (blue line) that were higher than those of the random simulated data (green and red lines).

As can be seen in Figure 5, the scree plot graphic shows a four-factor solution. The number of factors in the scree plot corresponds to the number of factors determined by the eigenvalue method. It is emphasised that these two methods (scree plot & eigenvalues) generally conform to each other; however, they perform an over-determining number of factors (Ford et al., 1986; Hayton et al., 2004). When the scree plot in Figure 5, which presents the curves of the actual data along with the simulative data, is examined, it is obvious that the three-factor construct decided as a result of the examination of the

eigenvalues, is supported and retained. In the graphic, it is seen that the first three factors of the actual data have higher eigenvalues than the first three factors of the simulative data. As for the fourth to seventeenth factor, the eigenvalues of the simulative data are greater than the actual data. Therefore, they were excluded from the analysis. Only factors 1-3 were retained in the analysis, as seen in Table 2.

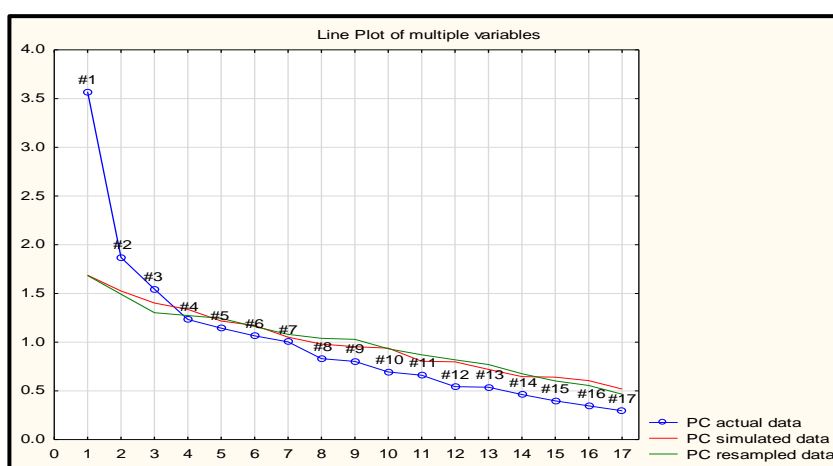


Figure 5.8: Scree plot of the exploratory factor analysis

5.4.10 Eigenvalues of the factors

As a result of the abovementioned observations, three scale factors were decided upon, and the analysis was re-performed on the actual data* with that restricted number. Table 2 shows that the total explained variance as a result of the re-performed exploratory factor analysis with a restricted number of factors to three is 41.08%. The results of the exploratory factor analysis of the stakeholder perception scale are presented in **Table A.5 in Appendix A.**

Table 5.1: Eigenvalues of the factors

Factors	Eigenvalues for the stakeholder data with labels: Principal components			
	Eigenvalue	% total variation	Cumulative Eigenvalue	Cumulative %
Perceived quality of TVET education	3.570306	21.0018	3.570306	21.0018
Perceived negative stereotypes of TVET	1.869143	10.99496	5.439448	31.99675
Perceived Value of TVET	1.544376	9.08457	6.983825	41.08132

**It is not likely to run exploratory factor analysis on simulation data. Therefore, the results presented for the exploratory factor analysis are based on actual data.*

Some items were manually cross loaded to categorise them where they were to be best interpreted. The factor results show that Bartlett's sphericity test was significant ($p = 0.000$) indicating that the distribution of values in the preliminary measure of the perception of TVET education in Namibia among stakeholders was acceptable for the EFA analysis (Field, 2009; Hair et al., 2010). This was achieved through the Oblimin oblique rotation. The results presented in Table 3 show that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index was found to be acceptable, as it was above the recommended threshold ($KMO = 0.67$).

Table 5.2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.67
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	136
	Df	136
	Sig.	< 0.01

This further supported that the data collected in the study could be factorised. The three actors accounted for 41.08% of the total variance (see Table 2). These statistics demonstrate that the factors generated through the EFA supported the factorability of the

correlation matrix, and that the KMO was above the recommended threshold, showing that factor analysis produced reliable factors (Pallant, 2007; Field, 2009, p. 660).

Therefore, factor scores were further calculated as the average of all measuring items that contributed to each specific factor. This was conducted to allow the researcher to be able to interpret the mean scores of the factor using the original 5-point Likert scale that was used in the measuring instrument. The Likert scale of measurement for the items ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. I explain the three retained factors below.

5.4.10.1 Factor 1: Perceived quality of TVET education

After running the exploratory factor analysis, one of the factors that emerged speaks to the quality of TVET education. Perceptions about the quality of TVET education were labelled Factor 1. Five significant, systematically loaded factors address the objective of the perceived quality of TVET. They consist of aspects such as that VTCs have sufficient tools and equipment, TVET education is well managed, the subjects that are taught at VTCs are relevant, VTC trainers are well-skilled, and consumables for practical purposes are adequately available. The factor explained 21% of the total variance. Based on that, this research finding revealed that apart from the stereotyping of TVET, Namibian students believed that the TVET education offered in the VTCs is of significantly good quality.

5.4.10.2 Factor 2: Perceived stereotypes of TVET education

Although college trainees expressed an overwhelmingly positive perception of and admiration for TVET education, some stereotypical perceptions persist. Therefore, four significant, systematically loaded factors were used to test these perceptions about negative stereotypes of TVET education. The findings revealed that the respondents still perceived that their education was likely to lead to a difficult and energy-consuming job, with a factor

load of 0.83. However, for the multiple regression analysis, the other three remaining factors were taken into account.

5.4.10.3 Factor 3: Perceived value of the TVET education system

Most of the 145 respondents perceived that TVET education will provide them with an opportunity to grow professionally, which was similar to the highest loading of 0.780. To statistically establish the factors that underlie the perception of the study respondents of the value of the TVET education system, the other three independent factors that were gathered in the objective were further measured using multiple regression to identify the level, effect, and significance of the respondents' perceptions. Since all subfactors were automatically statistically linked to the major Factor (Perceived value of the TVET education system), factor analysis acted as a confirmatory analysis to carry out the inferential statistical analysis (multiple regression). This factor demonstrates that TVET education is critical for developing countries like Namibia and that stakeholders should acknowledge its value.

The purpose of this section is to present the empirical results of the study conducted with college trainees. The next section presents the results of the data from the questionnaire that was administered to secondary school learners.

5.5 Section B: Secondary school learners' perceptions of TVET

This section presents the findings of the survey administered to a sample of 350 secondary school students. The results are presented in two sections. The first section presents the descriptive statistics obtained from the data that focus on the demographic characteristics of secondary school learners as respondents to the study. The second section focuses on providing an overview of the descriptive results on stakeholder perceptions of the TVET education system and programmes in Namibia.

5.5.1 Demographics of the secondary school learners study sample

The findings of this study were informed by the perceptions of female respondents, mainly aged 17 (28%). This was followed by 24.6% of 18-year-old and 20.6% of 19-year-old respondents. The results presented in Table 5.23 show that the least represented group of participants was 15 years old; less than 1% of the sample (0.6%).

Contrary to the study conducted with VTC trainees, which was dominated by the views of male respondents, I also report the findings of the secondary school respondents, who were mostly dominated by the perceptions of female respondents. The analysis of the results shows that more women than men participated in the survey, making up 61.4% of the sample. This was compared to 38.6% of the sample who indicated that their gender was male.

Unlike the study of college trainees, which revealed a positive perception of TVET by trainees, most secondary school learners have negative views about TVET. Respondents were asked for which course they are likely to register for after completing their grade 11 or 12.

Most indicated courses related to health, which accounted for 34% of the sample, followed by commercial courses (23%). The smallest percentage indicated technical courses as their career option (13%). For Namibia, which prioritises TVET as a vehicle to grow the national economy, this finding is not good news.

5.5.2 Overview of Secondary school learners' descriptive results

This section presents and discusses an overview of the descriptive results concerning the TVET perceptions of its prospective students; secondary school learners in grades 11 and 12. The key finding that emerged is that TVET needs to be promoted throughout the country. A large majority (72%) of the sample agreed that TVET must be promoted in the Namibian

education system (**Table A.4 in Appendix A**). This general understanding is suggested by the mean score, mean = 3.67; SD = 1.47 compared to those who disagreed (28%).

Despite the values and admiration of TVET held by its recipients (VTC trainees), secondary school learners have different views. For example, many of the respondents (62%) perceive that VTCs do not prepare students for employment opportunities (mean = 2.81; SD = 1.45); (**Table A.4 Appendix A**).

Another interesting key finding is that secondary school learners also have mixed views on whose TVET education is intended for. The findings point to many contrasting results regarding the participants' perceptions of TVET design. Half of the survey participants (50%) perceive that TVET is not intended for students who cannot cope with academic education, while the other half is convinced that it is well intended for students who are struggling academically, suggesting that society still has some stereotypical views regarding the value that TVET education brings (mean = 2.85; SD = 1.47).

Prospective TVET candidates also believe that TVET is for those who are not academically gifted. This perception is supported by 70% of the respondents, who agreed that students with higher marks should avoid TVET programmes, given that they have better options. This finding supports the perception pointed out in the reviewed literature that university education is always considered a better option and that TVET programmes are for people with limited opportunities (mean = 3.54; SD = 1.5). Furthermore, the findings (as presented in Table A.4 in Appendix A) show that more than 57% of secondary school respondents do not perceive VTCs to offer students a high-quality education. This view is detrimental to the perception that prospective TVET students will have, and thus will affect the enrolment statistics of secondary school leavers as students into TVET programmes (\bar{x} = 2.81; SD = 1.3).

Secondary school learners have negative views on TVET, for instance, because they believe that VTCs deliver poor quality education, which affects the employability outcomes of the graduates. Of the sample, 61% agreed that students are fully prepared by the TVET education system to start their businesses and grow the economy. The overall mean score for this statement is (mean= 3.3; SD = 1.46). This is a positive move for the TVET sector in Namibia.

5.5.3 Summary and conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the empirical results of the study as they were achieved in several stages. First, I described the respondent profiles of both secondary school learners and those who are currently college trainees. Subsequently, an overview of the perceptions of the respondents about Namibian TVET education was provided. The next section reported exploratory factor analyses, which identified the factors that influence the perceptions of the respondents toward TVET in Namibia. Regarding the TVET trainee study, three perception factors were identified from the exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

In summary, this study revealed two sides of perception regarding how TVET is being viewed by the TVET trainees who were doing TVET qualifications at the state-owned VTCs, and by secondary school learners who were completing their final years of secondary education. Most of the TVET trainees expressed positive views of TVET and its value. On the contrary, secondary school learners, prospective students of TVET, had little good to say about TVET education (see **Appendix A**).

Chapter 6 presents the analysed results from the qualitative phase. All results will then be integrated and fully interpreted.

CHAPTER SIX

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF TVET IN NAMIBIA:

QUALITATIVE ACCOUNTS

6.1 Introduction

The chapter presents qualitative narratives of subjective perceptions of various stakeholder of the structural and cultural conditions that lead to the views about TVET as presented in Chapter 5. The presented findings are derived from the themes emerging from qualitative data analysis using the ATLAS.ti 22 data management software. This chapter only presents results, while the next chapter (7) will present an integrated discussion of both data chapters (5 and 6). In Chapter 7, I will revisit theory and literature to help understand the results.

6.2 Overall findings

A total of eleven interview transcripts were uploaded to ATLAS.ti 22 in preparation for data analysis (one Minister of Higher Education Technology and innovation one acting CEO, one Deputy Executive Director in the Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation, two employers of TVET graduates, three Life Skill teachers, two TVET managers, one focus group interview with six parents, and one with a minister) as discussed in Chapter 4, the methodology. The audio recordings of the interviews with the participants were transcribed and also loaded for analysis into ATLAS.ti 22. All generated codes were grouped into themes according to their meaning and response to the main research question.

Four main themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis. These are: 1) TVET as quality education, with three subthemes; 2) TVET as sustainable education, which also consisted of two subthemes, 3) perceptions of TVET linked to parents' socioeconomic status,

which consists of two subthemes, and 4) TVET as a response to global challenges, which is further divided into three subthemes. Table 6.1 presents the themes that emerged during the coding cycle in ATLAS.ti 22 together with the grounded frequencies. The numbering in Table 6.1 reflects the numbering used in the chapter to present the overall findings (**Table 6.1, Appendix 6F**).

In the next section, I present the findings related to the four main themes in Table 6.1 above, as well as details about the codes within each theme.

6.3 Theme 1: TVET as quality education

The *Perception of TVET as Quality education* theme of this study focuses on the factors that contribute to the success of a TVET programme: the necessary equipment and resources, the quality of the education, and the relevant subject content. These also include the availability of practical tools and the necessary instructors. As such, this section presents codes assigned to *TVET as Quality theme*, including their grounded frequencies (**also see Table 6.1, Appendix F**).

Figure 6.1 shows the visual network codes for the perception of TVET as Quality theme with grounded frequencies and the relationship network using arrows.

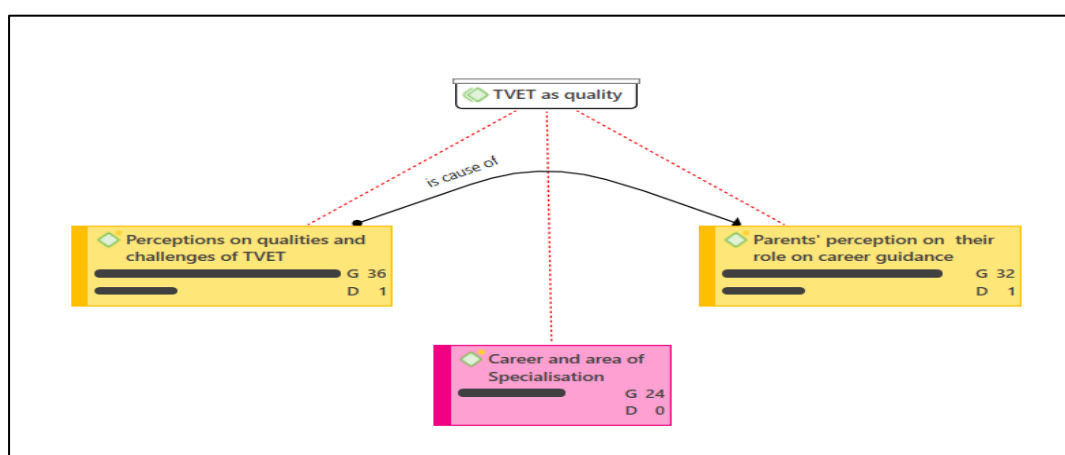


Figure 6.1: Network codes for TVET as Quality theme with grounded frequencies and the network using arrows

Based on the network codes in Figure 6.1, I used ATLAS.ti 22 network links to display the relationship codes. Therefore, the codes that belong to this theme were presented together to show the interrelatedness of the codes and grounded frequencies. Next, I present the analysis of the findings for the first subtheme, the perceptions of the qualities and challenges of TVET.

6.3.1 Perceptions of the structural qualities and stereotypes of TVET

To build on the finding of the previous chapter (5) regarding the perceived quality of TVET among students both in VTCs and Basic education, the participants elaborated on the finding that there are challenges in TVET that affect its quality. They explained that various factors influence these programmes, such as training equipment, training method, curriculum content, and the capability of the trainers. These all have a negative impact on how TVET is perceived by secondary school learners. The challenges arise when stakeholders, such as employers of TVET graduates and parents, have difficulty supporting TVET.

TVET aims to enable students to seamlessly transfer from one stream to another to get on a better career path. Unfortunately, the lack of support for this idea is not being resolved on the basis of the data in this study. The results also showed that the private sector had not contributed much to the support of TVET due to the quality of the programmes according to the employers of TVET graduates (Mr Orange and Khaiseb). To strengthen the theme, the following codes are analysed: the *Challenges of the TVET system*, and the *Stereotypes of TVET education*. In the following section, I discuss stakeholder perceptions on the challenges of the TVET system and how they influence participants' perception of TVET.

6.3.1.1 Structural challenges of the TVET System

An important finding of this study is that TVET itself poses structural conditions for its stakeholder, and this influences their perception of TVET. For example, one participant in

the study, who is an employer of TVET graduates, revealed that the TVET education system is very theoretical and does not really satisfy the labour market. Mr Orange said:

We are falling short in many respects. I indicated earlier that our education system is very theoretical, and the subjects they are offering at the school level are irrelevant. They need to do more to satisfy the market out there

Ms Maria, a TVET Manager at NTA, also raised a similar concern about the “disconnect” between the industry, schools, and TVET institutions. She said:

The challenge now we have in our process, especially when it comes to training, is that the disconnect between the industry and the school is quite huge.

The perception of the parents of secondary school learners, according to one of the career guidance teachers, also support the notion that the system has some conditions that affect how it is perceived in the country, such as parents discouraging their children from pursuing careers in TVET. Ms Happy, a Life Skills teacher, says:

It whereby some teachers or parents discourage learners not to go to vocational because they said it is for those who do not pass well and all

The Minister of Higher Education Technology and Innovation, agreed with the above sentiments about the TVET System’s challenges:

Exactly, those are the things as parents and as teachers that we must pay attention to. And really direct students well, but the challenge is, you know, in our education system, we don't have counsellors; we don't have guidance people, career guidance people. And that's where the challenge is, and these people must be there at the very beginning.

The skill mismatch is one of the structural conditions revealed by this study. This adds to the negative stakeholder perception. Many of the study participants revealed that the types of skills produced in VTCs do not meet the industry’s needs. Employers of TVET graduates expressed concern regarding the type of skills produced at the VTCs, saying they did not address the current industry needs. Mr Orange, TVET graduate employer #1 said:

I think as a potential engine of growth. TVET can really be positioned to address a number of barriers and shortcomings in the industry. One, skill scarcity. I think it's important to realise that the skill sets that we have currently in our economy are so much more like that of an older population, totally obsolete and not responding to our need in the industry.

Mr Hangula, a TVET manager, supported this finding.

The education should speak to the industry, so I could say it should be a demand and supply. So but what happens currently here in Namibia, what I have observed personally, if you look at the universities, there are programmes that don't really address the needs of the industry. So there's a disconnect that you would find the graduates that come out there, their competence does not really speak to the industries, you know, they either need to retrain that particular person.

Employers are unhappy because they believe that the training offered by various TVET providers does not meet their needs as indicated by these study participants (Mr Khaiseb, Mr Hangula, Ms Maria and Mr Orange). The study also found that parents often discourage learners from attending TVET (Ms Ndinelao, Life Skills teacher). The study also found that teachers and parents ignore the various factors that affect student well-being. One of these is the lack of effective guidance counsellors and career counsellors in the education system (Minister of higher education technology and innovation).

The following section presents the analysis of the perceived stereotypes of the TVET education subtheme.

6.3.1.2 Perceived Stereotypes about TVET Education

The results of the survey with secondary school learners (Chapter 5) revealed that most of the respondents still perceive TVET as a pathway only for those who are not very bright or have no academic interest. Almost all the secondary school learners expressed the view that TVET is meant for those who are not academically inclined and that it leads to difficult and energy-consuming jobs. The majority were also not satisfied that the TVET

content is of good quality. To help explain these perceptions, interviews with TVET stakeholder revealed that this is a cultural factor that conditions how TVET is perceived.

The findings of the in-depth interviews of stakeholder are summarised in the following comments:

Life Skills teacher # 2 (Ms Ndinelao)

Parents also play a major role in discouraging learners from taking vocational subjects, despite us trying to speak to them and guide them on the benefits of taking vocational subjects, such as design and tech, which is quite popular and organised. It is quite a well-performed subject in our school

Additionally, another Life Skills teacher reported that secondary school learners avoid TVET because they do not want to be seen as failures, because TVET is perceived as being for Grade 10 or 12 failures. Life Skills teacher #2 (Ms Ndinelao) said:

But I also know that there is a stigma specifically coming from the school that we come from, there is a stigma around vocational training as it is associated with grade 12 failure or grade 11 failure now, and a lot of the learners feel like if they end up in that field, or applying for that field, that they are not successful.

Discussions with a group of parents confirmed this view. One parent said.

I would want them to go and do something productive, not Vocational.

Additionally, the results of the survey respondents also revealed that TVET programmes are not regarded as effective or valuable educational tools compared to other learning opportunities, such as higher education.

A TVET Manager at NTA (Ms Maria) revealed that most industries in Namibia are owned by people who, in the end, train their sons and daughters to operate in those TVET systems, but they are not trained in Namibia.

We have a number of private schools in the Namibia and what we have also seen is, most of these students don't join TVET at all. Or they join TVET from other countries. They go and study TVET programs in in Europe, South Africa, and come back as qualified technicians. And this is a challenge and that tells you that they are not satisfied with our system.

One Life Skills teacher stated that parents consider TVET a waste of time for their children. This explains why most secondary school learners said they would rather consider academic programmes than TVET. Ms Ndinela revealed:

So yeah, that is the problem. When doing career guidance in class, these things come forward; the learners mostly reflect what their parents have already said to them. Despite their interests, they put them aside because they want to please their parents and decide that they will be lawyers, doctors, or engineers, so there is no room for them to be anything else.

Apart from parents fueling such perceptions, Mr Hangula, a TVET Manager, also mentioned that the political statements that politicians make to the school learners that if they fail, they will end up in TVET create a situation where TVET is considered a place for failures. Mr Hangula reported:

The perception is also caused by the politicians because what happens when we have for example, failures in grade 10, and then those dropouts are those kids that have failed grade 10 are always told that they have failed grade 10, they should go to TVET.

The Minister said:

TVET did not play a part at all during my early years of being a student, or learner and then a student. It is true that what the community or different societies in our country or people in our country, the perception they have that is negative, that is really looking down upon TVET, that is how I grew up.

This study found that teachers find it difficult to advise learners to consider pursuing careers in TVET because they are reprimanded by the parents of the learners. Some teachers revealed that most parents do not want their children to study anything other than academic subjects, because they see it as a waste of time. They prefer to have them take subjects such

as accounting, entrepreneurship, and geography that would earn them a place in the academic stream. Also, these topics arise in class, and learners tend to reflect what their parents have said. Although they have other interests, they are put aside because they want to be chosen as engineers, doctors, or lawyers (Life Skills teacher #2, Ms Ndinelao).

The study also revealed that participants felt that politicians fuel the perception that TVET is for failures; politicians only see it as a reflection of student failures. For example, many of the students who failed in Grade 10 are the ones who are sent to TVET. The majority of participants indicated that negative perceptions of TVET also caused people to think that it was only for students who were failing or are not very sharp. TVET was not held up as an option when they were growing up (TVET Manager, Mr Hangula; The Minister, and NTA acting CEO at NTA, Mr Ndjoze).

The findings of this study reveal that the admission requirements in place for TVET, create constraining structural conditions that would make people see TVET as a place for failure. These findings differed from the findings of the parents' focus group discussions. The discussions with parents revealed that some parents aspire for TVET to be accessible to all, as long as they can read and write.

The FGD with parents revealed:

You see so many children, when they go to school, that cannot complete school, and they actually cannot go on to qualify themselves as something, I would love to see them, those children also get the opportunity to enrol. And there's possibilities for them, even though they couldn't complete grade nine, or grade 10 as long as they can read, they can write and they can understand what to do.

This view was also supported by another parent, who argued that some children are not academically gifted but they are skilled; they should be allowed to do vocational education without being subjected to stringent academic requirements.

Also, in TVET they concentrate on mathematic and physical science, and, this child is not academically proven, let me say, and then this child is really skilled. He's really good at let me say with electricity, it's something that he maybe saw from his father doing and then so he learned from that. So I would suggest as long as they can do one plus two, they should do vocational, you understand because most of our children nowadays they are on the street.

This study finding revealed some interesting views where some parents indicated that the Grade 10 or 11 pass requirement for a student to enrol in TVET is a structural barrier to access TVET. The following section presents an analysis of the *Perception of the career guidance of the TVET* subtheme.

6.3.2 TVET and Career Guidance

This was another of the findings emerging from the data that point to structural conditions shaping how TVET is perceived in the country. Most of the participants expressed the need to strengthen the career guidance for TVET so that it is better understood by its prospective trainees. The results of the quantitative study revealed that most secondary learners expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of information on TVET programmes and the importance of TVET. They also reported that they rarely heard about TVET from their career guidance teachers. This is one of the structural conditions that restrict students and parents from accessing TVET opportunities in the country. To help explain this perception, I interviewed various TVET stakeholder to hear their views on the opinions expressed by the learners. Next, I explain the perceptions of parents about their own advisory roles to their children so that they can make informed career choice decisions.

6.3.3 Parents' Perceptions of their Advising Role

Another interesting finding of this study is that parents have a general understanding that it is their responsibility to explore the various options available to their children to ensure that they make the right choices. The choice of a career path affects the student's future, as

one parent pointed out. Another parent said that they, as parents, could help their children make informed decisions based on their interests. For example, they could help their children choose a career in which they are interested.

FGD with parents:

I think as a parent, I need to be open about the possibilities of a lot of careers that are out there, the type of subjects they are taking at school. I can support them and make sure that we give them the necessary information with regard to the careers and also some additional information on what they need

Another parent added:

For me as a parent I have to be all the way behind my daughter. I can't be the one to choose for her what she needs to study. The choice is hers. But as a parent I have to be there to support her. Whatever choice of career she makes

During the FGD with parents, a participant said:

You should also make sure that whatever choice they make is a choice that's also going to help them in the future, is the choice that's going to help them with their living conditions that they going to have in the future as well.

Another parent indicated:

That is why you see, if I can come in, it's so important that you do guide them thoroughly so that they may get even made the right choices and even to work closely with the school as parents we need to find out what is being done at school and how are they being guided, you see life skills, those choices that they need to make, the career choices that are out there.

6.3.3.1 Parents' Perceptions of Career Guidance

Parents also explained the importance of career guidance; that it can help students get financial study assistance, choose the right career, and secure better employment opportunities.

As one parent said:

These schools must really support our children and we as parents must find out how do they support, do they give the necessary information and all the information that is available out there? Sometimes our children do not know about the financial assistance that's available out there because at the end our children do obtain the number of points that is opposed to study.

During the FGD with parents, one parent mentioned the importance and need for career exhibitions.

in our years we had career exhibitions, the school used to send you maybe to Rossing for you just to have an open idea of what mining is all about. Or they send you to NIMT, they sent you there, they what they give you what they offer? Career exhibition that has to do as well with the career not for you at the end of the day you won't be disappointed career wise.

Furthermore, another parent in the focus group discussions averred that mines previously played a major role in raising awareness of possible careers. However, this was also no longer happening, she said.

I think the mines they don't really do that as much as they used to do it in the past. I remember those years of our primary school grades would be taken will be taken to Rossing Uranium Mine and observe things like fire brigade, those things I don't think the companies are doing that as much

To strengthen the theme, the following subthemes are analysed as they emerged from ATLAS.ti: Eligibility to enrol in TVET; Parents' views on career disappointments; Perceptions on how stakeholders should make informed decisions; and the Role of parents in career choice. The following section will discuss the eligibility to enrol in the TVET subtheme.

6.3.3.2 Perceptions on Decisions for Children's Career Choice

The decision to pursue higher education in one's chosen field can be daunting for many students. In addition to the personal factors that can affect a student's decision, other

factors, such as peer pressure and parental influence, can also affect a student's decision. Furthermore, the lack of involvement in decision-making can affect a young person's ability to make informed decisions. The findings of the in-depth interviews are captured in the following comments. One of the Life Skills teachers, for example, indicated that one of the most critical factors is recommending visits to exhibitions where students can experience their chosen field.

Advice regarding the future, I talk to them and sometimes brought in people that are experienced and let them attend exhibitions career exhibitions where they have those people where they can get first-hand knowledge in careers at all levels (Ms Trudy, Life Skills teacher #3).

Apart from the teachers, a TVET manager at NTA, Ms Maria, also confirmed that she would not really dictate which career choice is best over the other, but she would consider looking at the family needs of any individual.

In my view, if a family wants to venture into agriculture, for example, then the best for them is to start with TVET because if you send your students to university, they will learn all the science and the knowledge about agriculture, but they may not be able to develop the land immediately. But if you start them at TVETs, they get all the practical hands-on skills.

The Minister of higher education technology and innovation said that the parents that sit on the school boards should encourage discussions on different careers at the school so that parents and learners are informed.

You know, the school system has what we call parent-school boards, where parents sit, it is there, where things like different pathways of general education must be discussed so that parents are informed, and so on. So that when my child comes and tells me, mummy, it does not matter whether I get 35 points, I am not going to medicine, I am going to engineering, I am going to technical vocational education. But it is only an informed child who can say that. Many of our homes and backgrounds do not have this type of information.

In summary, the study found that Life Skills teachers believe that one of the most critical factors is recommending to parents that they visit exhibitions where students can experience their chosen field (Life skills teacher #3, Ms Trudy). These exhibitions will allow them to get a firsthand look at what careers are available in the future. Furthermore, being open about the various careers available will allow parents to make informed decisions regarding their child's career. In addition, it will allow parents to support their children in their decision-making process (FGD with Parents).

This study also found that students should consider various factors in their lives, with educational and socioeconomic factors among the most important ones. One Life Skills teacher indicated:

*I always try inform them that when it comes to education, they should look at their report cards and choose subjects that they are passionate about.
(Life skills teacher 2, Ms Ndinelao.*

It was also found that the school system has parent-school boards, which are where parents can get involved. These are also places where discussions about various general education pathways are conducted (Minister.). The following section discusses the *career and area of specialisation theme*.

6.3.4 Career and Area of Specialisation

This theme focuses on connecting educators and learners with the right industry professionals. It focuses on career paths where graduates develop in-depth skills in a specific area or career field. In strengthening this theme, the following subthemes are analysed as they emerged from ATLAS.ti: on-the-job learning, employment, and learning performance. The following subtheme is analysed to support the Career and Area of Specialisation theme: *Life Skills Teachers Workshop Attended and views on experience of Life skills teachers to teach career guidance*.

6.3.4.1 Life Skills Teachers Workshop Attended

A teacher training workshop is a type of event that provides teachers with the tools and resources necessary to improve their teaching techniques. These workshops also help them develop effective classroom management strategies. In addition to allowing them to improve their skills, these events also provide them with continuous opportunities to make the most of their talents. It is known from the quantitative data discussion in Chapter 5 that the majority of respondents revealed that they rarely discuss TVET in their career guidance lessons. In agreement with the findings of the in-depth interviews in the present study, it was revealed that Life Skills teachers received inadequate training to provide career guidance lessons, including TVET, as shown in the following comments.

Life Skills teacher #1, Ms Happy, said that initially she was not prepared to discuss career guidance; however, she received a few workshops that made her ready to teach life skills.

I wasn't prepared but after I got training through workshops that I attended, I started loving the subject and then get ready for it. I wasn't prepared before. Yes. we've been given workshops. We're guided on how to take life skills and all the information about life skills were given through workshops that we have attended.

Ms Trudy, Life Skills teacher #3, also revealed that she was not a trained life skills teacher, but she attended a few workshops.

I attended a couple of workshops concerning the syllabus, yes, alcohol abuse, pregnancies all these things, how to handle counselling and stuff.

Life Skills teacher #2, Ms Ndinela, echoed the same sentiment:

No, I'm not a qualified life skill teacher but I only teach it to help out one teacher who has health-related problems, so I stepped in to help, and that's how I ended up here.

This study found that the Life Skills teachers interviewed were neither specialised nor trained to teach life skills and expressed challenges such as not having the necessary career guidance skills to pass on to their learners. Many of them revealed that they started teaching Life Skills and career guidance to address structural challenges at schools such as the need for counselling of students and subjects. Some wanted to teach Life Skills while others applied for Life Skills teaching positions because they wanted to work close to their family. This helped me understand the reasons why secondary school learners perceive TVET as the last career choice and the reason they expressed the need for TVET to be actively promoted.

6.4 Theme 2: TVET for sustainability

The theme of *Perceptions of TVET for Sustainability* focuses on the understanding of stakeholders of the role of TVET for sustainable development. As such, this section presents codes assigned to *Perceptions of TVET for Sustainability* theme, including their grounded frequencies (Table.6.1).

Figure 6.2 shows the visual network codes for the TVET perceptions by the theme of various stakeholder with grounded frequencies and the relationship network using arrows.

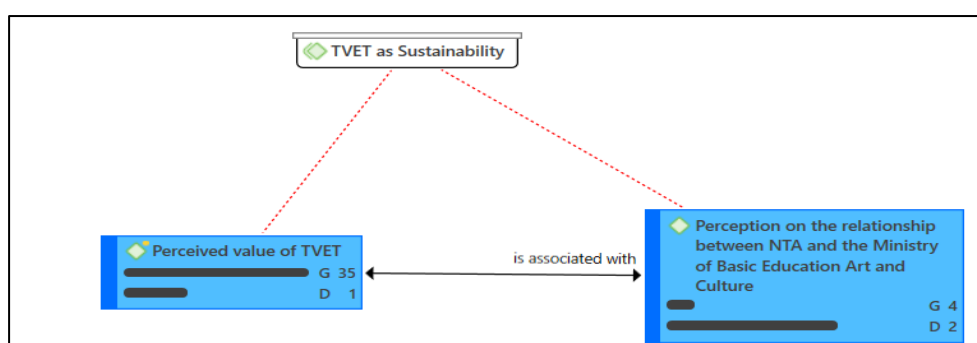


Figure 6.2: Network codes for *Perceptions of TVET and Sustainability* theme with grounded frequencies

Figure 6.2 shows the associated relationship codes. The next section presents the analysis of the finding for the first subtheme of the main theme, the *Perceived Value of TVET*.

6.4.1 Perceived Value of TVET in Namibia

This theme focuses on the various stakeholder perceptions, their understanding of TVET, and the role it can play for the country. It includes how TVET is designed (curriculum) and its role in Namibia. To strengthen the theme, the following subthemes are analysed: *Perceptions on the design of TVET*, and the *Perceived role of TVET*. The following section will discuss the perceptions on the design of TVET.

6.4.1.1 *Perceptions on the Design of TVET*

The study participants indicated that curriculum development was another structural element in the system that raises challenges in TVET. There are divergent points of view among participants on this issue. Some participants expressed the view that the curriculum needs frequent review to meet the demand in the industry, while others believed that employers need to be involved in it to respond to the needs of the industry. On the other hand, some participants contended that the curriculum is developed according to employers, and that it is developed to meet the needs of global markets. Some comments from the in-depth interviews are shared below:

Ms Maria, (NTA TVET Manager #2)

The industry is moving fast, and we are moving slowly, because as much as we review our qualifications, our review does not match the industry's standard. Cosmetic reviews are usually done on the qualifications, which remains a challenge.

Some respondents cited the time it takes to review the curriculum as a structural condition posing challenges for the curriculum. The TVET graduates' employers revealed that they are not comfortable letting the TVET graduate recruits touch their expensive and sensitive equipment, as they perceive them as lacking even basic understanding. Mr Khaiseb (TVET graduate employer #2) said:

I must tell you, we are in a motor industry. So we are representing so many brands if I can take a brand like a BMW or Toyota, for instance here we are already advanced in terms of the mechanics of that vehicle, that the graduates from TVET program, the auto mechanics, they couldn't actually work on these vehicles, because the industry is already advanced in terms of their hybrids, and some of them electric vehicles and stuff.

To strengthen his argument, Mr Khaiseb further elaborated:

What I can say is from the industry that I have been representing, is that the design is not 100% where it should be, the example that I have taken that a curriculum is reviewed after five years. So life has already gone 20 years ahead if we change the curriculum after five years. So from that perspective, that design does not speak to the immediate need of the labour force. So some work needs to be done.

Contrary to the assertions made above, the Minister of High Education Technology and Innovation agreed that as a country Namibia is not where it is supposed to be in meeting the needs of the industry; however, she argued that employers cannot complain about the nature of the curriculum because they were involved in developing it. She said:

But unfortunately, our industry or labour market, there is this tendency of saying that, TVET graduates do not meet the demands. How can they not meet your demands? they meet your demands! because many of the curricula that we are offering there are people from industry that are part of the skills committee, it is them that are informing the development of the curricula, unless those people are not telling us the truth, then whenever we come up with a new trade, we make sure that we double check and bounce it off with the industry

She further indicated that it is not practical and feasible to review and develop curriculums every year, and, most importantly, Namibia is not only training for itself as a country, but rather, for the world. Therefore, it is not feasible to narrow the curriculum. She further explained:

I'll tell you that the government, through NTA and the Ministry of Higher Education, we are doing all we can to align our training to the needs of industry. But we are not meeting the needs of industry. Number one, our industry is very, very small and they are specific in terms of the skills they

require. Our training landscape, we are trying to make it as wide and broad, we are not only training for Namibia, we are training for the globe,

The acting NTA CEO, Mr Ndjoze, also indicated that it is not practical to review the curriculum every year.

The employers labour market even themselves, they don't know what they want. Seriously, they don't know what they want because the fourth industrial revolution is telling us that jobs will change every year. Training is not something that can change so fast. Why? Because if you admit a trainee, let's say in certificate level, is two years, if it is a diploma it is three years. So it cannot change that fast.

The development of curricula and their implementation are some of the critical competencies of teachers in educational planning and practical TVET. The majority of participants indicated that the lack of a responsive curriculum design is the reason why technical and vocational education programmes are regarded by employers of TVET graduates as not being responsive to industry needs.

6.4.1.2 Perceived Role of TVET in Namibia

This subtheme explored a deeper understanding of the roles of stakeholder in TVET. However, the study reported several structural and cultural conditions that lead to the perception of TVET by stakeholders in the country. This study also found that most of the participants agreed that TVET is vital for the operations of any organisation, as it can help improve its sustainability. This is because it provides them with the necessary skills to succeed. Findings from in-depth interviews are encapsulated in the following comments:

Mr Khaiseb expressed positive views about TVET:

My perception of TVET in Namibia is that it is good. It is late to implement TVET in Namibia. It should have been done already from the independence of the country,

Mr Orange, one of the employers of TVET graduates, also agreed that TVET plays a huge role in enhancing business sustainability and, as a country, Namibia cannot do without TVET.

From a business perspective, TVET plays a decisive, huge role. I would even want to say that TVET helps organisations like ours to enhance business sustainability by providing the skills we may not necessarily have. So, the awareness out there is yes, we cannot do without TVET.

The deputy executive director in MHETI also expressed the view that TVET is the way to go if we want to address the shortage of skills in the country. This is what he said:

If you look at the nature of our industries, we have skills scarcity in the industry, and one of the critical skills that we have identified, are artisans. So TVET helps our company, our organisation to grow by growing the skill sets,

Life Skills teacher #1, Ms Happy, also agreed that TVET is important.

I found vocational training important for the learners because they are giving skills whereby learners, they can create job. They can also employ others, not just go to rely in a certain company or relying in the government, but with the skill that they are getting, they can create their own job, they can come up with their own workshop.

In the focus group discussions, parents also agreed that TVET plays a huge role in helping people find their own jobs. In the FGD with parents, one participant said:

So, there are times that you finish your vocational education, but then you don't get that certain job, which you have studied for. So, which is also good for you to start your own business which is way better than going to study for let me say nursing, and you don't get a job.

Acting NTA CEO Mr Ndjoze was also positive.

I would be the last person to tell you anything that is negative about what we have done and what I bring in TVET. Because I've been the driver.

Deputy Executive Director, MHETI, maintained that the reintroduction of apprenticeship programmes in TVET has revived the image of TVET and that it has improved significantly, which is evident in its enrolments compared to those in the past. He said:

Today we're speaking about 34 let me round it off to 35 000 students in the TVET sector - all our public VTCs as well as private VCTs. In the 90s there were a few companies, who were doing TVET training but recently efforts were made to revive apprenticeship.

The Minister of MHETI, also expressed the opinion that

TVET really is an avenue that I came to realise that it answers those creative minds. Yeah, it answers those visionary minds, you know, it actually brings out the best from within who you are, and it's not something that you can borrow for two years or three years. It's something that is you.

The following section discusses the perceptions of the relationships between NTA and the Ministry of Basic Education in promoting and implementing TVET in the country.

6.4.2 Perceptions of the Relationships Between NTA and the Ministry of Basic Education

This study found that there is no synergy between the Ministry of Basic Education and the NTA. One study participant stated that the two are working in silos because the basic education reforms that were recently implemented are not being implemented in a way that will benefit students. For instance, one participant indicated that even the pre-vocational subjects are not integrated into the formal TVET. The views expressed in the in-depth interviews are captured in the following comments.

Unfortunately, I would say Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of basic education are working in silos and that's why you could also have been informed by the recent reform done by the basic education, you would notice that even the so-called prevocational subjects do not really speak to the formal TVET. (TVET Manager #1 Mr Hangula).

Acting NTA CEO Mr Ndjoze also confirmed the lack of connection between the entities. He said:

There could be of course, a disjuncture in terms of our approach our but like I'm saying despite all that and I'm very hopeful, I see value in what we are working with and what we may need to actually to be rigorous in our campaign,

The majority of the key informant revealed that the two ministries are not collaborating with regard to TVET education implementation in the country. This helped explain the finding that emerged in the quantitative study that revealed two opposing perceptions: with positive views on TVET from TVET trainees, and negative perceptions from secondary school learners.

The following section discusses the third theme, namely TVET perceptions and parents' socioeconomic status.

6.5 Theme 3: Perceptions of TVET linked to the socioeconomic status of parents

This theme focuses on how the socioeconomic status of students and their families is related to the willingness of students to enrol in TVET. As such, this section presents codes assigned to TVET and the theme of socioeconomic status of parents as they emerged from ATLAS.ti 22, including their grounded frequencies (Table 61).

Figure 6.3 shows, using arrows, the visual network codes for the TVET perceptions and parents' socio-economic status theme with grounded frequencies and the relationship network.

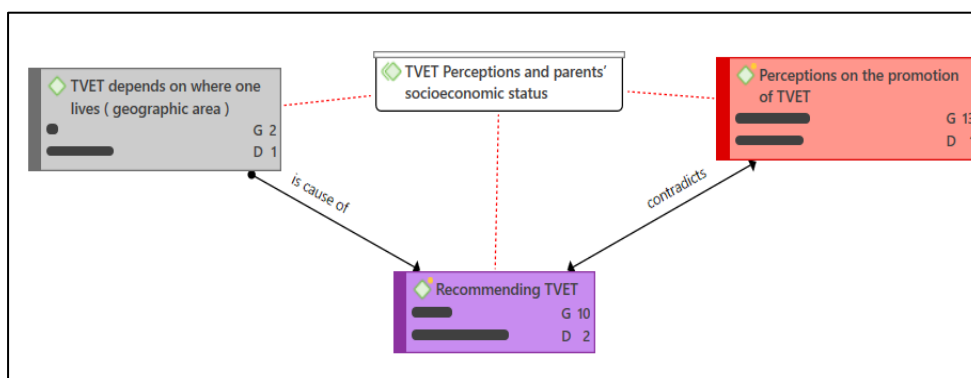


Figure 6.3: Network codes for TVET perceptions and parents' socio-economic status theme with grounded frequencies

I used the ATLAS.ti 22 network diagram to exhibit independent relationship characteristics that are similar, and those that are different from those of other codes. Therefore, the codes belonging to the *TVET and parents' socio-economic status theme* were presented to show the interrelatedness of codes and grounded frequencies. The next section presents the analysis of the findings for the first code, namely, the perceptions on the promotion of TVET.

6.5.1 Perceptions on the Promotion of TVET

This subtheme focuses on the understanding of various stakeholder perceptions about promoting TVET in Namibia. The emerging finding revealed that TVET is not well promoted in Namibia. The majority of participants agreed with the finding of Chapter 5, which reported that despite the importance of TVET, there was still very little advocacy to make stakeholders understand it. The results of the in-depth interviews are captured in the following comments:

Mr Khaiseb, TVET graduate employer # 2, had this to say:

In all honesty, not enough promotion. I am sincere. Look at the presence of our government, ministers or government representatives at the graduations of those academic institutions versus the TVET training centers. I sent my colleague to the Okakarara Training Centre for the graduation event. No high-level government representation. NUST and UNAM had their graduation last week. Our deputy president was there. Can you see that?

Ms. Maria, a TVET Manager, also elaborated on the need for promotion of TVET:

TVET in Namibia is not promoted well, and this is the challenge; I know we have done a few of the interventions like live your passion, but most of our interventions do not target the potential candidates or the learners. If you see the number of events career fairs, you hardly see NTA, to go there and spread the message of what TVET is.

The minister, also agreed that there is insufficient promotion of TVET:

The crop of teachers at General Basic Education, secondary school level, their knowledge of this is limited. Or it's just zero. You know. It is those of

you who come from that path, who saw the light, who must sell TVET. It's like you see a lot of mishaps created by us who are in the system, who are failing TVET by not selling it adequately.

These findings helped explain that there is a need for TVET advocacy to be fully accepted by learners and other key stakeholders such as parents. However, its significance has not been fully embraced.

6.5.2 Recommendations of TVET

The results of the previous chapter showed that the majority of respondents said that they would recommend TVET to the next person; however, they reported that they themselves have reservations about enrolling in TVET. To help explain this, I interviewed key stakeholders in TVET. To elaborate on the theme, the following subthemes are analysed: *Parents recommending TVET for their children and to a family member, and Teacher's views on recommending TVET.* The following section will discuss parents recommending TVET for their children and how they influence the perception of TVET.

6.5.2.1 Parents Perceptions on Recommending TVET

This theme focuses on the extent to which parents recommend TVET to their children. The findings of the in-depth interviews are summarised in the following comments.

In the FGD with parents, one parent said:

Yes, I will strongly advise them to enroll in TVET, they can get the basic skills to do what they want, to do with that makes them happy. Okay,

Another interesting finding emerged from the FGD with parents, where they expressed that they would support their children in their career choice. One parent said:

For me, if it is something they really want to do. I wouldn't say no. Yeah, for me, as I said in the beginning, also, what is very important for me is everyone needs to do something that they are really passionate about or

something because that is at the end of the day your own career that is your own future.

I also found that most parents would recommend TVET if their children were passionate about their chosen field, as it would enable them to achieve their goals and make a difference in their lives.

6.5.2.2 Teacher's view on recommending TVET to their learners

This theme focuses on the extent to which teachers will recommend TVET to their students. The findings of the in-depth interviews are captured in the following comments:

Life Skills teacher #1 (Ms Happy) reported that she recommended subjects related to TVET programmes to her learners.

I definitely recommend them to register any course that they are willing because when you look at the courses that are offered at the vocational when we talk about the development of the country, it always starts with the vocational, the skill that they are getting it involve building it involve plumbing, electricity and all those things. Mostly I recommend them to do vocational training.

Another key finding is that some Life Skills teachers still stereotype TVET and associate it with students who are not academically inclined. Ms Ndinela revealed that she recommends TVET to learners based on the individual assessment of the learners. She said:

Okay, um, it depends on the learner. Yes, I would recommend some learners to register for it, for example, perhaps, I feel as though this learner would benefit better from taking a vocational subject and I see that she or he has the creativity and the potential to do something like that. Andnd also, the other thing is obviously, when I see they cannot do academic subjects. (Ms Ndinela Life Skills Teacher #2)

Life Skills Teacher #3 (Ms Trudy):

Yes, I will recommend them to do TVET because I know what they can get from there, they can improve the skills.

This study found that all teachers recommend that students register for any course they are willing to take. Teachers also reveal that they will recommend TVET to some students that they register at TVET if they have the potential to excel in something like that and that taking a vocational subject would benefit them.

6.6 Theme 4: TVET as a response to global challenges

TVET can meet the evolving needs of today's workforce and requires an understanding of the world of work. The TVET as a response to global challenges theme focuses on the potential of TVET to transform the economy and influence the labour market. As such, this section presents the codes assigned to TVET as a response to the theme of global challenges, including their grounded frequencies (Table 6.1).

Figure 6.4 shows the visual network codes for TVET as a response to the global challenges theme with arrows indicating grounded frequencies and the relationship network.

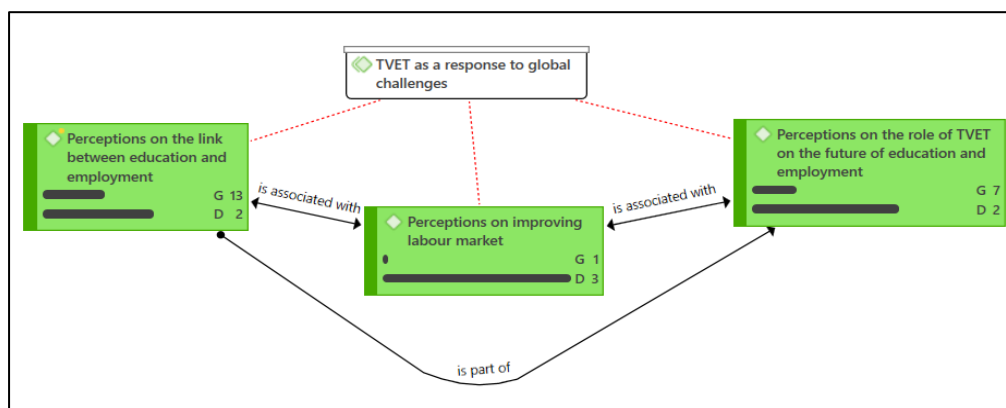


Figure 6.4: Network codes for TVET as a response to global challenges theme with grounded frequencies

The relationships between codes are shown in Figure 6.4. The ATLAS.ti 22 network diagram was used to exhibit independent relationship characteristics that are similar and those that are different from those of other codes. Therefore, the codes belonging to the *TVET in response to the global challenges* theme to show the interrelatedness of codes and grounded frequencies. The next section presents the analysis of the findings for subthemes.

6.6.1 Perceptions of the link between education and employment.

Most of the study participants expressed the view that there is a large “disconnect” between the skills students are learning and what employers are looking for. The findings of the in-depth interviews are captured in the following comments:

Mr Khaiseb, one of the employers of TVET graduates, expressed his dissatisfaction, which could explain why secondary school students do not see the need to enrol in TVET. He reported that there is a huge “disconnect” and that they add much more to bring students or former students to the desired level. He explained:

I am in the private sector and you must understand that private sector is the engine for making money, is the economic powerhouse, unlike the public sector, so we don't have the luxury to wait for a new recruit who is qualified, first to come into the traction before we can make money because the moment we are training that person in house, we are losing out on opportunities for making more money.

Furthermore, another TVET graduate employer, Mr Orange, expressed the sentiment that the education system creates structural challenges as it does not provide practical context. He said:

I think from a historical perspective; our education system is too theoretical. Meaning that the types of subjects that are presented at secondary school level, many of what has been provided there becomes irrelevant, you know. So there really is a misalignment between education, the TVET industry, but also the workplace.

TVET Manager #1, Mr Hangula, a manager at the Namibia Training Authority, expressed some views that helped provide insight; until Namibia’s education providers start speaking to industry, challenges will persist:

in my view is that employment, the education should speak to the industry, so I could say it should be a demand and supply. So, but what happens currently here in Namibia, you are asking for integration in general TVET.

6.6.2 Perceptions on Improving the Labour Market

This theme focused on the development of TVET and the labour market policy to provide students with the tools and resources necessary to improve their standard of living. Participants indicated that one of the essential factors the government can consider when addressing the development of the labour market policy is the establishment of entrepreneurship programmes in TVET. This will allow students to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in today's competitive environment. Unfortunately, the lack of opportunities for entrepreneurs in the country has caused many people to lose their jobs. This is the reason why the government and the private sector must work together to ensure that the country's youth can become self-employed (Mr Khaiseb). Findings from the in-depth interviews are depicted in the following comments.

Mr Khaiseb stated that TVET can respond to the global economy, as it empowers individuals with the skills to create their own businesses. This is what he said:

Okay, number one, equip Namibians students for entrepreneurship. Because employment, like look at what happened with COVID. There were so many retrenchments, they laid off, companies closing and all those things. And then it creates unemployment obviously results into poverty, results into increasing crime and those negative things. So but if we focus as a country on building the capacity of our Namibians to become self-employed, entrepreneurs, then there will always be an opportunity for sustainable economic growth

Ms Maria, a TVET Manager, believes that TVET can be the future; Namibia only needs to perfect its TVET system for it to be able to address future challenges. According to her:

The value of TVET is known. Our country's in the hands of the TVET, if we perfect our system, we will also be addressing a lot of future challenges, especially the employment will be addressed by the proper developed TVET system.

Mr Orange, who employs TVET graduates, echoed the same sentiment as Ms Maria.

There is no doubt that TVET can address many social challenges, but Namibia needs to work on its system, especially its technology.

I think first need to start by understanding what are the economic shifts? For instance, now, one of the key drivers in terms of economic growth is technology. Namibia still, play catching up. We do not have that drive to say let's capitalise on opportunities that technology offers. We have ministries, we've got certain units there, we don't see the output they have, therefore it's for us it's irrelevant.

6.6.3 Perceptions on the role of TVET on the future of education and employment

The theme focused on the future of TVET in relation to employment. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) VTC can provide employment pathways for those who want to pursue a technical or vocational education career. An adequately structured TVET system can lead Namibia to becoming a skilled nation. One of these is the scarcity of skills, according to Mr Orange, who is one of the employers of TVET graduates. The findings of the in-depth interviews are captured in the following comments:

Ms Maria, NTA TVET Manager #2:

TVET is the future. A proper TVET structure is the future for Namibia. And this is proven by all the countries which have managed to industrialize their markets. TVET trains people to be hands on, to do things with their own hands to do things the way they want them to be done.

Mr Orange, employer of TVET graduates:

I think as an engine of growth or as a potential engine of growth TVET can really be positioned to address a number of barriers and shortcomings in the industry.

Mr Khaiseb:

Well, as I have alluded on in the beginning, it has a great value. I also make reference to the developed countries, the fact that they are developed today It's not because of the academic and I'm not shooting down their

academic qualifications. But what I'm trying to say is that everything that is tangible physical, and visible, is as a result of TVET in one way.

6.6.4 Perceptions on improving the labour market

This theme focused on the development of TVET and the labour market policy to provide students with the necessary tools and resources to improve their standard of living. The participants indicated that one of the essential factors the government can consider when addressing the development of the labour market policy is the establishment of entrepreneurship programs in TVET. This will allow students to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in today's competitive environment. Unfortunately, the lack of entrepreneurship opportunities in the country has caused many people to lose their jobs. This is the reason the government and the private sectors must work together to ensure that the country's youth can become self-employed (Mr. Khaiseb). Findings from the in-depth interviews are depicted in the following comments:

Mr. Khaiseb stated that TVET can respond to the global economy as it empowers individuals with the skills to create their own businesses. This is what he said:

"Okay, number one, equip Namibians students for entrepreneurship. Because employment, like look at what happened with COVID. There were so many retrenchments, they laid off, companies closing and all that things. And then it creates unemployment obviously results into poverty, results into increasing crime and those negative things. So but if we focus as a country on building the capacity of our Namibians to become self-employed, entrepreneurs, then there will always be an opportunity for sustainable economic growth"

Mrs. Maria, a TVET Manager, believes that TVET can be the future; Namibia only needs to perfect its TVET system for it to be able to address future challenges. According to her:

"The value of TVET is known. Our country's in the hands of the TVET, if we perfect our system, we will also be addressing a lot of future challenges, especially the employment will be addressed by the proper developed TVET system."

Mr. Orange, who employs TVET graduates, echoed the same sentiment as Mrs. Maria that there is no doubt that TVET can address many social challenges, but Namibia needs work on its system, especially its technology.

"I think first need to start by understanding what are the economic shifts? For instance, now, one of the key drivers in terms of economic growth is technology. Namibia still, play catching up. We do not have that drive to say let's capitalise on opportunities that technology offers. We have ministries, we've got certain units there, we don't see the output they have, therefore it's for us it's irrelevant."

The findings from the previous chapter (5) are supported by the finding in this present chapter. In light of the increasing level of youth unemployment in the country, stakeholders felt that TVET could be used to address such global and national challenges.

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter presented data emanating from the questions that were posed to various key stakeholders in Namibia to help explain and elaborate on the views and opinions expressed by the respondents to the survey. It has been found that some structural and cultural factors influence how TVET is perceived by its stakeholders. The data revealed that the TVET system, TVET curriculum design, TVET promotion and advocacy, and a lack of proper career guidance are the key structural conditions shaping stakeholder perceptions of TVET.

Apart from structural factors, I also found that there are cultural factors in the Namibian TVET context that shape how TVET is viewed by its stakeholders. Such examples include the stereotyping of TVET and those attending TVET institutions. The perception is that TVET is for those who are not academically inclined. Although the study found those structural and cultural challenges, it also reported some degree of agency, that stakeholders still perceive value in TVET and would recommend it to their children and family members.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the discussion of the findings will be explained in more detail in Chapter 7, which will discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical framework underpinning this study, and the reviewed literature. The conclusions drawn from the study findings will also be presented in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WAY STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE TVET IN NAMIBIA

7.1 Introduction

The Social Realism Theory espoused by Margaret Archer (1995, 1996, 2000) suggests analytical dualism as a methodology, which separates structure, culture, and agency for analytic purposes. In this chapter, I examine the structural and cultural factors responsible for the way stakeholders perceive TVET in Namibia. I attempt to separate the “people” from the “parts”, as in Archer’s dualism, with the intention of understanding how these two entities influence each other (Archer, 1995; 1996).

Stakeholders are treated as independent beings with powers and properties that are different from and exist independently of the structural and cultural system, they find themselves in. Thus, the aim is to examine how stakeholders in this study, as social agents and social actors (Archer, 1995, 1996) with powers of their own (agency), come to perceive TVET in Namibia.

First, I discuss the structural and cultural conditions that shape stakeholder perceptions of TVET. Then I discuss how stakeholder use their agency to either transform or reproduce the structural and cultural conditions that influence different stakeholder perceptions of TVET.

7.2 Structural conditions responsible for stakeholder perceptions of TVET

Carter and New (2004) argue that when human beings are born into pre-existing structures, they start to discover and create their own perceptions of the structures they are exposed to. The evidence from this study suggests that the structural conditions under which

the stakeholder find themselves influence how they perceive TVET. In this section, I discuss some of the features that form part of structure namely the structural conditions prevalent at national, school, and community level that yielded results in stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia. There was evidence in both the survey and interview data that the Namibian context in which the study participants operate produced structural conditions that influenced and conditioned their perceptions of TVET, to either reinforce the negative perceptions, or transform them.

I identified six key structures that can influence stakeholders' views of TVET in Namibia, namely the broad Namibian education system (7.2.1), inadequate career guidance for TVET (7.2.2), the influence of parents and teachers (7.2.3), the structure of the TVET subsector of the Namibian education system (7.2.4), the structure of the TVET curriculum design (7.2.5), and insufficient TVET advocacy, information and motivation (7.2.6). These are some of the structures that influence stakeholder actions on TVET adoption.

7.2.1 The Structure of the Namibian education system

The broader structure that emerged from the data that conditions and influences the views of stakeholder on TVET in the country is the nature of the Namibian education system. Through analysing the literature on the Namibian education system and drawing from my experience in both basic education and TVET, I discuss the structure of the system and how it influences stakeholder perceptions of TVET. I argue that the way the Namibian education system is structured contributes to perpetuating negative views about TVET. Data show that the way the Namibian educational system is structured influences the adoption of TVET in Namibia. Next, I highlight the structures identified from the data as conditioning the stakeholders to perceive TVET negatively.

7.2.1.1 The Focus on the academic stream rather than TVET, and a lack of clearly defined articulation

Key informants in this study indicated that the way the education system is set up focuses more on academic than vocational and technical education and training, thus creating misalignment. This was pointed out by a TVET graduate employer.

I think from a historical perspective; I think our education system is too theoretical. Meaning that the types of subjects that are presented on a secondary school level, many of what has been provided there becomes irrelevant, you know, goofing off in our work context. So really, there's a there's an, they say there's a need for streamlining subjects for instance, a subject like psychology, for instance, that you can only get at a university level if basics like that is already being addressed (Mr Orange, TVET graduate employer).

It was evident that the current system lacks clear learning pathways for students due to the lack of articulation within the formal education system. This was pointed out by the NTA TVET manager, among others:

in terms of aligning to have an education system that has clear learning pathways and articulated and only when you have that and then you have clearly defined outcomes, you know that when the person has completed this what do you expect this person to be able to do? So currently, like I mentioned, there's a bit of silos (Mr Hangula, NTA TVET Manager).

Several studies have also reported that Namibian TVET lacks certification that goes beyond the current level three certificates that are offered throughout the country (UNESCO, 2016). This was reported to be due to the persistent lack of trainers who can offer advanced courses and the legal framework that cannot accommodate higher-level studies in the vocational education system (Amukugo, 2017). Further, literature also revealed that there is a general deficiency of institutions that offer further training for engineers, technicians, and artisans who would then become trainers in vocational centres (Rauner & Maclean, 2008).

It was further found that there is a wide gap between the training institutions and industries that are meant to absorb TVET graduates (Akoojee, Gewer, & McGrath, 2005). Oftentimes, graduates are exposed to old systems of industry that do not match the prevailing global trends, and this affects the quality of both vocational training graduates and industrial output, leading to stagnancy or a downward spiral in the economy (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). As a result, there is a noticeable gap between academic and vocational institutions. They seem to compete rather than complement one another in creating and equipping graduates with skills that can improve the quality of their lives, society, and economy. This also explains the lack of connection between the two ministries as a structural condition shaping how TVET is viewed in the country, which is discussed in the next section.

Archer (1995; 1996) argues that agents have a point of contact with structure not only through the roles they occupy or assume but also through their situation or context, which can be either problematic or opportunistic. Although the stakeholders in this study reported being challenged by the lack of defined learning pathways and articulations, they used their roles to transform this structure, as discussed in Section on page 193

7.2.1.2 Lack of connection between the Ministry of Basic Education and the Ministry of Higher Education

A constraining structural challenge identified by stakeholders in this study was the lack of synergy between the two ministries. Participants in this study further raised concerns that there is a lack of connection between the two ministries that administer education in the country, namely the Ministry of Basic Education Art and Culture (MBEAC) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation (MHETI). For example, the study participants revealed that during the revision of the curriculum for basic education (RCBE), which was implemented in stages from 2015 until 2022, the entire process was handled by

MBEAC alone, without involving MHETI, and the departments responsible for the different education policies never came together to discuss issues of common interest during the reform. This extract is from an NTA TVET Manager:

I don't think there is a relationship between the two, in that and just to respond in simple terms. So the two ministries, they are working in silos, that's why you could also have been informed by the recent reform done by the basic education, you would notice that even the so called pre-vocational subjects does not really link to the formal TVET. So, and only until maybe the two ministries start working together and to have programs aligned to each other. But at the moment, it's not, each one they're doing on their own (Mr Hangula, NTA Manager).

This has raised numerous questions about how the various education policy and planning instruments are aligned, coordinated, and interpreted to meet the country's priorities (Tubaundule, 2014).

I therefore argue that the fact that the two ministries operate separately has resulted in a lack of formalised synergy in programme offerings since what is happening at the basic education level does not really translate or speak to what is happening at the higher education institutions. A notable challenge is that the Ministry of Basic Education reform introduced a basic pre-vocational stream for junior secondary school, which is good for articulation, but the TVET substream of the education system was not involved so they could make arrangements to accommodate the secondary school learners who are graduating from the basic education prevocational stream. As a result, there are no articulation pathways for these learners.

Besides the lack of articulation in the educational system, the documents I analysed also revealed that the new curriculum also requires resources for it to succeed; nothing is done to equip schools to accommodate vocational principles (Tubaundule, 2014; Amukugo, 2017). Schools are not adequately resourced due to budget cuts and the economic recession in

the country, and this also works against the objectives of the new curriculum. A Life Skills teacher mentioned this during the interview:

The thing is learners are not interested or discouraged. You see, the problem is that the new curriculum brought vocational subject; the government did not really do much to prepare the school to accommodate these subjects. This made the students not interested because there are more challenges there, there are no equipment and the teachers are also not comfortable, so it is difficult to guide the student to show interest in TVET as they do not see good example (Mrs Happy, Life Skills teacher).

Another life skills teacher mentioned the inadequate preparedness of the schools to accommodate the pre-vocational curriculum, resulting in challenges where learners do not perceive its value.

But the challenge is there is no money or budget due to the economy in the country. Parents are told to buy materials for training and it is expensive. Also another thing learner are not interested is that they are supposed to do job attachment but when and where it was not indicated. So, these are some of the things that discourage learners to do TVET (Mrs. Ndinela, Life Skills teacher).

To elaborate on this, the discussions with the national leader also reported similar concerns: this is the extract:

...But from secondary education, I suspect that some of these schools, which are implementing TVET programmes, may not have the necessary equipment to do these programmes. Also, they may not have the necessary qualified teachers or instructors to do these trainings, and that's why there is that perception from them with the quality of training and all sorts of excuses that the people that they provided you with I wouldn't be with them (Deputy Executive Director in MHETI).

Building on these extracts from the interviews, I agree that those structural challenges contributed to how TVET is perceived in the country and thus also explain why secondary school learners perceive TVET negatively (as presented in Chapter 5).

It is obvious from the above findings that there is more criticism than praise for the curriculum. For instance, it was revealed in this study that learners who are doing the basic

prevocational curriculum are supposed to be exposed to industrial attachment; however, it would seem that there is no guidance for schoolteachers and management on how this can be done, as there are no clear guidelines in the new prevocational integrated curriculum on the inclusion of a learnership or industrial attachment programme. As a result, these learners are not placed anywhere during the whole process. This is a structural challenge that has created a negative view of TVET as it has created problems for both learners and teachers, resulting in ineffective curriculum implementation.

Archer (1995) argues that structure has independent powers that exert influence on agents by constraining or enabling their actions in relation to their projects. In this case, the education system is influencing stakeholders to have negative views about TVET because of the way it is structured, such that it favours the academic stream and lacks articulation pathways, and the challenges of the new curriculum reform influenced the stakeholder participants to perceive TVET negatively.

7.2.2 Inadequate career guidance in secondary schools

A major constraining structural condition reported by learners and teachers in secondary schools was the lack of information on TVET that could be shared during career guidance lessons. The learners reported that they hardly hear information on TVET. Some teachers revealed that they learned about TVET just by observing the pre-vocational subjects taught to learners at the school where they teach. For example, one of the Life Skills teachers revealed this during the interview:

About vocational training, I don't really have much information except what I saw what learners do and when I visit the workshops, you'll see some learners are doing some of the wood work things and then you ask them some questions and then from there you start knowing what the learners are doing and then you look at that this subject is also helping the learners when they complete their school, they got skills and knowledge on

how to do it myself I had no knowledge about the subject (Mrs Happy, Life Skills teacher).

In Namibia, only a few selected schools offer basic prevocational subjects. Teachers at such schools could teach their learners about TVET, but what about those who are teaching at schools where such subjects are not offered? It would mean that the learners would not receive information from their teachers, and this is a structural challenge. To gain a better understanding of this issue, I had discussions with key stakeholders such as TVET managers responsible for TVET planning, employers, parents, EDs, and the Minister to hear their opinions and the reasoning behind this (as presented in the previous two chapters, 5 and 6).

All study participants expressed their views about the lack of proper career guidance offered to students, which in this case influences the uptake of TVET by learners. Stakeholders expressed their views on career guidance in schools, which they perceived as a structural barrier that prevents learners from choosing TVET. Stakeholders argued that if there was proper career guidance in schools, learners could have an interest in TVET because they would have information about the good it can do. They further explained that the reason why few learners take the TVET route is because there has been inadequate career guidance offered to learners, thus hindering them from choosing TVET.

The basic education curriculum requires teachers who are qualified in career guidance, yet this study has revealed that little is done to prepare teachers nationwide to implement career guidance. The literature reviewed in this study revealed that the degree to which career guidance and counseling services are mainstreamed in the teaching and learning processes will determine the success of this curriculum (Tubaundule, 2014). This suggests that teachers will be required to do more than just academic counseling. Learners across the country require good career guidance services to help them gain a greater understanding of the labour market and their future career prospects (ibid.). Also, learners need help

understanding their own strengths and weaknesses; what skills and competencies they have, and what they need to improve on. Therefore, career guidance needs to be strengthened for the current pre-vocational curriculum in Namibia to succeed.

According to Archer (2007), structures can condition the agents who interact with them. Through this interaction, some structures may be reproduced or transformed, depending on how these structural emergent properties and powers (SEPs) are activated. In this study, the inadequate pre- and in-service training for Life Skills teachers to teach career guidance and the lack of readily available information on TVET as a structure all shaped the responses and experiences of teachers, learners, and other stakeholders of TVET in the country.

Furthermore, Archer (2003) argues that human beings have the power to critically reflect on their social context and creatively redesign their social environment, its institutional or ideational configurations (p. 308). What was interesting is that the teachers in this study indicated that, although they were conditioned by these structures, they were still able to use their reflective powers to create projects and aspirations to improve the inadequate training and information on TVET structures. The teachers who participated in this study all indicated that they improvised when they did not have the required resources and engaged in discussions with the learners, thus delivering pedagogical lessons to transform some of the structural conditions. The TVET trainees also indicated that they engaged in internal conversation and used their reflective power by choosing to register in TVET.

7.2.3 The influence of parents and teachers

This section focuses on how the teachers and parents in this study, as social agents and social actors with powers of their own (agency), respond to the structural system within the TVET system and how these conditions contribute to either positive or negative perceptions of

TVET. Their responses to these circumstances (agency) are also explored. Parents and teachers have a strong influence on their children's education. Given the position they hold in the home and society; they have the power to decide where the children go to school. Thus, it is not surprising that parental influence came up as a major theme in the study. Archer (2000) explains that structure influences human action by shaping the conditions in which humans find themselves (see Chapter 3 for more details on this).

In the literature, the parent was perceived as being deciding factor, and this confirms what came out of the data, as indicated in the extract below from a Life Skills teacher who perceives parents as significant contributors to negative perceptions of TVET since they set standards for their children and do not want them to pursue vocational training. She also revealed that during their career guidance lessons, where learners have to choose the subjects that they want to pursue at secondary school, in instances where the learners had to choose the basic prevocational stream, some parents make calls to teachers, persuading them to allocate them subjects such as accounting and science:

so parents are also playing a major role in discouraging learners from taking vocational subjects, despite us trying to speak to them and guide them as to the benefits of taking vocational subjects, for example, design and tech, which is quite popular and organised. It's quite a well performed subject in our school. So the parents did not see it that way. They see it as a waste of time and would rather have their children taking subjects that are more academic (Ms Ndinlao, Life Skills teacher #2).

Although both the literature and the teachers who participated in this study indicated that parents were discouraging learners from taking the TVET route, Namibian parents who participated in this study challenged this widely held perception. Most parents indicated that they would not force their children to do something they did not want to do and that they would respect and support their children's decision. The evidence in this study shows that

parents take on the role of “literacy sponsors”, which Brandt (as cited in Namakula, 2021, p. 110) defines as

agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way.

Namibian parents reported that they provide support by researching and assisting their children in making informed decisions about their future careers.

Therefore, this study revealed contradictory findings, where career guidance teachers claimed that they were reluctant to discuss topics that encouraged learners to consider registering in the TVET stream since parents were opposed to it. The literature reviewed in this study also indicated that parents discouraged their children from pursuing TVET programmes due to the lack of social prestige associated with these programmes and the lower financial incentives compared to white collar jobs (Okae-Adjei, 2017; Aldossari, 2020; Aziz et al., 2020).

7.2.4 The structure of the TVET subsector of the Namibian education system

In Namibia, TVET is a sub-section within the Education system that falls under the custodianship of the Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation, while it is regulated and funded by the Namibia Training Authority (NTA). The findings of this study indicated that the way TVET is structured in Namibia can foster negative perceptions of TVET. The interview data revealed that stakeholders were not happy with the way TVET was structured. For example, stakeholders complained that the training offered in TVET hinders graduates from getting employed because they are deemed not skilled enough.

Then the graduates that are released from the VTCs, they are not yet on that level, they haven't been trained on that level to work on those vehicles. I don't know the reasons behind it. Maybe somebody will argue differently, but those are my views (Mr. Khaiseb).

Another stakeholder expressed the same concern. He said:

We are also very much aware that a system and, I'm referring now to VTCs, their focus is on building technical capabilities. But the missing link, in terms of in accordance with our experience, is to bring in the behavioural competency component. So the person can at least have the discipline to understand what the organisation is, understand the consequences of not doing certain things. And I think that that's important. That's what has always been the missing link (Mr. Orange).

Most of the stakeholders complained that the training offered in TVET was not of good quality (secondary school learners, TVET employers, graduates, and TVET Managers). This confirms the findings of previous studies that concluded that poor quality TVET education was a factor that contributed to negative perceptions of TVET (Mason, Mbambo, & Pillay, 2018; Mokochekanwa, Mahunu, & Pindiriri, 2016; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ngati, 2016). My contention is that for education to be perceived as quality, TVET institutions need to have well-trained and skilled lecturers and TVET instructors. This view was strongly supported by the literature (Woyo, 2013a; Eun, 2018; Wudneh, Seifu & Dagneu, 2022). The structural conditions that yield negative perceptions of TVET from the TVET sub-sector are discussed below.

7.2.4.1 Inconsistent admission requirements in TVET

The evidence in this study revealed that an important structural condition that shaped how stakeholders view TVET in the country was the fact that the admission requirements for TVET are lower than those required in other high-learning institutions, giving the impression that it is a career path for failures. Life skills teachers also indicate that learners do not want to associate themselves with TVET due to this perception. In particular, this was reported by two Life Skills teachers and a few other stakeholders, as discussed in Chapter 6. One teacher said:

I also know that there's a stigma specifically coming from the school that we come from, there is a stigma around vocational training as it is associated with grade 12 failure or grade 11 failure now, and a lot of the learners feel like if they end up in that field, or applying for that field, that they are not successful (Ms. Ndinela, Life Skills teacher).

In addition, another Life Skills teacher, Mrs Happy, also expressed the same concern that learners are reluctant to apply to TVET due to low requirements and teachers discouraging them from going to register at TVET.

...because learners they have this tendency that if want to go to vocational training ...it like for inferior or one did not either pass well, and then it now It comes with an interest if the interest does not matter. If you have 40 points or whatever, and then you have interest to do vocational you can go to vocational. It whereby some teachers or parents discourage learners not to go to vocational, because they said it is for those who do not pass well and all (Mrs. Happy, Life Skills teacher).

Although some stakeholders indicated that the lower enrolment requirements cause negative perceptions of TVET, parents expressed a similar concern, but the difference was that they want the requirements changed since the current admission requirements create barriers for their children. Given these challenges, my view is that the lack of formalised, standardised requirements creates negative perceptions of TVET in the country. This has been echoed by many researchers from various countries and contexts (Aldossari, 2020; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ngure, 2015; Pangantihon & Pidor, 2019; Russo, Serafini & Raineri, 2019) who unequivocally argue that negative perceptions about TVET are fuelled by low requirements for admission into TVET programmes.

7.2.4.2 Neglect of informal and non-formal training

The findings of this study revealed a variety of constraining and enabling factors regarding the TVET system. For example, stakeholders revealed that the current TVET system mainly focuses on formal training, while neglecting other forms of learning such as

informal and nonformal education, including adult education. In particular, a NTA TVET manager reported.

People are also not happy because the current TVET system mainly focus on formal training, while neglecting other forms of learning such as informal and non-formal education including adult education, when it comes to the employers, we have really introduced Recognition of Prior Learning but really I think employees are not happy because they are still not promoted as it lacked stem subjects, so we still need to improve from NTA side (Mr. Hangula, NTA Manager).

The stakeholders that participated in this study complained that there is limited advocacy and information on the available opportunities. That is why the TVET system has been criticised for not being able to attract unemployed youth to skills development and for rarely disseminating the information to youth regarding the available training and skills tests such as RPL. The literature revealed that most skilled workers were not aware of the existence of RPL and apprenticeship programmes in some countries such as Nepal (Baral, 2020).

This further led to employers losing trust in the system. Another study participant, the deputy executive director of the Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation, expressed that there is limited access to opportunities for people who acquired skills in informal settings.

...We have a serious challenge for people that have acquired competence in our set up the same Namibia, the community understanding and perception in people is that everybody must go to the university, we only looked at one way or form of learning. There are three forms of formal, informal and non-formal, but what is being recognised mostly here is formal, if you do not have a degree you cannot be seen, as you know (Deputy executive director MHETI)

The Namibia Training Authority, which regulates TVET in the country, introduced the formal recognition of prior learning and certification of informal skills acquired through RPL. The findings of this study reveal that, although there are such opportunities, there is still

dissatisfaction and complaints that, although informal workers are finally recognised for the skills they possess, such recognition is superficial, as they are not still considered for promotions and are discriminated against because they are RPL candidates. A government official indicated:

But we have people that have acquired competencies through informal learning and yet these people could not find their ways, those of you seen in the media you could find that there are even some of the gifted kids, somebody had invented the helicopter but that somebody does not have a formal qualification to enter the TVET, that somebody could be given an opportunity for development. When are we going to reach the objectives of the Vision 2030, knowledge based economy and industrialised country and the growth at home strategy. So we, in one way we drove ourselves, we create these challenges through our system. So what we need to do is to make sure that we address all these inefficiencies in the system (Minister of Higher Education Technology and Innovation).

This has also been confirmed in the literature; for example, a study conducted in Bangladesh points out that although Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was established in the context of educational expansion, it was primarily driven by exogenous actors who ultimately had little influence on its implementation and who did not take the central reservations of Bangladeshi key stakeholders vis-à-vis RPL seriously enough (Maurer & Morshed, 2022).

My analysis of the implementation of RPL in the country suggests that RPL contributed greatly to employees accessing TVET qualifications. However, the results of the interviews reveal that qualifications have limited social recognition and value in the job market. One employer of TVET graduates, for example, raised this concern.

I'm talking about the artisans, the apprenticeship and RPL programs, to deploy them to give them opportunities for growth, is one thing to go to school and get a qualification. It's something else for that person to have the opportunities to grow, and move the government's shift now towards vocational education and training. I think that is the right thing to do (Mr. Orange, TVET graduates employer).

This is contrary to the intent of the policy and has unfortunately contributed to negative perceptions of TVET.

7.2.4.3 Non-alignment of NQF levels between basic education and TVET on the NQF

Another important structure in the TVET system that emerged from the data as constraining the agents or stakeholders is the non-alignment of TVET qualifications with the Namibia Qualification Framework. A national leader indicated during the interview:

Here, I just want to single out, the reformed basic education curriculum made grade 11 as the formal admissions to TVET, but in terms of the NQF levels, grade 11 of NSSCO, is pitched at NQF Level three, now makes it very difficult, when a graduate from the basic education comes to TVET. So there is no such a situation, there's no such an articulation, articulation is vertical down it should be vertical up and horizontal. So now you're coming from level three, down to level one. You know, it creates perception to say TVET is, just, it's nothing. So that's what we need to rectify this elephant in the room (Deputy Executive Director, MHETI).

In addition, the same concern was also highlighted about grades 9 and 11, which are offered at levels 2 and 3 of the NQF, creating structural challenges that may have led secondary learners to negatively perceive TVET as being of lower status.

Just to highlight for you, if you look, in the NQA Framework, and then the NQF levels, you will see grade 9 is pitched at NQF level 2, and grade 11 at NQF L3 and it goes on, to me is very higher. The TVET qualification L1 is at NQF L1. So that what disadvantaging TVET, because these kids, when they're coming from, basic education, they found that no, they cannot come down here, this is a low level, you know, low class, they need to go to the universities (Acting CEO of NTA, Mr Ndjoze).

Stakeholders indicated that they are challenged by the fact that there is no clear indication of TVET qualification in the framework and that the TVET certificates issued to graduates are national vocational certificates, which confine the graduates' employment opportunities to within the country only:

if you look at our Framework, So that's one of the significant challenges. Look at our framework, is our framework that we have in the country certificates are from level one to level eight. And diplomas are from five to eight. And then of course, we have the master level nine, and then the level 10. So on the framework there are only those dots that represent TVET unit standard but they are not clear to anybody else to say what is that exactly mean? So that's why there is a need to come up with clear pathways, within the framework (Mr Hangula).

Archer (2007) holds that people have very little control over the structures that they are born into; however, they have the power of reflexivity, where they can engage in internal conversation to transform or reproduce the structural system they were born into. In my view, the lack of TVET qualification on the qualification framework is a major structural challenge, since the graduates have no control over it. When interviewed for this study, the Minister of Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation said:

I'll tell you that the government, through NTA in the Ministry of Higher Education, we are doing all we can to align our training to the needs of industry. But we are not meeting the needs of industry. Number one, our industry is very, very small and they are specific in terms of the skills they require. Our training landscape, we are training for the globe, because we don't want to limit our trainees to say if you graduate here or wherever you can only operate and function in Namibia. (Minister of Higher Education Technology and Innovation).

Based on the indications, it is evident that although the Namibia TVET curriculum is meant to train for the world, the certificates given to graduates paint a different picture because they restrict graduates to employment within the country only. Therefore, it is necessary to align the NQF with SADC for the free mobility of candidates and the export of skills. The literature also indicated that difficulties with the recognition of TVET qualifications within the government's framework proved difficult and contributed to the negative perceptions of TVET by stakeholders (Ngati, 2016; Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018).

7.2.4.4 A fragmented TVET system with hybrid programme offerings

The Namibia TVET system is also said to be fragmented, with hybrid programming offerings. Evidence shows that stakeholders are confused about different training approaches used in the country, as, for example, this extract from the interview with stakeholders revealed.

you have CBET here, you have what and what in the end, it's confusing. So we need to make sure that we adopt CBET as the national TVET system in the country (Deputy Executive Director, MHETI).

Additionally, TVET graduates' employers believe that when TVET graduates leave TVET institutions, their skills are obsolete due to trends in the industry. Things are happening fast, and technology is evolving every day.

The literature reviewed in this study revealed that training providers are seen to be producing the same skills over and over, creating a duplication of skills in the industry and not responding to industry needs. This was another structural mechanism that generated constraining conditions and thereby influenced and shaped negative perceptions about TVET in the country. Stakeholders revealed that there is no coordination in the programme offerings, resulting in duplication of skills in the labour market.

In addition to the skill mismatch, Namibian stakeholders also revealed another important structure that allows negative perceptions of TVET, which is caused by the Competency Basic Education Training (CBET) approach or paradigm used in the TVET sector in Namibia.

The stakeholders expressed concern that there is a misalignment between the CBET TVET qualifications and industry job titles. A TVET Manager from NTA expressed this concern:

There's nonalignment of TVET qualification to industry exit occupational titles. What we mean here of course from our CBET we make it like, you can exist at any point, and can enter at any point but the challenge is when a trainee decides to exit at level two, and he want to go for a job in the job market. Does he have a job position there? That's where the challenge is, the industries are finding it very difficult, because these people are not fully competent, so we need to redefine our essence of purpose, to be more responsive and in line with the professional job titles in a specific sector (Mr Hangula a TVET Manager at NTA).

The same concern has been raised in the literature, where it was also attributed to a poor link between TVET and industry and/or a weak partnership between industries and TVET institutions, resulting in a mismatch of skills, where what is produced does not address what is required in the labour market (Andjira, 2014; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ngati, 2016; Mason, Mbambo, & Pillay, 2018).

Another structural condition influencing stakeholders to perceive TVET negatively was the lack of articulation learning pathways within the TVET education system. The TVET system in particular is criticised for the lack of clearly defined pathways and articulations. Furthermore, this study found that there is a lack of standardised TVET Community Skills Development Programmes in the country, such as COSDECs, KAYEC and MSYNS. Each is training resulting in graduates suffering due to the non-alignment of articulation between these community skills and mainstream TVET and between TVET and Higher Education. The extract below revealed the following.

...There is no articulation, between basic education to TVET and from community skills to mainstream TVET and from TVET to higher education, that's it, that's a reality, there is no articulations. And that's the reason that's we have graduates suffering without knowing where to go since there is a need to make sure that the parent, and anybody is aware of when my child moves from one point to another like from Kayec to Valombola or Windhoek VTC. And if you took a wrong course, or register in the program that you're not interested, you can be able to divert and go to other program (Mr Hangula, NTA TVET Manager).

In addition, it was found that TVET graduates suffer when they want to enrol in higher learning institutions with their TVET certificates or diploma, since they are asked to produce their Grade 12 leaving certificate with 25 points or more.

If you have been studying at VTCs and want to go and do the bachelor's then you are asked, they will be told, No, no, no, we don't recognise this. They want you produce your grade 12 secondary certification with Maximum or more than 25 points, it is defeating the purpose of our education system (, Deputy ED in MHETI).

From the extracts of the interviews, it could be seen that the stakeholders indicate a structural challenge caused by the lack of articulation from community skills development to formal TVET. This influences stakeholders to view TVET negatively because it prevents skills development graduates from progressing to the next level at public VTCs. Both the literature review and interviews with stakeholders revealed that a lack of horizontal and vertical articulations between TVET and other components and segments of the education system hampers the vision of lifelong learning (Haileselassie, 2002; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ngati, 2016).

7.2.5 The structure of the TVET curriculum design

The findings of this study indicated that the TVET curriculum design shapes stakeholder perceptions of TVET. Some stakeholders were concerned that the TVET curriculum is out-dated and does not provide the skills that the country currently needs. Stakeholders also raised concerns that the time it takes to review the curriculum results in TVET producing graduates with skills that do not match current industrial needs. Employers of TVET graduates further confirmed the view stated in some of the literature that the TVET curriculum lacks the behavioural competency component and does not address industry needs (Atari & McKague, 2015; Ndiwu, 2015; Ngati, 2016).

It seems that although industry experts are asked to develop the standards, the curriculum is not being reviewed often enough, and therefore the graduates produced need to be retrained and reskilled to meet the current industry needs. This suggests that there is a need to reconsider the time it takes to review the TVET curriculum so that it aligns with industry needs. As it is currently, stakeholders are not happy, and employers will not accommodate graduates unless they are from an apprenticeship programme where they were involved in the employee-mentoring process.

The study also showed that the current Namibian TVET system is being criticised for not producing graduates who possess the necessary technical and problem-solving skills. Employers of TVET graduates indicated that one of the key competencies for being a leader in the current setting is to have complex thinking, problem solving, and facilitation skills. The biggest challenge that stakeholders reported is that these skills are not provided at the school level and in TVET institutions. The study participants indicated that the misalignment is not only between the two ministries of education and the TVET sector, but also between the workplace, and that TVET needs to incorporate these competencies into the curriculum. Several studies have confirmed that the TVET curriculum does not cater for critical thinking and interpersonal skills, which are critical in the labour market (Andjira, 2014; Mason, Molale & Gomba, 2016; Mbambo, & Pillay, 2018; Ngati, 2016).

The data collected in this study indicates that although the majority of TVET stakeholders reported that there is a gap in the TVET curriculum in terms of soft skills and that graduates are not prepared to meet industry needs, the TVET trainees in this study expressed great satisfaction, suggesting a positive change in how TVET is perceived by its students in Namibia. TVET trainees who participated in this study and who were direct

recipients of TVET education at the time of this study reported satisfaction with TVET education and believed that their trainers were confident and skilled.

They also indicated satisfaction with the tools and equipment used. This challenges the literature, where a considerable number of studies indicated that TVET is frowned upon by students themselves because of training programmes that emphasise theory more than hands-on practical skills (Aziz et al., 2019; Mason, Polesel, 2010; Mokochekanwa, Mahunu, & Pindiriri, 2016; Mbambo & Pillay, 2018); TVET institutions that are poorly resourced; and outdated tools and equipment (Mokochekanwa, Mahunu, & Pindiriri, 2016).

Although TVET trainees in Namibia were confident, secondary school learners and other stakeholders expressed the need for improvement. The evidence from the interviews also indicates that stakeholders are also concerned about the type of training and assessment offered at the VTCs. These stakeholders reiterated some of the perceptions covered in previous studies, namely that trainers are not competent enough or lack the pedagogical skills to provide the necessary training (Ngati, 2016; Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018).

7.2.6 Insufficient TVET advocacy, information, and motivation

Most of the TVET trainees expressed satisfaction with TVET in the country, whereas secondary school learners expressed dissatisfaction, probably due to the lack of knowledge about TVET expressed by the study participants. Inadequate information on TVET created a barrier to accessing it, although TVET is foregrounded and prioritised in the country as a tool that could grow the economy, address the issues of unemployment, and thereby drive the country to an industrialised nation. Most of the stakeholders in this study, including students, teachers, and family members, expressed a lack of information about TVET. Teachers are supposed to distribute information about the importance of TVET in the country, but they

also confirmed that they did not have sufficient information on TVET, and that they were not trained or prepared to teach career guidance.

All study participants, including secondary school learners, teachers, parents, national leaders, and TVET managers, confirmed that there is insufficient promotion of TVET and that there is room for improvement. For example, the Minister indicated that:

You know, those are the things that must happen but as government, it is our responsibility also to make sure that the policies that we develop, really speak highly to promote TVET, you see, to promote TVET. So really, the onus is on all of us, policymakers being those at the governance level and also those who are the institutions heading the institutions and instructors themselves as well. We need to bombard the public with the goodness of TVET and we must showcase those who have excelled (Minister of Higher Education Training and Innovation).

My view is that the image of TVET has been bruised since the colonial era when skills provided by TVET were perceived as skills meant for slaves to satisfy their colonial masters and were therefore less important than white-collar jobs. This has been confirmed in the literature, where some scholars (Papier, Needham, & McBride, 2012; UNESCO, 2016) argue that in the South African context, the negative perceptions of TVET emanate from the long history of racial apartheid that excluded black Africans from professional studies.

Furthermore, in this study, I argue that if the country does not remedy this with robust campaigns that promote TVET, its image will continue to be perceived negatively. The lack of promotion also explains why many of the school learners and some stakeholders in the country perceive it negatively. The NTA LIVE YOUR PASSION programme, which was an initiative meant to change the perceptions of TVET in the country by showcasing graduates of TVET who are doing well in the industry, was a good initiative, and the majority of study participants confirmed this. However, they still raised concerns that it does not really reach

all audiences, especially people who live in rural areas and do not have television sets or access to the media.

Negative societal perceptions have also been acknowledged in the context of developed countries such as England (Atkins & Flint, 2015) and therefore, the findings of this study appear to be consistent with previous research and show the need for more policy and practical promotion of the TVET mode of education, as well as in dealing with negative perceptions by society.

7.3 Cultural conditions influencing stakeholder perceptions of TVET

In keeping with Archer's idea of culture and structure being different and therefore having separate powers to influence social reality. In this section, I discuss the cultural conditions that influence stakeholder perception of TVET in Namibia. By "cultural conditions", I mean the systems of meaning that people or communities subscribe to and which are expressed through discourses, language, forms of knowledge, rituals, traditions, and common-sense understandings of the social world and how it works (Archer, 1996, p. xviii). The results presented in Chapters 5 and 6 provided some insight into what is happening in Namibia regarding TVET education, including the structural and cultural conditions that may shape how TVET is viewed. These cultural properties include values, beliefs, and ideas about TVET that may influence the agents (participants/stakeholders).

Furthermore, as much as agents can be influenced by cultural and structural properties, Archer (2010) suggests that they can use their agential powers to negotiate their way around these conditions. In this study, agents could decide to participate in TVET and contribute positively despite various cultural conditions that emerged from the data from the previous chapters. Like structure, cultural conditions can also enable or constrain agents when they interact with structural conditions (Hakaala, 2014). The government relies on

TVET to carry out its planned agenda to address issues of unemployment and poverty eradication in the country (Josia, 2021; revised TVET policy, 2021). The data show that cultural properties influence how TVET is perceived. The next section focuses on the cultural properties contributing to how TVET is perceived and how they act as constraints or enablers for the stakeholders in their dealings with TVET.

7.3.1 The value and importance of TVET

Despite the identified structural conditions that have contributed to negative perceptions of TVET in the country, evidence in this study further shows that the dominant discourse among stakeholders in TVET is that of the value attached to TVET. The majority of study participants reported an understanding and a perception that TVET education is an important tool for global economic development, entrepreneurship, and job creation in the country. For example, the TVET trainees who participated in this study reported their positive perception of the importance and value of TVET (I explained this in detail in Chapter 5, Section 5.4.10.3 above; Factor 3: Perceived value of the TVET education system).

Furthermore, the 10 key informants and six parents who participated in the group discussion reported a positive perception regarding the value and importance of TVET in the country. A TVET manager indicated that the value of TVET is not questionable, but there is a need to have leaders in TVET with strategic thinking and a mind set to perfect the system if TVET is to realise the value attributed to it:

The value of TVET is known but we are moving at a snail's pace, then that is the concern. We know, the TVET we want, but we need strong leadership in TVET, those who can lead the path or the system to move, we need leaders who have a clear vision. Leaders who are saying in the next two years, we want to move from point A to point B, as opposed to the current status, as where we kind of, just continue with business as usual. And there's a bit of a frustration in the system now because I think most of the people in the system, whether inside or outside, they all see the value they

all see the good it can bring. But the action towards that it's a bit slow (Ms Maria NTA TVET Manager).

Another important discourse on the role of TVET is attributed to the role that TVET can play in addressing unemployment. This extract from the national leader, the deputy executive director in the MHETI:

You see, if you want to grow an economy, then you must invest in TVET and you must popularise that, so that you have people that make a choice to go into it. Now, if I can give you an example of what is happening out there in the First World Countries, the developed countries 70% of school leavers, prefer to go to TVET whereas 30% goes to make a way through the normal academic route. And it's because of the importance of TVET. If you go to a VTC and train as a plumber, you can immediately go into the business and employ other people.

Despite the values and admiration of TVET by its recipients (TVET Trainees), secondary school learners have different views. For example, many of the respondents (62%) argued that VTCs do not prepare students for employment opportunities (Mean = 2.81; D = 1.45) (Chapter 5 section 5.5.2 above).

The literature also confirms that national plans and agendas prioritise TVET as a vehicle that could drive the country to industrial growth while addressing poverty and unemployment (Hategekimana, 2014; Maunganidze et al., 2016; Shikalepo, 2019; Aldossari, 2020).

Two major cultural factors were identified in the data as contributing factors shaping how TVET is perceived in the country; these are TVET and global development (that included TVET and employment creation and TVET and skill development) and TVET and economic growth.

7.3.1.1 *TVET and global development*

According to Pezzoli and Howe (2001), globalisation encompasses cross-cutting transnational dynamics and sociocultural, economic, technological, and environmental interconnections or any combination of these. No nation is excluded from the rest of the world, and they engage with each other either knowingly or unknowingly. According to Singh (as cited in Pereira et. al., 2012), people do not need to be present to influence others. The ideas and expertise of people in other locales are present and influence the way of life of people without their physical presence in those places (ibid.).

In the data presentation chapters (5 and 6) I highlighted the value attached to TVET by secondary school learners, teachers, national leaders, and all stakeholders that participated in the study. The study found that stakeholders perceive TVET to be a vehicle that could address the global challenges. The extracts from the interview:

The value of TVET is known globally. Global countries are in the hands of the TVET, if we perfect our system, we will also be addressing a lot of future challenges, especially the employment will be addressed by the proper developed TVET system. (Mrs Maria TVET Manager).

In addition to Ms Maria, Mr Orange also expressed his views on the role that TVET has in addressing shortcomings in the global village.

I think as an engine of growth or as a potential engine of growth TVET can really be positioned to address a number of barriers and shortcomings in the world industry (Mr Orange, TVET graduate employer).

Other evidence was captured in the excerpt from the interview.

Well, as I have alluded on in the beginning, it has a great value. I also make reference to the developed countries, the fact that they are developed today It's not because of the academic and I'm not shooting down their academic qualifications (Mr Khaiseb).

The results showed that TVET is regarded an important contributor to global development.

According to Waks (as cited in Pereira, 2012, p. 75)

There is no greater context for educational change than that of globalisation, nor any grander way of conceptualising what educational change is about.

Pereira (2012) further elaborated that this statement points to the power that the global context has in influencing changes in education systems around the world. She argued further that to ignore the global world is to disregard important knowledge about what could be seen as either enabling or constraining educational change in different parts of the world (Pereira, 2012, p. 75).

Apart from global development, evidence from this study contributes to the widely held view that TVET is the vehicle that could create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the graduates. Contrary to VTCs providing poor quality education that affects the employment outcomes of graduates, a larger number of study participants report that in Namibia students are fully prepared by the TVET education system to start their own businesses and grow the economy, the Minister of Higher Education revealed.

I found vocational training important for the learners because they are giving skills whereby learners, they can create job. They can also employ others, not just go to rely in a certain company or relying in the government, but with the skill that they are getting, they can create their own job, they can come up with their own workshop.

Evidence from the data supporting the Minister was from the focus group discussions with parents.

So, there are times that you finish your vocational education, but then you don't get that certain job, which you have studied for. So, which is also good for you to start your own business which is way better than going to study for let me say nursing, and you don't get a job (FGD with parents).

This finding is supported by literature that showed that entrepreneurial preparedness is enhanced in the TVET education pathway due to its learning-by-doing approach (Beggs et al., 2008; Chen, Hsiao, Chang, Chou, Chen, & Shen, 2015). Many scholars (Gleeson & Keep, 2004; Goel, 2011; Gapultos, 2017) found that the presence of entrepreneurship education in vocational education has the propensity of leading to the opening of vibrant small businesses that are a pinnacle and indicator of economic development of a country.

These findings also show that the role of the vocational education system in Namibia is critical to the development of skills. In terms of perceived value, vocational education is crucial because it is an educational model that represents unique technical knowledge that learners will be able to use beyond the classroom. This study demonstrated the complex links that vocational education has with industry, the economy, labour market, and employment.

7.3.2 Economic discourse

Most of the study participants revealed that TVET has the ability to grow the country's economy. This has been identified as one of the enabling conditions that made the agents in this study perceive TVET positively. Stakeholders, as members of the global context, are reflective beings, and they have the ability to engage in self-reflection to see the value of TVET despite the cultural conditions. Although there is evidence that the value is tainted by the lack of a unified and coherent education structure in the country and the resulting challenges, this study found that stakeholders recognise its value in growing the economy and addressing poverty. The following extract reveals the perception of one TVET graduate employer about the economic importance of TVET.

Once you exit TVET than you can make money, there is no way only if you are lazy, that you say you cannot make income. And that's also what I'm telling our trainees apprentices, we may not absorb all of you, by employing you. But I'm telling you, if you can set out a board outside with a notice that says, qualified auto mechatronic trainee, I mean, graduate with

practical experience at Pupkewitz motors for five years working on these different vehicles, people will come and bring their vehicles and you will have bread on the table every day. So that's why I would say TVET pathway for Namibia is the way to go (Mr Khaiseb, TVET graduate Employer).

Another stakeholder reported the same sentiment about the role of TVET in growing the country's economy.

It's very important just to highlight from the outset that TVET plays a very, very important role in the Namibian economy, especially if you look at the historical composition of our economic structure. Our economic structure was a primary sector driven, probably still is, to a large extent, we're very weak, relatively weak secondary sector with t tourism sector, you know, the tertiary one, now, TVET plays a role in, in cross sectoral in, in all these phases or economic sectors that I've mentioned (Mr Orange).

The results of secondary school learners as respondents to the survey revealed that although learners have negative views about TVET, they still reported a positive perception of the role it can play in developing the economy of the country. For example, of the sample, 61% agreed that the TVET education system fully prepares learners to start their business and grow the economy. The overall mean score for this statement is (mean= 3.3; SD = 1.46).

Evidence from the data also further supported the claim:

Number one, TVET equip Namibians students for intrapreneurship. Because employment, like look at with what happened with COVID. There were so many retrenchments, they laid off, companies closing and all that things. And then it creates unemployment obviously results into poverty, results into increasing crime and those negative things. So, but if we focus as a country on building the capacity of our Namibians to become self-employed, entrepreneurs, then there will always be an opportunity for sustainable economic growth (Mr Khaiseb).

This was also evident in the literature, indicating that stakeholders recognise the link between technical vocational education and economic development. Some scholars have also reported that TVET is capable of providing the industry with the required skills to help graduates

generate income (Aldossari, 2020; Mandava & Gopanapalli, 2019; Molale & Gomba, 2016; Ndiwu, 2015; Pangantihon & Pidor, 2019; Pierre, 2012).

7.3.3 Demand for skilled workers

An important factor that influenced stakeholders to view TVET negatively in Namibia is its inability to produce appropriately skilled workers in response to industry needs. The dominant view that emerged from the data were that the Namibian TVET system is not meeting the demand for a skilled work force, which is one of the goals of the national development plans. A considerable number of studies reported that although TVET is prioritised by many countries to address the demand for a skilled workforce, TVET graduates do not seem to be meeting industry requirements. The TVET institutions must ensure that the education and skills they offer meet the expectations of learners and those of employers and industry, today and in the future (Maunganidze et al., 2016; Chinengundu & Hondonga, 2022).

The dominant discourse points to the skill mismatch that was mentioned earlier in this chapter as another reason why many graduates are not employed. Demand and supply are mismatched, and this results in TVET graduates struggling to find employment. The TVET graduates who participated in this study said that they were not happy and that the TVET graduates are not ready to work, and the employers spend time and money training them.

My view is that this could be the reason why employers are reluctant to recruit or give TVET graduates internship opportunities or full employment. Employers of TVET graduates, however, reported in the interview one cultural enabler; the newly introduced apprenticeship programme has brought about a positive shift, as employers are given time to mentor and train the apprentices.

This view was supported by NTA TVET managers and national leaders who also indicated that the apprenticeship programme is addressing the skills mismatch in the country (Mr Khaiseb and Anonymous).

7.3.4 TVET education stereotype

In this section, the cultural influences related to ideas, values, beliefs, and attitudes held by Namibian people are discussed. They are also conditions that influence the ability of TVET stakeholders to exercise their choice in dealing with TVET. When studying the data that emerged from this study, it was evident that there is tension between the cultural elements of Namibia's TVET system that have resulted in stereotypical views of TVET.

From my analysis of literature, in Namibia before independence, the kinds of skills and values inculcated through prescribed educational programmes were those of the colonial masters (Amukugo, 1998; Josua, et al., 2022). Colonial education inculcated Western cultural tastes and values among the colonised. The German education system that was introduced to Namibia was shaped by the assumptions that the Germans had about Namibians, in particular, the indigenous people. The intention of the education that missionaries offered to the indigenous people of Namibia was to serve the interests of German settlers (Hategekimana, 2014, p. 20). The TVET curriculum focused on subjects such as carpentry, bricklaying, and domestic sciences (Amukugo, 1998, p. 44).

The findings of this study indicate that, to date, the majority of Namibians are still influenced by this cultural condition, and it shapes how they view TVET in the country. Stereotypical perceptions emerged as an important factor in the study (see Chapters 5 and 6). This is an extract from an interview with a Life Skills teacher.

But I also know that there is a stigma specifically coming from the school that we come from, there is a stigma around vocational training as it is

associated with grade 12 failure or grade 11 failure now, and a lot of the learners feel like if they end up in that field, or applying for that field, that they are not successful (Ms Ndinela, Life Skills teacher).

Many Namibians, especially secondary school learners, still view TVET qualifications as a waste of time and TVET occupations as low skills, leading to menial jobs (findings are presented in Chapters 5 and 6). University education is considered a more attractive model of education. This cultural factor cements the long-held view that TVET education is inferior compared to university education (Woyo, 2013a; Atkins & Flint, 2015).

7.4 Stakeholder agency in dealing with conditions that shape their perceptions of TVET

This section is a continuation of the previous sections on the structural and cultural conditions that contribute to the perception of TVET in the country. The sections have been discussed separately in line with the theory that frames this study. According to Archer (as cited in Hakaala, 2014) agency indicates the ways in which people can exercise some sort of influence over their structural and cultural contexts by virtue of their social roles and positions, as well as their ability to activate their personal emergent properties and powers (PEPs) in those situations (p. 83). This section focuses on the evidence in the study, which shows how stakeholders used their agency to respond to the identified cultural and structural conditions. It further explores the decisions made by stakeholders to reproduce or transform these conditions. Finally, this section looks at the findings that depict instances where stakeholders acted in agreement with or contrary to the structural and structural conditions emerging from the TVET system in the country.

7.4.1 The agency of learners and trainees in TVET

This study reported findings from data collected from learners from selected secondary schools in Namibia and from TVET trainees from the state-owned vocational

training centres in the country as agents and actors. I was particularly interested to hear their opinions about TVET, whether they would choose to enroll in it (in case of the secondary school learners), and whether they would recommend it to the next person. The evidence from the study shows that while secondary school learners, or prospective TVET students, had negative views on TVET, TVET trainees reported positive perceptions about it. This was discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Archer (1995) posits that

while people may be enabled or constrained by the uneven way in which interests and resources may have been distributed due to sociocultural and historical circumstances, they have internal conversations and are able to use whatever cultural and material resources they have in creative ways by activating their personal emergent properties (PEPs) (p. 70).

Secondary school learners and TVET trainees are agents and social actors with the power to critically reflect on their social context. This study showed the different ways in which different social actors deal with structural and cultural conditions.

Although the TVET trainees reflected the influence of cultural conditions, for example, the view that TVET is for failures and dropouts, the data shows that TVET trainees made choices that were sometimes contradictory to the cultural conditions they were exposed to. Those cultural conditions did not deter them from seeing the good in TVET. Most reported that TVET provided them with entrepreneurial opportunities. On the other hand, the data revealed that secondary school learners did not show interest in enrolling in TVET despite the good they thought it could do. The majority indicated that they do not want to pursue qualifications in TVET. A massive turnaround strategy and robust information awareness campaigns are needed if the country is to achieve its goals.

7.4.2 Agency and the place of reflection for teachers

The data revealed the structural and cultural conditions that constrain teachers who teach career guidance, such as inadequate preparation to teach life skills and other teachers who discourage learners from pursuing TVET courses, among others. The findings of the study also show that teachers act as social actors and reflective beings who have internal conversations and design projects that enable them to provide Life Skills and career guidance, despite the prevailing structural and cultural conditions.

According to Archer (2007), human beings have the ability to come to ethical decisions and act according to those decisions even in the light of negative structural and cultural conditions. Even when the teachers indicated that they were constrained by the national education policy, a lack of information, and inadequate training, they nonetheless endeavoured to teach learners Life Skills and career guidance.

Further evidence from the study shows that Namibian Life Skills teachers regard teaching career guidance as an important element of their role in changing the lives of learners. This corresponds to the ideals espoused in curriculum policy and national education policies, in which career guidance is put forward to play a pivotal role in helping learners make informed decisions about their future careers.

7.4.3 Stakeholder perception on their role to recommend TVET

One of the salient points that emerged from this study is that although stakeholders as study participants revealed that they were constrained by a lack of information about TVET in the country, most of these stakeholders, as actors and social agents, expressed a general understanding of the value of TVET in the country. As one of the employers of TVET graduates who participated in the research put it, the role of TVET is:

To help this country to build capabilities and capacity, you know, to take this country to the next level, you would also realize that vision 2030 states that we would want to become an industrialised country, driven by our own human resources. And given historical reasons, we do lack in terms of skills and skills, also skewed, you know, in terms of what your average youngster believes in, in a white collar industry, they would want to go to universities and establish themselves. TVET, on the contrary, provides opportunities for those that are not aligned to those white, white collar industries or even the sectors to really provide an opportunity for them, you know, to become productive assets within a Namibian economy (Mr Orange, TVET Graduate Employer).

The extract above illustrates that Namibian TVET stakeholders are conditioned by the sociocultural system but not determined by it. This study confirmed Archer's (as cited in Pereira, 2012) assertion that people, as reflexive actors, choose what they like and dislike, what they agree with and disagree with, and what they prefer and do not prefer. The decisions of stakeholders are determined by the values, attitudes, and beliefs that they have developed through their life experiences (ibid.). My contention is that the TVET stakeholders, as actors in this study, have used their agential power because their decisions or actions can reinforce or transform existing structures and cultures.

It is evident that structural constraints such as the structure of TVET systems (not meeting the current demand of skills in the country, not sufficiently promoted and being stereotyped as a route designed for failures), TVET curriculum design (which is reported theoretical and lacked thinking and problem-solving skills) and the broad Namibian education system do not have total power to transform the actions of stakeholders but may only condition their actions. All stakeholders interviewed and surveyed in this study indicated a good understanding that TVET has the power to address the obstacles and socio-economic realities facing the country.

Another participant in the study explained his understanding of the role that TVET can play in the manufacturing sector.

Also, if you look at the manufacturing sector, for instance, you know, TVET could, I'm sure, already play an important role in terms of boosting manufacturing. Many, you know, the economic situation is, we import what we do not have and export what we don't use. So if we can have TVET ideally positioned, you know, to play that decisive role (Mr. Khaiseb).

The extract above shows the stakeholders' understanding of the role that TVET can play if it is properly positioned. In this study, obstacles and socioeconomic realities have been discussed, one of which is the dominance of imported skills. A study conducted in South Sudan reported similar findings, that their...

Market is dominated by foreign workers, tradespeople and retailers and market disparities brought on by wealth inequalities among South Sudanese communities (Atari & Mckague, 2015, p. 184).

Apart from the role that TVET can play in manufacturing, a study participant highlighted the role that TVET can also play in enhancing business sustainability by producing artisans and thereby eliminating the skills shortage. Employers of TVET graduates in particular expressed the view that there is a shortage of skills in their industry and that TVET could play a significant role in addressing that.

From a business perspective TVET plays a decisive role, a huge role. I would even want to say that TVET helps organisations like ours to enhance business sustainability by virtue of providing the skills we may not necessarily have. So, the awareness out there is yes, we cannot do without TVET, we cannot do without apprenticeship programmes, why am I saying that; is because if you look at the nature of our industries, we have skills scarcity in the industry, and one of the critical skills that we have identified as an employer are artisans. So TVET really can help our company, our organisation to grow by growing the skill sets, but also making sure that we are tapping, you know, from the opportunities that are out there (Mr Orange).

My analysis of the data reveals that despite the structural and cultural challenges identified in TVET in Namibia, stakeholders are aware of the potential role of TVET in the country's socioeconomic growth and development.

7.5 How structure, culture, and agency interact

The finding shows that social structure, cultural norms, and individual agency interact with each other to shape the way people perceive TVET. Archer's social realism theory framework provides a useful lens to understand the interaction of culture, structure, and agency in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). From Chapter 3, it is known that structure refers to the social institutions and organisations that shape our lives, such as the economy, government, education system, organisations and institutions that provide TVET, and the act, policies, and funding mechanisms that govern the provision of TVET.

Culture, on the other hand, refers to the shared beliefs, values, and norms that guide human behaviour, inform TVET practices, and shape the way people think and act. Agency, in this context, refers to the capacity of individuals to make choices and act within the TVET system. Overall, this study's findings reveal that stakeholders operate in an environment characterised by a set of structural and cultural conditions and that they have the power to exercise their agency to either perceive TVET positively or negatively. In this section, I discuss how these structural and cultural conditions interact and influence human agency, in this case TVET stakeholder perceptions, to either negatively or positively perceive TVET in Namibia. To understand the interaction of culture, structure, and agency in TVET, it is essential to examine each element in turn.

The interaction of these three elements in TVET is complex and multifaceted. Archer (1995) asserts that structure, culture, and agency have properties and the power to influence one another. They interact because we cannot say that structure influences agents or that agents influence structure and culture. Archer argues that these three elements are interconnected and

mutually reinforced. For example, social structures can shape cultural beliefs and norms, which in turn influence individual agency.

Similarly, an individual agency can challenge and reshape social structures and cultural norms. This dynamic interaction between structure, culture, and agency is what shapes and defines human behaviour. Because, as people, we cannot do away with structure and structure cannot do away with people, we create structures, and structure creates us. For example, if we look at the trends that are happening in the world, they do change our beliefs, they change our perception, they change our ideas, structure, and culture, and its people driving the change. So, for example, when structure interacts with cultural conditions, they generate properties that enable or constrain agents. On the one hand, the structure of TVET institutions and organisations can shape the cultural beliefs and norms that guide TVET practices. For example, this study revealed that the Namibia education system as a whole prioritises academic skills over technical and vocational skills, and this could shape the cultural norms and practices of the TVET stakeholder. The study further found that this, in turn, influenced the agency of individuals within the TVET system, as they may feel compelled to prioritise academic skills over technical and vocational skills.

Another typical example of the interactions of structural and cultural conditions that influenced agents to view TVET negatively is the colonial structure. The literature revealed that TVET skills were stereotyped during the colonial era as those meant to serve the colonial masters (Amukugo, 1998; Akoojee et.al., 2005). Henceforth, when this structural property interacts with the stakeholder cultural properties (ideas and beliefs), it seems to have generated a stereotypical belief toward TVET that TVET skills are less important and are meant for slaves. This seemed to have influenced some stakeholders to date, such as secondary school learners, to have a negative perception of TVET. I argue that the reason for

this is because of structural conditions such as a lack of TVET awareness and the lack of career guidance we discussed in the previous section as part of the reason why we are not seeing TVET taking centre stage in Namibia. So, when these structures interact with cultural conditions, they generate properties that can enable and constrain agents; for example, the lack of TVET Promotion can constrain agencies resulting in poor uptake of TVET.

The long-held cultural belief and ideas that emerged from the colonial era that TVET is for slaves (Hamukugo, 1998; Hategekimata, 2014; Gessler & Peters, 2020) that it is for failure (Mason, Mbambo & Pillay, 2018) could be the reason why stakeholders still hold negative attitudes towards it. Because the colonial education system does not hold it in high regard, as a university degree, regardless of whether graduates from universities are still unemployed (TVET Policy, 2021), it would seem people are still proud of having a university degree and vice versa.

All and above, it could be that those stereotypes are stemming from and shaped by the colonial era as a structure, and when they interact with the cultural beliefs of the stakeholders, they still do influence how those stakeholders view TVET, its institutions, TVET courses, and graduates from those. With such beliefs, they still see them as less, for underprivileged people, for poor people, or for failures. Furthermore, the education system as a whole, still places more value on white collar jobs instead of promoting TVET and showing the benefits of it, instead of looking at it as a dirty job for someone who wants to be a plumber, or a chef, because stakeholders still do not understand those kinds of jobs. They do not believe that people can make money as chefs or cooks. Therefore, it could be that the colonial era or the apartheid era shaped the views of the stakeholders and their perception of TVET in a negative way.

Second, cultural beliefs and norms can be shaped by the structure of TVET institutions and organisations. For example, my study revealed that there is a widespread worldwide belief that TVET, as a critical component of education systems, is seen as a vehicle that provides learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy (Aldossari, 2020; Shikalepo, 2019; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2018) This is true when looking through the lens of this study's finding. But the study had further revealed numerous structures, as mentioned in the previous section, that conditioned agents. When these structures interact with the cultural belief, such as the societal attitudes towards vocational education and training, the perceived status of vocational occupations, and the expectations of parents and employers, they generate properties that do not translate into the long-held belief that TVET is the vehicle or the answer that could address employment and transform the country's economy. This belief is on the national and international agenda (Chapter 1-2). What is actually happening, it would seem, is that this belief is not translating into what it should be.

Third, Archer (2003) emphasises the interplay between structure, culture, and agency in shaping human behaviour. The agency of individuals within the TVET system can also challenge and remodel the structure and culture of TVET. For example, despite the structural and cultural conditions in the TVET system, this study further reports finding that TVET learners prioritise technical and vocational skills and demand more emphasis on these skills within TVET institutions. Secondary school learners still report that although they indicated little interest to pursue a career in TVET, they do see its value. This challenges the existing cultural norms and practices in the Namibia context, including the stereotypical nature of TVET that it is for failures and the existing structural conditions emerging from the broader

education system (see Chapter 6). This, in turn, can lead to changes in the structure of TVET institutions and organisations.

Another typical finding from the study is individual agency, which (Archer, 2003) refers to the capacity of individuals to act and make choices in the context of social structure and cultural norms. In the context of this study, the individual agency includes the aspirations of stakeholders to see TVET as a catalyst for the development of economic and entrepreneurialism despite the available structural and cultural challenges. For example, learners have invested in projects to pursue or further their education. They internally reflect, or become reflexive, and make a decision to pursue TVET or to go for an academic route.

Given these influences from the structure and culture that I discussed, they can influence how they are going to pursue their project or further their education. Now they have these structures in place, such as the education system, which did not create clear articulation pathways, which did not have uniform admission requirements, and they have cultural properties such as TVET stereotypes, TVET quality, and TVET as inferior. These can either push them to engage in an internal conversation and decide that given what they have seen or heard from others, they are going to pursue an academic degree, or given what they have seen and the dedication they have shown, they will pursue TVET.

Fourth, the interaction of culture, structure, and agency in TVET is dynamic and constantly evolving. Understanding this interaction is crucial to developing effective TVET policies and practices that meet the needs of learners and the wider society. For example, policymakers may need to consider how changes in the structure of TVET institutions can shape cultural beliefs and norms, which, in turn, can influence the agency of individuals within the TVET system. For example, if the TVET education system in Namibia, which

seemed to have generated properties that constrain the agents changes, it would create an enablement that could also change the way stakeholders perceive it.

The interaction between social structure, cultural norms, and individual agency shapes the stakeholder perception of TVET. For example, if the social structure provides limited funding for TVET, the cultural norms perceive vocational occupations as less prestigious, and the individual agency lacks motivation and skills, the stakeholders may perceive TVET as a second-rate option. However, if the social structure provides adequate funding for TVET, cultural norms recognise the value of vocational occupations, and the individual agency is motivated and skilled, stakeholders can perceive TVET as a viable and attractive option.

The social realistic theoretical framework suggests that stakeholder perceptions of TVET is not fixed but can change over time. In this instance, the stakeholder perceptions of TVET may improve if the social structure changes to provide a unified TVET system; if there is a clear articulation pathway and a curriculum that is responsible to the needs of the employers in the industry, and if it is widely promoted and known for its importance to transform countries to a knowledge-based economy. Stakeholder perceptions may also improve if cultural norms shift to recognise the value of vocational occupations, and if individual agency develops more motivation and skills.

Finally, the interaction of culture, structure, and agency in TVET is shaped by broader social, economic, and political contexts. These contexts can create different structures, cultures, and agency dynamics, which can lead to different outcomes. For example, the cultural beliefs and norms of TVET educators and learners may differ in different countries or regions, and the structure of TVET institutions may be shaped by different economic and political systems. Understanding the context and the interplay between culture, structure, and

agency is crucial to developing effective TVET policies and practices that meet the needs of learners and the wider society.

7.6 Chapter summary

It appears that there is inconsistency within the cultural system and the structural systems of TVET in the country. The main structural conditions that emerged from the data, such as the broad educational system, contributed to the negative perceptions of TVET in the country, while the cultural systems conditioned stakeholders to perceive TVET positively. For example, the main structural challenges that contributed to the negative perceptions of TVET included how the broad education system, including how the TVET system in Namibia is structured. For instance, the focus on the academic stream rather than TVET, the lack of clearly defined articulation in both basic education and TVET, inconsistent admission requirements in TVET, the absence of TVET Qualifications on the Namibia Qualification Framework (NQF), the fragmented TVET system with hybrid programme offerings, the disregard for informal and non-formal training, and the TVET curriculum design, among other structural constraints that conditioned how TVET is perceived by the stakeholders.

In this chapter, I also discussed the cultural conditions that influence how TVET is perceived in the country. My contention is that these have perpetuated negative perceptions since the dominant dialogues among stakeholders pointed mainly to the importance of TVET. This study also discussed how stakeholders used their agency to transform the structural and cultural conditions to participate in TVET and to recommend it to others, as they saw its value in developing the country and creating business opportunities. The study has also shown that there is a need to promote TVET and its intended role in growing the country's economy, as articulated in the national agenda and strategies.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPLICATIONS FOR NAMIBIAN TVET SECTOR: POLICY, PRACTICE, THEORY, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 Summary of the study

In this final chapter, I integrate the presentation and discussions to respond to the research questions of the study and show how the data that emanate from the survey and interviews relate to the already existing perspectives on stakeholder perception of TVET in Namibia and beyond. It also supports the discussions in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, respectively. I also discussed the recommendations of this study in relation to the implementation of practices and policy.

First, I will present and synthesise the findings of the study as per each research sub-question, drawing out the key findings. Thereafter, I discuss the limitations of the study. Finally, I look at the contribution that this study has made to the field of TVET. Some recommendations for policy implementation, secondary school education, TVET curriculum planning, and suggestions for future research conclude the section.

The key finding of the study revealed that cultural and structural conditions determine the perceptions of stakeholders about technical and vocational education and training in Namibia, but they express agency in the making of career choices through the selection of post-school training institutions.

The use of social realism theory was useful in this study because it provided a lens to examine how the interplay of structure, culture, and agency shaped stakeholder perceptions

regarding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia. The study findings show that stakeholders operate in a context defined by a set of structural and cultural conditions that enable or constrain them. Stakeholders, on the other hand, are not passive actors who sit back and wait for things to happen to them because they have the ability to use their agency to positively or negatively perceive TVET. Similarly, individual agency can challenge and reshape the social structures and cultural norms that shape TVET. For example, in this study, social structures, such as education systems and the economy, can influence how TVET is structured in Namibia and hence shape stakeholder perceptions of TVET.

Using Archer's theory was also helpful to reveal that there are inconsistencies within the cultural system and the structural systems of the TVET system in the country. The main structural conditions that emerged from the data, such as the broad education system, contributed to the negative perceptions of TVET in the country. However, there were some cultural systems that conditioned stakeholders to perceive TVET positively. For example, the way the broad education system is structured includes the way the TVET system in Namibia is structured. For instance, the focus is on the academic stream rather than TVET, there is a lack of clearly defined articulation in both basic education and TVET, inconsistent admission requirements in TVET, absence of TVET Qualifications on the Namibia Qualification Framework (NQF), the fragmented TVET system with hybrid programme offerings, disregard for informal and non-formal training, and the lacking TVET curriculum design. All these factors count among other structural constraints that influence how TVET is perceived by stakeholders.

Much has been achieved in the areas of systemic redress, access, progression, quality, and transparency in the context of our National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which is

administered by the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA). The NQF serves as a single national framework for all qualifications and learning achievements. However, the framework falls short because it does not adequately provide clear articulation pathways for holders of the TVET qualifications registered on it. This study found that this has been a source of frustration, not only for the Ministry and the NTA, but especially for holders of national TVET qualifications, who, as a result, are held back in their desire for further education and job preparation.

Another major finding from this study is that the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Services currently runs training interventions aimed at training unemployed youth. At the community level, the Community Skills Development Foundation, as well as the Katutura Youth Enterprise Centre, offers training like that of the Youth Ministry but using a different curriculum. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture has reintroduced a TVET stream into schools for grades 8 to 11. The unfortunate reality is that due to the lack of a fit-for-purpose articulation framework, these graduates find it difficult to articulate into mainstream TVET; the NQF levels between Basic Education and TVET are not aligned with each other. For example, Grade 11, which is the formal admission requirement for formal TVET, is assigned at NQF Level 3. However, national TVET qualifications also begin at Level 1. I argue that this is problematic since the articulation can be either vertically upward, or horizontal. It cannot be vertically downward.

This study reveals that stakeholders believe that a responsive and industry relevant TVET sector is central in overturning our unemployment challenge, which is one of our biggest stumbling blocks towards a modern economy. The impact of unemployment and underemployment on the highly segmented Namibian labour market continues to impede our economic development as a country. Therefore, I argue that there is a need to address these

structural challenges if TVET has to be given the recognition for the role it is claimed to have.

Archer suggests the separation of structure and culture for analytical purposes. Keeping in line with this framework, I was also able to identify the cultural properties that may have influenced how TVET is perceived in the country. My contention is that these have perpetuated positive perceptions since the dominant dialogues among stakeholders were pointing mainly to the importance of TVET. Most of them had a good understanding of the value of TVET for global development, business opportunities, and employment creation.

Therefore, the important aspect that this study found is how stakeholders used their agency to transform the structural and cultural conditions to participate in TVET and to recommend it to others, as they saw its value in developing the country and creating business opportunities. It shows that there is a need to promote TVET and its intended role in the growth of the country's economy. This aspect is articulated in the national agenda and strategies, as discussed in Chapters 5-7.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Section (3.3), Archer puts emphasis on the importance of separating these three concepts during the analysis to understand the interplay between them (1995, 1996, 2003). Understanding the interplay between structure, culture, and agency helps to examine their powers and properties. In this study, the structure of TVET in Namibia, for example, is shaped by various factors, such as historical, political, and economic forces. For example, Namibia's colonial history I discussed in the previous chapter has influenced not just the education system but also the structure of TVET, which was initially designed to train indigenous people for manual labour rather than skilled occupations (Amukugo, 1998; Hategekimana, 2014). The current structure of TVET in Namibia is characterised by a centralised governance system (Gessler & Peters, 2020), limited resources, and a mismatch

between training programmes and labour market needs (Namibia TVET policy, 2021). This study revealed that the Namibia Education system as a structure prioritises mainstream academics over technical and vocational education, which shapes the stakeholder perceptions of TVET. When structural property interacts with cultural properties (ideas and beliefs), these create conditions that enable or constrain stakeholder agency, hence shaping how they respond. For example, how the structure of TVET training, which includes the curriculum for TVET, shapes stakeholders to perceive TVET negatively or positively.

As discussed throughout this study, agency is shaped by both structure and culture, but it can also challenge and change them. The stakeholder agency can shape their perceptions of TVET in Namibia by influencing their participation, engagement, and attitudes toward TVET. For example, students who have positive experience in TVET can become ambassadors and promote the value of vocational education to their peers and the broader community. This viewpoint is evident in this study because the findings show that despite the structural and cultural conditions in the TVET system, TVET students express a great value in TVET programmes and had high hopes that TVET will make their lives better. This is a positive shift in the Namibian education landscape. In the Archerian language, TVET students perceive TVET positively because they have a personal project which is to attain a TVET qualification. Due to their personal project, students engage in internal conversations and make the decision to pursue TVET qualifications rather than academic degrees.

Additionally, employers who recognise the benefits of skilled workers trained through TVET can become advocates for the system and support its development (Carter & New, 2004). The study reveals that cultural conditions such as lack of awareness and poor career guidance shape how parents, teachers, and students perceive TVET in Namibia. I argue that

these shapes how stakeholders perceive and use their agency either to challenge and reshape TVET norms, values, and practices.

The three concepts, as indicated in the previous paragraphs and chapters, have powers and properties that influence one another (Archer, 1995). Thus, this theory provides an analytical tool to understand the interaction between the three concepts and is important to understand how, for example, structures can enable or constrain agency by providing individuals such as students with opportunities or constraints.

Therefore, it is imperative to understand the interplay between them to examine how social reality is shaped (Archer, 2003). As shown in this study, stakeholders are not passive, but actively engage and challenge structures and culture to create change in TVET education. Through this engagement, they can make decisions regarding how they perceive TVET. Although I was able to identify the kind of structural conditions and cultural conditions in the stakeholders' context; the acts of agency to transform those were limited. There were only a few instances in which stakeholders went out of their way to challenge existing structural conditions, mostly from TVET trainees. However, they have indicated suggestions to address them, as I will discuss further in the recommendation section.

In conclusion, the interplay between these three concepts and how they influence one another highlights the power structures must constrain or enable agency and vice versa. This study acknowledges that stakeholders are not passive actors but can exercise their agency to perceive TVET positively or negatively. Examining the interaction between structure, culture, and agency provides a lens to understand how stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia are shaped. Since stakeholders do not operate in an environment defined by a set of structural and cultural conditions that either enable or constrain them, it is imperative to

understand the interplay between structure, culture, and agency to examine how social reality is shaped.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the analyses presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, the following recommendations are made.

8.2.1 Create robust awareness of TVET and enhance career guidance.

This study found that TVET is not promoted and there is little available information on TVET. This has an impact on the uptake of TVET by its prospects and, to a larger extent, by the people in the country. The study also found that the type of career guidance given to school leaving learners is not sufficient to enable them to make informed decisions about career choices. Therefore, to support the career aspirations of learners, career guidance should be strengthened in Namibian secondary schools. Learners can make subject choices that support educational programmes that can lead to the careers to which they aspire. There is also a need to train and prepare Life Skills teachers to enable them to improve their career guidance skills; they need these skills to expose learners to the diversity of careers in different economic sectors. As such, there is a need to increase TVET advocacy. This could be achieved by using religious and non-government organisations to deliver the message about vocational education on the grassroots, especially to those in remote rural locations.

I argue that the most influential people in the community are parents, Life Skills teachers, church leaders, and political regional constituency councilors. These are the groups of people who need to be mobilised to facilitate TVET awareness programmes in the community. These are people who have positions of authority and respect at home, in the village, and in the community. They are reliable sources of knowledge and wisdom for the

community. Therefore, to affect change at the grassroots level in favour of vocational education will require their concerted effort and cooperation.

8.2.2 Provide sufficient training tools and equipment for the basic prevocational curriculum in secondary schools

It was also revealed that the basic prevocational curriculum introduced in some selected secondary schools has faced challenges such as budget cuts, resulting in insufficient tools and equipment; for example, one school of the Omusati Education Directorate where this study was conducted, had only three sewing machines where learners had to practice both from Grade 8-12. It was also reported that learners are asked to buy garments to sew for the practical subject. Furthermore, the unpreparedness of teachers who teach such subjects is also a challenge. There is also an uncoordinated placement of learners for industrial exposure. I recommend that there is a need for role players to strengthen pre-vocational curriculum in schools by availing resources such as tools and equipment needed for practical training, upskill, or reskill teachers to be able to deliver prevocational subjects.

8.2.3 Provide a unified structure of education

The country's education system must provide a unified education structure with clearly defined vertical and horizontal learning pathways, articulation from basic education to higher education, and from TVET to higher institutions. This would address the current confusion of CBET qualification naming with the NQF level descriptors. It will also provide consistency with the Basic Education Reform Structure of 2015-2022 in terms of NQF levels.

8.2.4 Develop and publish entry requirements for TVET programmes.

Entry requirements should be standardised across the country. Parents who participated in this study also indicated the need to provide admission to the mainstream TVET for learners

who have not achieved Grade 11. This could be done through community Skills Development programmes such as COSDECs, KAYEC, and MSYNS.

8.2.5 Review the TVET curriculum regularly and address gaps to meet industry demands

The study found that VTCS graduates are perceived as lacking in terms of practical, critical thinking, and interpersonal attitudes. Additionally, new exit points for TVET need to be meaningful and consistent with industry occupational job titles.

The time it took to review the TVET curriculum was also one of the structural challenges revealed. TVET curricular practitioners should prioritise reviewing the TVET curriculum regularly, just to meet the need of employers that seems to be volatile.

8.3 Opportunities for future research

The emerging results of the study highlight the need for more research in the following areas.

Most of the reviewed studies looked at TVET perceptions through opinion expression. This study involved a wide range of stakeholders to investigate their views going beyond just opinions but went deeper to uncover the kind of conditions that contributed to the perceptions of the TVET of the stakeholders. The structural and cultural conditions in the Namibian context with properties that condition the stakeholder to view TVET positively or negatively. Although my study used many stakeholders, I noticed a gap in opinion from officials from the Ministry of Basic Education Art and Culture, such as the Regional Education Directors, school principals, and Senior Education Officers. They deal directly with the planning of education, such as the upskilling and training of teachers who teach the basic prevocational curriculum and career guidance. Therefore, more research involving them is needed to hear their views on the opinions of school learners of TVET in the country.

8.4 Limitations of the study

Archer (1995; 2004) states that the interaction of people through the structure and culture and parts results in morphogenesis or morphostasis (see Chapter 3). Although agency can result in structural and cultural elaboration or reproduction through its emergent properties and powers, this study cannot make confident conclusions that it is transformed or elaborated. I was unable to do this in this study as it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was characterised by lockdowns, which made it impossible for me to engage in direct discussions with secondary school learners and TVET trainees and ask them questions to uncover their agency. The kind of choices they would have made to transform or reproduce the structural or cultural conditions. Using Archer Analytic dualism during COVID 19 where in-contact research was prohibited to mitigate the risk of transmission. This was specifically difficult for trainees, learners, and parents who had no access to online platforms. Henceforth it was a bit of a challenge to explore an example where stakeholders, especially the learners and TVET trainees, would have used their agency to deal with the structural and cultural conditions to transform or reproduce them. This has presented a gap that could be addressed by future researchers to go and engage in discussions with school learners and see whether they will still choose to participate in TVET by enrolling in the VTCs apart from just recommending it to others.

My study sought to use government leaders such as ministers and EDs as well as parents, secondary school learners, and employers of TVET graduates. I faced a challenge in gaining access to some groups of stakeholders due to their busy schedules or sheer unwillingness to meet with a researcher. I was planning to interview the executive director of the Ministry of Basic Education, Art and Culture but was unable to do so. I also planned to conduct focus group interviews with parents at the four selected schools, but due to COVID-

19, this was not possible. Instead, I managed to do only one focus group interview. I also planned to do interviews with four Life Skills teachers, but one teacher did not consent. This study was carried out during the COVID-19 lockdowns, in which face-to-face research was halted. This, in turn, undermined my attempts to collect data from direct lesson observations.

8.5 Contribution to the body of knowledge

There is an extensive range of studies on stakeholder perceptions of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in developed countries and some developing African countries. In Namibia, few available studies on stakeholder perceptions of TVET institutions have been limited to those in receiving institutions (private sector employers, and government) and among graduates of those institutions. This is the first study on perceptions of TVET among TVET trainees and final year secondary school learners, and their career guidance/planning teachers from sending institutions (schools) who may or may not enroll in these TVET institutions in Namibia.

This study also adds to the body of knowledge in several ways. It identifies the structural and cultural conditions available in the Namibian context that influence the perception of TVET by its stakeholders in the country while providing an understanding of the prospects of TVET considering Archer's work on the structural conditions that shape attitudes among young people, especially those of school age. This extends beyond the specificities of Namibian conditions. It acknowledges that structure and agency are analytically and ontologically separate with distinctive causal powers in the form of structural emergent properties (SEP), personal emergent properties (PEP), and finally cultural emergent properties (CEP) capable of influencing each other. By focusing on the perceptions of the TVET stakeholder only, this undermines the role of structure/culture and agency in shaping these experiences and perceptions about TVET in Namibia.

This study particularly delinks structure and agency, or “culture and agency”, rather than sinking the difference between the “parts” (organisational or ideational) and the “people”, who hold the positions or ideas within them” (Archer, 1996: xiv). It is through the separation of structures and agency analytically as Archer suggests that one will be able to see how different structures, culture, and agency interact and notice the exceptional powers that each possesses. Therefore, this is where the analytical dualism fits in. It enables me to examine and understand what structures, culture, and agency influence each other and why.

Archer disagrees with any form of conflation (see the discussion in Chapter 3, Section **Error! Reference source not found.**) and thus for analytical purposes she favours the separation of structure, culture, and agency.

This study analyses the structure/culture and the stakeholder agency separately to understand the interaction between them. By engaging in such an analysis, I had the opportunity to understand what and why stakeholders have certain perceptions about TVET in Namibia. Employing this kind of analysis can contribute to a growing body of research on the perception of TVET by a stakeholder beyond the usual explanations offered in the literature.

Individual agency emerged as being important, with some participants exhibiting limited agency and others with greater agency. On occasion, it was only when a participant realised that a particular constraint stood between them and their project, which in turn put their ultimate concerns under threat, that the participant drew on their agency and the tasks required to assist them in achieving this project. A case of Life Skills teachers who navigated the constraints as posed by inadequate training as a structural condition to teacher career guidance, but still made plans to teach. Although agency was always needed to navigate structural or cultural conditions, it was not always required to navigate enablement.

Furthermore, although learning opportunities were readily available, accessing these required reflexivity and decision making about choices, given the dominant structural conditions that create constraints such as admission requirements that are not formalised and standardised, and a lack of available information and motivation about TVET in the country, as discussed in Chapter 7. This study shows that the discourse around secondary school learners not being prepared for higher education, not being motivated or interested, and not having the resilience required to be successful is not yet over. Therefore, my study has made some recommendations on how to address these.

This study will create awareness for major stakeholders such as government officials, school administrators, parents, teachers, students, and employers about the different perceptions and attitudes that currently exist in Namibia about TVET. This knowledge and awareness are necessary for these stakeholders, especially those at the policy-making level, to be able to make sound judgments and decisions about the future of vocational education and training in Namibia. The indicators show that this awareness is seriously lacking among secondary school students who may be TVET prospects, among employees who may register for an apprenticeship or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and among life skills teachers who teach career guidance in Namibia.

The results of the study can pave the way for more effective vocational education awareness programmes in Namibia. Strategies can be developed to improve stakeholder understanding and participation in vocational education at the school, village, and community level in Namibia.

8.6 Intellectual significance of the study

Despite the increasing interest in TVET, it is surprising that no empirical research has been recorded on stakeholder perceptions of TVET in Namibia, especially from the

perspectives of government leaders, secondary school learners & teachers, TVET trainees, and parents to identify and understand the factors that shape the views and opinions of TVET stakeholders. Given that this was the first empirical study of stakeholder perceptions of TVET, its findings will contribute significantly to understanding how TVET is perceived by its stakeholders and the public at large.

It is also hoped that the findings helped explain the reasons for the negative perceptions of TVETs and its institutions by the prospects of TVETs. As such, they can be a reference for informing education and training policies in Namibia. Third, it is also hoped that the findings of this study may highlight the need for robust marketing and community awareness of the role of TVET in the country's economic development.

Lastly, this study may also be of great academic importance, as its findings could fill the gaps by generating statistical and in-depth knowledge on how TVET is perceived in Namibia. The study contributes to the literature by providing an explanatory account on the structural, cultural, and agential level that contributed to the formulation of stakeholder perception of TVET.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Data Collection tools



The Questionnaire for TVET trainees



The Questionnaire for FI Secondary School Le

Appendix 2: Quantitative Outputs



Appendix for chapter 6.docx

Appendix 3: Qualitative Outputs



Appendixes for Chapter 5.docx

Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Approval



Ethical Clearance Approved 2022.pdf

Appendix 5: Permission letter



ERONGO REGION
Permission to condu

Appendix 6: Consent forms



Humanities_Electro Minors consent.pdf
nic Mr. Khaiseb.pdf



Sample parent consent for minors 1

