

# **Tourism Curriculum, a Contestation Space for Employability: A Case of Technical Vocational Education and Training**

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## **Abstract**

This paper evaluates the present NCV tourism program to see how well it meets the requirements of the tourism industry for employing graduates with this specific qualification. The study employed a qualitative research methodology and a case study research design. Following an interpretivist paradigm, emphasis was focused on understanding the individual participants' interpretations of the world. Tourism graduates who graduated between 2013 and 2017 were selected by systematic sampling. Four lecturers and two tourism industry employers were interviewed. Interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. The offered NCV Tourism Curriculum was evaluated to establish the degree of congruence between TVET Colleges and the industry. This research was underpinned by Dredge and Wattannacharoensil's knowledge of the tourism curriculum and the human capital theory, as the study also focuses on employability skills. To analyze the data, a thematic approach was applied. The results of the study revealed that the current curriculum for tourism programmes at TVET Colleges must be revised and aligned with industry needs. The study was concluded by recommending that graduates would need more experience and practical knowledge to be employable in the wider tourism labor market. The results authenticate that more relevant NCV tourism curricula are critically important to make the qualification of greater applicability to the South African tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Technical Vocational Education and Training colleges, tourism curriculum, tourism industry, employability.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

Various debates on the employability of local graduates attest to the fact that employment challenges in South Africa are a significant problem (Tripney & Hombrados,

2013). However, it appears that students and academics have become complacent with regard to ensuring that students are acquainted with the technical components of the tourism industry, resulting in less emphasis on promoting the skills that aid students upon entering the workforce (Mourshed et al., 2015). According to Tripney and Hombrados (2013), tourism graduates in South Africa are not appropriately equipped for the industry after they are employed. This is consistent with the researcher's observation that the tourist industry in connection to academia suffers from several deficiencies and employer frustrations over their prospective employees (tourism graduates). In addition, Tripney and Hombrados (2013) believe that despite the fact that the tourist skills shortages in this country are frequently discussed, the market still faces a serious scarcity of specialized skills, which makes it intrinsically difficult to attract expert talent.

Despite an increase in the number of students enrolled in tertiary education, Brauns (2013) asserts that employment is declining, adding that "employers want graduates who can do the job." It is the responsibility of TVET colleges and students to ensure they are prepared to bridge this gap. "The researcher's experiences align with Tripney and Hombrados (2013), who are of the view that the curricula at South African TVET colleges have not evolved at the same fast-paced rate as the tourism industry is evolving. Furthermore, Broeze (2015), argues that since many tourism qualifications are theory-driven, it is assumed that students will be able to link theory and practice effectively because tourism students often receive limited Work Based Experience (WBE) exposure that poses a problem regarding their understanding of the theory they have learnt. To this end, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET: 2013) in South Africa is encouraging research engagements which are aimed at reducing job shortages while Post-School Education and Training (PSET) is aiming at creating better cooperative liaison between academia and industry (DHET, 2017). This statement suggests that the National Department of Tourism (NDT) would help create new job opportunities in the tourism sector for students who have completed their studies depending on the standard of the curriculum and the minimum requirements set by the tourism industry itself.

This study focuses on the Level 4 tourism qualification (NCV Tourism) from Tshwane District, which is rated to be equivalent to Grade 12, and the employability of Level 4 graduates in the tourism industry. The study attempts to establish the skills gaps in the tourism industry in TVET colleges with the aim of informing training institutions and lecturers on emerging trends.

## **2. Literature Review**

There has been a perception that graduates from different training institutes in South Africa do not meet industry standards, and when such graduates seek job in the sector, the term "half-baked" is typically used to describe their viewpoint. Other scholars, such as Huang (2016), Duncan, Scott, and Baun et al. (2013), have recorded the same sentiments, suggesting that there is a need for the ongoing growth of training in the tourist business to fulfil the ever-changing needs of consumers.

Some tourism players suggest that educators should tailor-make their program to respond to specific job competencies, while others have suggested that students should be prepared for multitasking once employed.

### ***2.1 Comparative education from international perspectives***

For benchmarking purposes, it is usually advisable to understand how other countries are prospering and overcoming education-related obstacles. Hans (1955) argues further that it is pointless to transplant an educational method or invention from one national environment onto a different societal context for which it would be inappropriate. According to Wolhuter et al. (2007), comparative studies can be useful for education administrators and policymakers, in addition to being an important component of teacher training program.

#### ***The international context of Tourism VET***

Tourism qualifications in the countries under discussions differ from country to country, and their different educational systems are explained. These countries benefit from tourism industry participation and buy-in from their various tourism businesses to aid in the support and provision of practical experience for students pursuing a career in the tourism industry. According to Karmel (2008), the United States and Australia previously prioritized sending their postsecondary students to colleges, but this has switched to a greater emphasis on VET. Switzerland and Germany both offer a dual system of vocational education and training, which allows students to move between the classroom and the workplace and exposes them to practical knowledge that is invaluable in any tourism industry (Engelbrecht, 2017). In

addition, the Australian tourism sector defines the VET tourism certificates in order to align the content and curriculum with industry requirements. The United Kingdom focuses on their tourism industry requirements to ensure the tourism qualifications are in line with what the tourism industry requires. The VET system in South Africa is compared to these countries' VET systems and to consider possible improvements (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). The tourism industry is an important sector within the economy of every country and, therefore, plays an important role in the socio-economic development of each country.

#### ***Relation to the NCV (National Certificate Vocational) program and tourism in South Africa***

In South Africa, the VET tourism qualification is known as NCV (National Certificate Vocational), tourism and the institutions that offer these programs are called TVET colleges (Technical Vocational Education and Training). There are three types of VET systems globally, i.e., school-based education, a dual system and informal training (Eichhorst, Rodriguez-Planas, Schmid & Zimmerman, 2012). When looking at the link between NCV tourism in South Africa and VET tourism program in the United States, the United States and South Africa need to change their VET system to decrease their unemployment rate compared to that of European countries, which are currently using the dual system where students work for pay several days of the week and spend the rest of the time in the classroom (Goldstein, 2012). In South Africa there are other NCV program which follow the dual system, for example plumbing and electrical engineering, but this is not the case with the tourism program. When comparing the United States school-based enterprises with TVET colleges in South Africa, only the NCV hospitality program work in the college cafeteria as part of an introductory chef course (DHET, 2007). The United States focuses on sending their students to institutions of higher learning, while in South Africa due to the socio-economic situation; most students are not able to afford to attend institutions of higher learning (OECD, 2014).

In likening NCV in South Africa to VET in a country such as Switzerland, the following is apparent: Switzerland has dual-track VET program that allow students to do practical training for three to four days per week at the training company and then do

theoretical classes for one to two days per week. However, in South Africa, this system does not exist but rather a more theoretical approach (Educa.Swisseducation, 2013). The implementation of WBE in South Africa with regards to NCV tourism students now goes into the tourism

Industry but only for a ten-day period. This is not the case in Switzerland, where VET students attend inter-company courses in which they enhance vocational practical skills according to the specific industry they will be entering.

In comparing the South African NCV and the dual system in Germany, the following is evident: the dual system in Germany allows students to enter the world-of-work for a specific number of days per week and attend their VET school as well, and the same applies in Switzerland. According to DHET (2013), in South Africa there needs to be more participation from the various industries and the NSDS III needs to encourage the linking of skills development to career paths and development; promote sustainable employment and in-work progression; create a closer synergy between the world-of-work and our formal education system; establish and promote close links between employers and training institutions; and between both of these and the SETAs.

In Germany, most VET students participating in the dual system received permanent job offers from the companies for which they worked (BiBB, 2010). Therefore, the dual system of vocational training ensures targeted qualifications and support within the tourism industry (BiBB, 2010).

In South Africa, our youth unemployment rate is still remarkably high, whereas NCV is not a first choice of education in South Africa and is considered a low status qualification (SASSETA, 2013).

When comparing NCV in South Africa and VET in Australia, the following is evident: Australia has a national body, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), which is responsible for registering training organizations and accrediting courses (ASQA, 2014). In South Africa, SAQA manages the same tasks as ASQA in Australia. VET tourism qualifications in Australia provide practical training and industry placements are included in many of the courses (Hobsons, 2014).

The link to VET in the Netherlands, when comparing it to NCV in South Africa, is that in the Netherlands most students follow the vocational education pathway, but general education is viewed as a superior path (EQAVET, 2014). This is not the case in South Africa, where vocational education is seen as a low status qualification (SASSETA, 2013). In the Netherlands, work experience is compulsory to guarantee the appropriateness of the courses to industry practice (Cedefop, 2014). In South Africa, the various industries state that they cannot find enough candidates who are “ready to work” and who have the necessary “soft

Skills” (generic skills) needed to perform entry-level jobs (Harambee, 2015) and this is addressed in the NSDS III (DHET, 2013). In the South African VET secondary tourism education, NCV tourism is the course offered in one single system of tourism education, not designed by employers and educational providers but rather by government education departments (GDE, 2009).

In the United Kingdom the largest group of VET providers are further education colleges which include adult learners (Cedefop, 2005). Similarly, South African TVET

colleges are the main providers of VET, especially when looking at tourism VET program, called NCV Tourism (DHET, 2007). In South Africa, NCV tourism and most other VET programs offered at TVET colleges are on a full-time basis only, focusing mainly on general academic study (SAQA, 2003) but in the United Kingdom general academic is combined with vocational elements (Cedefop, 2013). South Africa needs the same at TVET colleges, with much more involvement from the tourism industry to ensure the qualifications are in line with industry requirements (DHET, 2013). In the United Kingdom there is good articulation from VET to higher education (Cedefop, 2013) unlike with TVET students in college X, Y and Z (DoE, 2009).

### ***Challenges facing NCV in South Africa***

Challenges facing NCV also affect the TVET college system. Some other key challenges pointed out relates to program wherein the curriculum is viewed of too high quality and difficult for students. Moreover, the imbalance between theory and practical inputs was another area called into question to mitigate such obstacles. Student and college challenges were perceived as problematic amongst others due to inadequate academic preparedness and lack of appropriate infrastructure to teach program. In an endeavor to ensure the requirements for TVET Colleges are met, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013), wants to set out strategies to improve the capacity of South Africa's post-school education and training systems. Such objectives appear to be aligned with those of Powell (2012) regarding the re-imagining of the purpose of further education and training.

### ***How does the NCV curriculum respond to employability?***

The NCV is basically a vocational curriculum for training skills into students and, subsequently, go into the employment world. It is an alternative route to employment and entrepreneurship. From the interviews conducted with the lecturers it was indicated that the

NCV Level 4 graduates still lacked the competent skills for the workplace and, hence, could not access employment.

The NCV programs are positioned for responding to skills demands in the South African economy through exposing students to high skills and knowledge (Umalusi). Unfortunately, there is no structure or system in place to coordinate the NCV graduates against the enrolment statistics in relation to government unemployment statistics.

To act on the skills development, the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) No. 27 of 1996 gave the Minister of Education the authority to set norms and standards on the National Certificate Vocational and the FET band. The Government Notice number 28677 (DoE, 2005) on the policy for the National Certificate Vocational notes that the NCV at L4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) enables students to acquire the knowledge, practical skills, competence and understanding necessary for employment. The NCV should be a curriculum for skills-building and empowering the graduates at Level 4 to be able to fit in the working environment of their career.

Due to lack of credible statistics for employment and self-employment, Work Based Experience (WBE) from Tshwane TVET College X, Y and Z had a limited number of students placed for employment and for self-employment, particularly for tourism and hospitality studies. This is further argued by Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath (2014) maintain that causes of unemployment in South Africa is due to poor economic base for the last three decades. For this reason, the researcher recommends for government intervention to partake

with all the stakeholders.

### ***Higher education and employability of students***

Stakeholders such as governments and employers expect higher education institutions to develop a variety of complex skills, because these skills raise the productive potential of graduates (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Another view is that it is the duty of higher education institutions to equip graduates with the knowledge and skills required by employers (Branine, 2008: 498) and to prepare them for workplace culture as it is often difficult for them to adjust (Harvey, 2005). In so doing these institutions will be fulfilling an important role of producing an appropriately trained workforce that meets the needs of employers (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). Due to this importance, there are on-going political and economic discussions pertaining to the role of higher education institutions about enhancement of graduate employability (Gracia, 2009).

The need to improve student employability clearly remains high on the priority list of higher education institutions (Allison *et al.*, 2002), i.e., higher education institutions in developed nations place employability remarkably high on their agenda and, as a result, students are more selective regarding course and institution choice (Rae, 2007). One such case is that in the United Kingdom employability of graduates forms a fundamental objective of higher education institutions and the debate is on the extent to which the curriculum should strive to improve graduates' employability (Cranmer, 2006).

In Australia, universities have taken different approaches to develop their students' employability skills (Precision Consultancy, 2007). Amongst others, academic staff is provided with relevant support and resources while the employability skills are integrated into the curriculum and course design. Furthermore, students are exposed to professional settings and provided with work placements, while simultaneously receiving advice and guidance through career services.

In South Africa, the North-West University included critical cross-field outcomes in their agricultural module program to improve employability of its graduates (Oladele *et al.*, 2013). Amongst others, this included problem-solving skills, creative thinking, teamwork, analytical ability and effective use of technology. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) outlined the competencies that South African graduates should possess (De Jager & Nassimbeni, 2005). It is expected of graduates to possess computer literacy skills, knowledge reconfiguration skills, teamwork, networking, information skills, problem-solving skills, mediation skills and social sensitivity.

### ***Views on the contribution of TVET colleges toward employability of graduates***

The quality of TVET colleges has been of great concern throughout the world because of its impact on the quality of graduates as espoused in the previous chapter. TVET colleges are seen by many as providing a highly skilled human resource or human capital that drives the economy for sustainable growth (World Bank, 2013; Schomburg & Teichler, 2011). Furthermore, any higher education institution is expected to contribute to economic growth or socio-economic betterment of individuals and by so doing, reduce social inequalities. According to Schomburg and Teichler (2011) and Forrier and Sels (2014), issues concerning the relationships between higher education and employment in the early 2000s resulted in major policy debates for research in Europe and the rest of the world. These concerns came

about as a result of growing mismatches between the increasing demands for qualified labour and the rapidly growing numbers of higher education graduates.

It is worth mentioning at this point that Aamodt and Havnes (2008) suggest that labour market influences may also affect the employability status of an individual and that it is not all about qualifications and competencies. They argue that if at one point there is a high demand for people in a certain field then more graduates, including those who lack employability skills, may obtain jobs, but if job prospects change then the employability skills of individuals will be critical. Therefore, employability goes beyond the point of being employed and having positive attributes and competencies presumed relevant to employment, but also includes labour market issues.

Ama (2010) argues that since over 70% of the graduates were in employment that matched their level of education, this is indicative of the quality and versatility of program. However, one may argue that not only were the programs of good quality but, rather, that it may be a question of the availability of jobs – especially as most were in the public service. Moreover, the study did not involve the employers, it focused only on the graduates. The employers' views on the employability of graduates were not captured. A similar scenario is reflected in the work study that argues that in the MENA countries most graduates are employed by government, irrespective of the skills they have (Salefi-Asfahami, 2010).

The aim of the study was again to establish the expectations of TVET students concerning higher education and employability; and whether institutions shared the same views as their students. According to the empirical data, most graduates tried to find jobs immediately on completion of their studies between 2012 and 2017, and they were not successful. Those who were successful in securing jobs immediately, were graduates of the more professionally oriented programs, such as Medicine and Engineering (Stats S.A, 2018), as opposed to humanities and arts-related programs and in relation to this study tourism studies are incorporated into these type of programs. Ultimately, the former professional programs could be more practical and skills-oriented, making them more intricately linked to labor market needs.

### ***TVET colleges responding to the needs of labour markets***

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an important skill-oriented education with the prospect of stimulating employability and national development.

TVET colleges are an important investment lever for economic development through their focus on developing skills for the labour market. Skills development is critical for absorbing the economically marginalized into vibrant, innovative and internationally competitive labour forces (UNESCO, 2012). Most business organizations and governments recognize that South Africa suffers from a shortage of skills, including skills within the tourism sectors. The World Competitiveness Yearbooks published by the international Institute for Management Development (IMD, 2018) ranked South Africa last out of the 58 countries for availability of skilled labour. With that said, it means there is a huge gap between labour force entry and the ability of the economy to create jobs for young unemployed people.

The apparent significant rise in graduate unemployment rates and its extent of emerging skills regarding the new graduate labour market entrants in terms of what they possess deviates from the skills that employers demand. For instance, these two areas that have received much attention are academic research and the media (Koen, 2006, & Branson, Hofmeyr, & Lam, 2014).

According to Kraak (2010), the review of the South African report on unemployment

amongst individuals with post-secondary qualifications is still attributed with skills mismatch. Furthermore, South Africa's existing skills shortages have adversely affected the employability and subsequent labour market prospects faced by tertiary-educated individuals to a greater extent than for any other education cohort.

### ***Employability amongst NCV tourism graduates from Tshwane TVET colleges***

This research study additionally seeks to establish the level of employment in the tourism industry for Level 4 NCV tourism graduates from TVET colleges. The findings obtained from the interviews conducted indicate that most students were not employed within the tourism industry. It was further revealed that few of those who are working are not employed in line with what they are qualified for. That may suggest that NCV tourism graduates may be lacking certain critical requirements that hinder them from entering the tourism job market. According to Akoobhai and Schindler (2016), who also conducted a research based on whether their participants were employed or not, also found that they were unemployed?

This concern of high unemployment propelled the researcher to find out what the industry must know, how the colleges could incorporate entrepreneurship in their college curriculum, and an understanding of what NCV is all about.

## **3. Entrepreneurship Trends in South Africa**

Like other countries entrepreneurship is fundamentally important towards economic growth and socio-political stability in South Africa (Fatoki, 2010). However, research has consistently indicated that South Africa is lagging on this front (Luiz & Mariotti, 2011). One such observation indicates that entrepreneurship activity in South Africa is comparatively low to entrepreneurial activities of other countries (Farrington, Venter, & Neethling, 2012). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report (GEM) on South Africa revealed that in 2012 South Africa's rate of entrepreneurial intentions decreased from the 2010 and 2011 rates (Turton & Herrington, 2012). For the period 2013 to 2016, the rates of entrepreneurial intentions amongst South Africans were significantly low in comparison to other efficiency-driven economies, which averaged 27% as illustrated in Table 3.1. Amongst others, fear of failure was cited as a contributing factor because of the 36% percent who identified an opportunity, 31% feared failure and only 10 percent had an intention to start their own business.

**Table 3.1:** *Entrepreneurial intentions in South Africa (2013–2016)*

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Indicated entrepreneurial intentions</b> |
|-------------|---|
| 2013        | 11%   |
| 2014        | 17%   |
| 2015        | 18%   |
| 2016        | 14%   |

**Source:** *Turton and Herrington (2017)*

Self-employment in South Africa is exacerbated by necessity and as a result, prospects for growth and job creation are low (Urban & Barreira, (2007). This is not surprising because unemployment in South Africa has been persistently at high levels and this pushes people into entrepreneurship for survival. In this way, the types of businesses that

people engage in are likely to be for survival. Against this background, entrepreneurship activity in South Africa is described as incredibly low and largely of poor quality (Viviers *et al.*, 2013) because it reflects a picture of underperformance as compared to countries at similar levels of development (Luiz & Mariotti, 2014).

Fatoki and Chindoga (2011) are of the view that low overall rate of entrepreneurial activity in South Africa is a consequence of low self-employment activity amongst young people. The findings revealed that there are many obstacles that inhibit entrepreneurship intentions of young people and graduates in South Africa, such as lack of financial resources, perceived lack of government support, lack of knowledge and weak market opportunities were mentioned as obstacles. This is a disturbing fact because young people constitute the highest percentage of those who are unemployed and from the empirical data collected in this study, it is also revealed that most graduates felt like having a program during their NCV training which exposes them to entrepreneurship skills. In all the TVET colleges where this study was conducted, none of them is offering any program related to entrepreneurial studies which should aim at equipping graduates with entrepreneurial skills. Despite the government of South Africa putting self-employment high on its agenda, self-employment intentions amongst students remain exceptionally low (Fatoki, 2010). To encourage self-employment amongst the youth in 2008 government launched the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) to improve entrepreneurship and reduce unemployment amongst the youth and graduate. Infusing entrepreneurship into vocational and technical education

To expedite economic development, vocational and technical education must incorporate an entrepreneurial mindset. In developing nations such as South Africa (SA), entrepreneurship education is believed to foster a favorable attitude toward self-employment or entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is not about generating business plans and launching new businesses; rather, it is about creativity, invention, and growth, a style of thinking and behaving that is applicable to many sectors of the economy and society (Volkman, Viviers, Van Eeden & Venter, 2012). According to Hynes and Richardson (2014), entrepreneurship education is more about entrepreneurship education programs that provide graduates with the knowledge and skills to engage in a more enterprising, innovative, and flexible manner in an ever-changing workplace context. The ideal method to accomplish this is to build an all-encompassing curriculum for cultivating the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship among graduates of TVET colleges and other institutions of higher education where vocational and technical education is taught. The necessity of entrepreneurship education must be supported by society, and it necessitates a reorientation of both students and instructors. This would assure the shattering of the myth that employment is preferable than self-employment. Students will obtain the essential skills and training, locate an opportunity to capitalise on, and ultimately establish their own business. The graph below illustrates how curriculum could be expanded to include a variety of skills such as employability, entrepreneurship, and competencies attained through TVET colleges.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The analysis of this research study was underpinned by the theories of Dredge *et al.* and Wattannacharoensil's knowledge of tourism curriculum and the tourism industry framework (Wattannacharoensil & Dredge *et al.*, 2008). According to this framework, both theorists recommends that tourism's historical development, its determinants and motivation issues, as well as marketing and future business management, should be amongst the inclusions for tourism. One interesting way of overcoming that barrier is proposed on a

theoretical basis by Muller (2009), as he postulates the creation of a so-called tourism studies “boss” whose task would be to synthesize the partial results coming from different disciplines. Until such time, the real dominance of interdisciplinary studies over multi-disciplinary studies will not be achieved. Informed by Wattananacharoensil’s framework, the study that will be reported in

this paper is premised on the notion that the tourism curriculum and the future business management should be amongst the inclusions for tourism.

The human capital theory was also used as a theoretical framework to underpin this study. The rationale for adopting the human capital theory as a theoretical framework was that the study is concerned with employability skills required by employers from TVET colleges for NCV tourism graduates entering the workplace. At the core of human capital theory is the idea that humans, and more precisely, their stock of knowledge and skills, are an important production factor. According to Van Loo and Rocco (2004) human capital is seen as an “investment in skills and knowledge”. Human capital can be defined as the stock of skills, knowledge, experiences and other characteristics that are relevant to job performance as well as determining salaries. In this context, Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu and Kochhar (2001) as well as Brooks and Nafukho (2004) argue that human capital is a manifestation of a person’s education, experience and identifiable skills which translate to increased productivity and earnings.

A key research question of this study is to determine how the NCV tourism curriculum is equipping students with the development of employability skills; and whether it is the responsibility of the education and training system, or whether it should be done outside the school system by families, or whether it should be done at the workplace. This is intricately linked to the question of the types of human capital and differences in the willingness to invest in themes.

### ***Research questions***

- What are the causes of the disjuncture of the NCV tourism curriculum, and the key skills required in the tourism industry?
- What can be done to improve the NCV tourism curriculum so that it addresses the needs of the tourism industry?

### ***Research methods***

The study assumed a qualitative research approach with a case study research design. An interpretivist paradigm was followed, with emphasis placed on understanding the individual participants and their interpretation of the world. The population in this study consisted of tourism graduates, lecturers, and tourism employers. Purposive sampling was used to select

6 tourism graduates who have completed their studies from the TVET colleges where this study took place, 4 tourism lecturers and eight tourism employers, who are in the Tshwane District. Data was collected through interviews and document analysis. The interviews were used to explore the perceptions of employers in the tourism industry on the work readiness of the NC(V) graduates, and the NC(V) graduates’ and the lecturers’ views on whether the type of training offered align to the needs of industry. The findings from document analysis were used to corroborate the findings in the interviews. Themes emerging from the responses were identified, analyzed, and later used to guide the discussion. Participants’ responses provided insight into their experiences. The data was collected with

open-ended questions that gave the respondents ample opportunity to share their views and opinions. The data collected was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

To achieve the objectives of the study, research sub-questions were formulated, and these supplied the main themes that guided the discussion. After transcription, the researchers used word repetitions to identify themes from participants' responses. A more formal analysis of word frequencies was done by generating a list of all the unique words in a text and counting the number of times each occurred. During this phase, researchers identified general themes, which were then broken into sub-themes that were manageable enough to assist in compiling a report. After the transcription and coding of the data, researchers solicited the views of an external person on the data analysis. This was aimed at intensifying the rigor and trustworthiness of the data analysis process.

## **5. Results**

The outcomes revealed that the NCV program is too academically focused, and that the curriculum still lags business practices. Furthermore, tourism program cannot sustain an academic approach when it should be vocational in nature and in its approach. The study of Gracia (2009) emphasise that importance of aligning curriculum offered in NCV programmes with the needs of industries in order to ensure the employability of students upon completion. Specific tourism industry requirements should be looked at when the curriculum review to ensure that this is a vocational qualification, which should be more workplace relevant (Loiz & Marriotti, 2011). This needs attention and updating because abandoning the NCV program entirely runs the risk of eroding any benefits and lessons learned since 2007.

There was also a common concern among role-players and tourism employers who acknowledged that the NCV tourism curriculum is outdated and needs to be revised. As indicated above, Gracia (2009) believe that poor alignment of curriculum offered with the industry results into economic crush. Therefore, without revising the curriculum graduates would not gain the appropriate knowledge and may not be employable in the tourism industry. At the core of human capital theory is the idea that humans, and more precisely, their stock of knowledge and skills, are an important production factor. According to Van Loo and Rocco (2004) human capital is seen as an "investment in skills and knowledge".

Supplemental to the results mentioned, the NDT included that the NCV tourism programme does not meet industry demands and that the review process (CATHSSETA and DHET) should focus on implementing more practical exposure and make work-integrated learning mandatory. Boden and Nadeva (2020) argue that Work Integrated Learning exposes learners to the actual work environment that improve their practical skills. Other comments regarding why the NCV tourism qualification is not in line with industry demands related to the time students spent in industry for NCV WBE it is only ten days, but the tourism industry prefers that students stay for three to six months to gain more practical experience. Reflection on what Human Capital Theory suggests, there is a need to increase more time for Work Integrated Learning in order to expose student to the work environment. Powel (2012) argue that during Work Integrated Learning, students are able to ask questions that are aimed at improving their practical skills. It also came out in this study that; other tourism organizations were not aware of what the NCV tourism qualification was. However, the inclusion of short periods of workplace exposure for NCV Level 4 Tourism students, through the SSACI/DHET WBE task book project has shown significant success. This was supplemented by Koen (2011) that the alignment of Tourism curriculum with the industry should start from

basic education in order to ensure strong entrepreneurial foundation among learners.

## 6. Conclusions

The study concluded that there is no alignment between the NCV tourism curriculum and the needs of the tourism industry. The study, furthermore, revealed that there was a failure on the part of lecturers to effectively translate the curriculum into classroom activities. This may be contributing to the production of graduates who do not possess all the skills needed by industry. The findings show that TVET colleges focus more on theoretical skills at the expense of practical skills. There are also relevant skills areas that are not included in the syllabi which can be addressed through a curriculum review. Enough resources need to be acquired in order to overcome the challenges that hinder skills development in tourism at TVET colleges.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings it is recommended that training institutions need to research, innovate, and equip graduates with skills and competence to work in the industry with the future in mind.

The following recommendations were made on the basis of the findings and conclusions derived from this study to provide TVET institutions, DHET and policy makers with guidelines on how the NC(V) tourism studies curriculum could be improved so that it becomes relevant to the needs of the hospitality industry and enhance the employability of the graduates in South Africa. The bulk of the recommendations emanated from the discussions with interviewees and have been summarized as follows.

- TVET lecturers will have to be trained so that they are able to implement any given vocational curriculum and to free themselves of traditional delivery practices.
- The simulated environments and workshops in TVET colleges should be upgraded to provide meaningful and up-to-date experience.
- TVET programs must be linked to the job market to enhance the employability of their students because partnerships bring about currency and relevance in the curriculum.
- TVET colleges should be mandated to incorporate WIL into the NC(V) tourism studies curriculum in order to promote student career development.
- The NC(V) tourism studies curriculum is not balanced, meaning that the quality of training has been discovered to be low, with undue emphasis on practical knowledge rather than on both theory and practice.

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