

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DROP-OUT RATE OF LEARNERS IN NATIONAL CERTIFICATES VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AT WEST COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

This report presents an investigation into the factors that contribute to the dropout rate of learners in the NCV programme at Westcol College. The study applied a qualitative method in which one campus was observed. Data was collected through interviews, detailed set of questions and documentary analysis. The research was based on the views articulated by at least ten respondents that comprised the following levels of employee's viz. Management, Educators, Programme manager, Administration head – Student Affairs and a Career Guidance person. The purpose of the interviews was to acquire the respondent's views on the factors contributing to the dropout rate of learners in the NCV programme at the college. Data was collected and analysed from the Department of Education Annual reports and documents addressing the Further Education and Training issues.

It is evident from the respondent's views that it is difficult to identify all these factors. The study established two key themes namely: Learner related factors and College performance related which were identified as the following: socio economic issues, for an example HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. Learners not academically prepared when accessing the college and end up not performing well. They end up bunking classes and being involved in drug abuse and learner pregnancy, which lead to the dropout in the college.

The wrong choice of programme by learners to satisfy their families and friends not choosing according to their potential, affects the college performance and theirs. The under qualified lecturers which are not committed to their job, the multi grade classes and the lack of educational resource are also a challenge in the FET sector.

DECLARATION

I declare that this Dissertation is submitted in fulfilment for the degree of Master of Management in Public and Development Management at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It is my own work and has not been submitted before for any degree at this or any other university.

Glory Mable Chiloane

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my late father “Daddy” Dr Rev. Molefi Seth Pitikoe who passed on in 2009. Above all things he taught us that, God the creator is the beginner and the finisher of our circumstances (Alpha and Omega) we must always trust unto Him.

He also taught us that in life there is only one thing that people cannot take away from you and that is education. He was prepared to educate us so that one day we can stand on our own when they have passed on with my mom. He taught us that “Perseverance is the mother of success” as long as we cannot lose focus of what we want to achieve in life, we will definitely reach our dreams.

May his soul rest in peace

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ABBREVIATIONS

FET	Further education and Training
NCV	National Certificate (Vocational)
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NATED	National Association for Tertiary Education for Deaf People
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
OBE	Outcome Based Education
DoE	Department of Education
RSA	Republic of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The Republic of South Africa is facing challenges regarding unemployment of youth and poverty because they do not have skills required by the local economy. The country has to find ways to deal with the majority of school leavers who do not qualify to enter into higher education institutions and the world of work, in order the challenges facing the education system (Nair, 2007: 94)

Different authors came up with the thought that, besides the needs of a large number of matriculants who failed and other learners who dropped out of school. There are also needs of other college students who drop out and the needs of unskilled adults at the work place taking all the above mentioned into account it is obvious that the country is experiencing a pressing need for developing skilled graduates.

In 1998 the Ministry of Education introduced the Further Education and Training band (FET) previously known as the technical vocational phase. It provides an opportunity to develop a proper intermediate structure between the school sector and the higher education sector, to cater for those who are not prepared at the school exit point and lower achievers.

In 2005 the FET the 152 Technical Colleges were merged into 50 FET Colleges, with each college comprising four to six sites of delivery known as campuses. The campuses are distributed across nine provinces in order to serve the rural, peri-urban and urban communities (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges 2009-2011).

In 2006 the Department of Education introduced the National Certificate (Vocational) that offers programmes of study in a variety of vocational fields. This resulted in colleges offering both theory and practice colleges. After completion of the 3 year qualification there are many exit options for learners to choose from. The National Certificate (Vocational) is offered at Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The aim of the study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the dropout rate of NCV students at the FET Colleges in Gauteng, the reason being that most students register at the colleges but they do not complete their studies within the stipulated period.

1.2 Background

Prior to the formation of Further Education and Training Colleges in South Africa there were 152 Technical Colleges. Then the Ministry of Education promulgated the FET Act 16 of 2006 as legislation in 2006 to address the development of intermediate to high level skills in accordance with the world – class standards of academic and technical quality. The scope of Further Education and Training Colleges is defined by the FET Act of 2006 (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges .2009-2011).

The FET colleges have developed, introduced and implemented the National Certificate Vocational (NCV). These study programmes must meet the individuals' aspirations together with the economic and social development needs of the country. They constitute the core business of the Gauteng FET Colleges and they are divided into four divisions namely:

Engineering studies, Business studies, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) studies and General/Utilities studies (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges .2009-2011).

The National Certificate Vocational has three Levels namely:

Level 2 – equivalent to grade 10

Level 3 – equivalent to grade 11

Level 4 – equivalent to grade 12

Some colleges offer NATED Programmes namely: N4, N5 and N6 qualifications which fall under the Higher Education Band, and they have an exit certification qualification. The course takes eighteen (18) months in order to acquire the certificate. The FET colleges also offer Learnerships together with financial benefits in order to change the college focus away from education and training to skills

programmes, which are an essential part of the study programmes offered to all students (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011).

1.2.1 Geographic Area

Gauteng is the smallest province out of the nine with an area of 17 000 square kilometres. Representing 1.4 % of the total area with a population of 8 837 178 (Census 2001) and a density of 520 per km², but Gauteng is the province where most of things start. It is the heart of commercial, financial and industrial sectors. According to the Census 2001, Gauteng made the largest contribution of 33% to the economy (Census, 2001).

Gauteng province has five higher institutions of education, three universities namely: University of the Witwatersrand, University of Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria. Two universities of technology namely: Pretoria and Vaal, therefore FET colleges could develop strategic partnerships to serve as feeders for these institutions and to be responsible for joint projects. (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011)

The FET colleges need to establish strategies in order for them to be part of the wealth of knowledge for the benefit of institutional and community development. The province is comprised of five recognisable regions: the central part is represented by the City of Johannesburg, which is influenced by the finance and services and manufacturing sectors. The adjoining Ekurhuleni and Sedibeng are dominated by manufacturing. Gauteng West represented by Randfontein which is predominantly a mining area while the Tshwane area is powerful in service sector and strong automotive industry. (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011)

The Gauteng province attracts people from around the country and the continent because of business opportunities it provides. The challenge for the country is the lack of skills required in the knowledge economy that has resulted in an unemployment rate of 20% in this province. (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011)

The province came up with a mechanism of addressing the issue of unemployment by introducing the economic development strategy that comprises of the Blue IQ projects. These projects are in sectors that have the possibility of achieving high growth rates and job creation namely: smart industries, including information and communications technology and pharmaceutical; Infrastructure development; Tourism; Transport; Agriculture, including agro-processing; Biotechnology; Trade and Services, including finance and film; High value added manufacturing, including steel related industries, automotive parts and components and beer and malt.

The aim of the blue IQ projects mentioned above is therefore to develop high-tech industries underpinned by the Innovation-Hub, stretching for the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to Midrand.

1.2.2 National Challenges

Prior to 1994, South Africans especially Blacks (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) were excluded from taking part in the mainstream of the economy. Majority of the population did not have access to technical education, as such they lacked required skills and they were therefore confined to menial jobs (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011: 16)

With the dawn of democracy in 1994, blacks started to participate in the mainstream of the economy. The 1996 Democratic Constitution requires a redress of these historical imbalances, because of the challenges faced by the government and the people of South Africa which are lack of skills, unemployment and poverty.

Blacks must be allowed to participate in the economy of the country, and their contribution must be made regardless of the positions in which they are operating. However, the major obstacles for blacks entry in the economy apart from capital are skills knowledge, experience and the right attitude (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2010:16-17).

So with the transformation of former technical colleges into colleges of Further Education and Training (FET) a great believe or hope has been created, that these obstacles experienced will be removed by providing access to the wide spectrum of

vocational and skills programmes(Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2010:16-17).

1.2.3 Socio-Economy of Gauteng

The 1996 Constitution of South Africa empowers the National Department of Education with the responsibility to make it a point that the vision of FET and associated policy directives are implemented. The nine provincial governments are also empowered by the constitution with statutory competence over strategic affairs pertaining to Further Education and Training. As a result it is the responsibility of the Gauteng Provincial Government to ensure that FET Colleges under its authority incorporate and meet the provincial imperatives and priorities (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011:17).

1.2.4 Working Age Group

In 1999 the population of Gauteng was 7 348 423 and in 2001 it rose to 8 837 178 and this shows an increase of 4.05%. In 2011 the population rose to 51 770.560. Possible growth rate has possible effects on the number of people especially the youth entering the labour force each year. As a result Gauteng province is faced with a problem to start effective job creation programmes. In order to accommodate the increasing number of job seekers, this means that the Gauteng FET colleges should not only produce job seekers but also job. (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009- 2011: 17)

According to Statistics South Africa (2002:16) Africans have a younger profile compared to the other groups. Its working –age population is 36% and they are 15 - 24 years old, compared with 31% of coloureds, 28% of Indians and 24% of whites. The foregoing implies that a large number of African youth leave school at a young age to seek employment.

1.2.5 Education and Labour

Education is the determining factor in gaining access to employment and earnings, so the level of education of individuals in relation to labour market categories is a vital policy variable for Gauteng Department of Education. Labour supply policies must be linked with education policies, in order to have a flow of labour with suitable

mix of skills to match the demand for labour. Also to be able to know how to improve the training programmes or employment creation programmes.

1.2.6 Gauteng Economy

The province has been experiencing lack of employment and job opportunities which resulted in poverty. The Gauteng Plan (2011) states that the province accounts for 33% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), followed by Kwa –Zulu Natal with 16% and then Western Cape with 14%. Gauteng province is the largest sub-national African economy, and is also responsible for 49% of all employee remuneration in the country and 52% of all turnovers of institutions.

The structure of Gauteng's economy has three parts namely: the primary sector (extraction), secondary sector (manufacturing) and the tertiary sector (services). There has been an increase in the tertiary sector, while the primary sector and secondary sector have been decreasing. Though manufacturing industries have been the highest contributors of GDP but there has been a down trend. Transport, storage, communication, finance, real estate and business services have shown the highest growth rates. (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009- 2011:25)

It means that Gauteng's economy has shifted away from primary and manufacturing production towards a high output in the service sector. This results in an increase demand for skilled professionals and managerial occupations.

1.2.7 Poverty profile and Service Delivery

The Gauteng province is experiencing a high migration of people from rural areas to urban areas, because of poverty that is caused by unemployment in rural areas. This results into informal settlements that are spreading in an alarming rate within the province. Poverty reduction and social service delivery programmes of the Gauteng Provincial Government have benefited many families. These programmes are as follows: Housing, social and child support grants and minimum free basic services. Poverty is still high because of unemployment and HIV/AIDS, which impacts mostly on the 20-40 years age group

However, service delivery is still poor in rural areas and informal settlements irrespective of the progress made during 1996 to 2001. For an example, the number

of households with formal homes grew by more than 705 000 between 1996 and 2001. The number of households living in informal settlements grew by more than 163 000 during the same period. (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011:27-28)

1.2.8 Policy Context

Globalisation has forced developing countries and highly industrialised countries to migrate from dependency on agriculture and natural resources to the secondary and tertiary economies (manufacturing and services) this migration demands for new skills. Jobs are created for people but they lack the appropriate skills.

Gauteng as the industrial engine of South Africa is also experiencing some challenges, so to address them the Gauteng Provincial Government developed the 2014 Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) which is set within National Policy Frameworks and associated strategic goals. The 2014 Growth and Development Strategy is informed by a number of Provincial Policies namely:

- The Trade and Industry Strategy (TIS)
- Gauteng Integrated Development Plan (GIDP)
- Local Economic Development Strategy (LEDS)
- State of Environment Report and Environment Implementation Plan (SEREIP)
- Land Use
- Gauteng Global City Region Strategy (Gauteng Plan for FET Colleges, 2009-2011:28-29)
- Environment: College Orientation

The Gauteng Colleges must develop programmes that will address the requirements of industry and community needs. These needs are supported by the Growth Development Strategy, which provides the colleges with a basis for understanding industry requirements.

In the past the main contributors to Gauteng's GDP was the primary (extraction) and secondary (manufacturing) industries, but there is an indication of tertiary industries (services) taking over.

Meaning that the economy has changed and it requires new skills. The Gauteng colleges still have to provide programmes for both primary and secondary industries. However, more resources will have to be directed at the tertiary sectors in the course of time.

The Growth Development Strategy requires that can accelerate economic growth in the province, as such colleges have to develop responsive programmes to meet the labour needs of these priority areas, in order to achieve relevance between learner competence and industry needs.

1.2.9 Environmental Scan

For curriculum innovation it is vital that colleges undertake an environmental scan of their respective sub-regions. The scan should cover industry, community, local and provincial government needs, which are the basis for programme development and the establishment of strategic partnerships with these stakeholders.

1.2.10 Strategic Partnerships

The environmental scan should give colleges the opportunity to create lasting relationships with industry, community organisations and local government. Partnering with industry is very important because it opens the door for creating opportunities for the following:

- Work experience for learners in vocational programmes
- Learnerships, especially for unemployed youth and matriculants who require relevant skills to secure employment.
- Job placements for graduates
- Up-skilling or multi-skilling of employees and college staff in order to meet industry requirements.

Linkage between colleges national and international is important in order to enrich their programmes. Colleges need to link – up with feeder schools on the one hand and higher education institutions on the other. These relationships can bridge the gap between these institutions, in order to make life easier for learners.

1.3 Problem Statement

NCV Students at the Further Education and Training Colleges in Gauteng do not complete their studies at the required time as shown by table 1 below.

According to the data collected from the Gauteng Department of Education (FET) 2008 results of the NCV Level 2 and 3, results were received from all eight colleges in order to ascertain the performance of learners and also the number of learners who dropped out for the 2008 November examinations. The objective of the Department of Education was to identify factors that contribute to poor performance and dropout rate of students, in order to improve performance and reduce the dropout rate.

Table 1 demonstrates the pattern of 2008 results of NCV students Level 2 and 3. According to the Department of Education is that, factors contributed to the 2008 NCV Level 2 and 3 results below are lack of capacity of educators and poor college performance.

Table 1: Gauteng Province Analysis of NVC Level 2 and 3 2008 Results

NCV Prog	No. Enrolled	No. Written	No. Not written	No. Passed	No. Failed	% Passed	% Failed	% Pass enrolled
Level 2								
Total	80346	59556	20902	27213	32343	45.7	54.3	33.9
Level 3								
Total	22722	18836	3886	9890	8946	52.5	47.5	43.5

Having demonstrated the results of the NCV programme above it is necessary that a research must be conducted in order to discover which factors contribute to the dropout rate of learners in the FET sector.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to investigate which factors contribute to the dropout rate of NCV students at the FET colleges. In order to identify these factors the Westcol College in Randfontein (Randfontein campus) has been used as a case study, because the purpose is not to generalise the findings, however to create the space of conducting a research. Further to this investigation the study intends to present the findings and the analyses of these findings. Based on the findings and the analyses the study intends drawing conclusion and making recommendations to Westcol College.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are the factors contributing to learners not completing their studies?
- How would the learner related factors or college performance contribute to the dropout rate?

1.6 Knowledge gap

There is no research that has been executed on the factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV programme learners in the FET sector. This research wants to convey new knowledge on how the factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV programme learners in the FET sector can be attended to, so as to have quality teaching and learning in a conducive environment. The study findings will assist the Department of Higher Education and Training appropriately to address these challenges at the Westcol FET.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study will be of value to the Department of Education and the FET College that will be used as a case study, in that the findings and recommendations will be handed to them. So that in the future the specific college is able to address this challenge of dropout rate.

1.8 Outline of chapters

The research report is structured into six chapters.

Chapter one

The first chapter outlines the background to the study. It also tells about the purpose statement, problem statement, the research questions, knowledge gap and the significance of the study.

Chapter two

This chapter informs about what the previous literature locally and internationally say about the topic of the study.

Chapter three

This section of the study presents the research methods that were used.

Chapter four

This chapter presents the data collected.

Chapter five

This chapter outlines the data analysis and interpretation of the research data.

Chapter six

This section of the research presents the conclusion and the recommendations based on the findings of the data.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The researcher will deliberate on the similar issues that have been addressed by the literature locally and globally, regarding the factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV students at the FET colleges. The review will be done through interviews, consulting relevant resources of information and other publications.

2.2 Content

In France higher education dropout students are having difficulties in looking for jobs compared to students who have left with their secondary diploma. Whilst students who are at the universities show a high pass rate compared to the college students who show a higher dropout probabilities during the first two years. The other factor is that students, who are not admitted into their choice of faculty, can probably dropout (Gury, 2007:52 citing Thomas, 2003 & Moullet, 2006).

According to Thomas & Yorke (2012) research, is that if United Kingdom institutions during the pre-entry process do not engage with student, regarding subject choices can influence to their dropping out of their studies(Thomas & Yorke, 2012 :67).

According to Gury (2007:61) living conditions of students affect their studies; as such they can influence the probabilities of dropping higher institutions without graduation. Students need to adapt and integrate with other students unlike those that are staying at home with their parents, do not have problems of socialising (Gury; 2007:61, citing Tinto 1993 & Thomas, 2002: 61).

Students getting financial support from their parents have a significant lower dropout risk, while on the other hand students who are working part-time while studying increase dropout rate in the higher education institutions.

Lastly, students receiving social grants are at a high risk of dropping out during the first year of their studies and less during the third and fourth year. These findings could show the presence of three distinctive behavioural types:” Opportunity behaviour of young people not interested in studying at the higher education level, but merely seeking to take advantage of grant availability. Students who are financially dependent on grants and see themselves refused renewal for the next year due to insufficient results during the current year, and have no choice but to quit. Students still receiving financial aid and at the end of the period of schooling have no more motivation than others to finish their studies.” (Gury, 2007:62).

A research conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002 shows that one in three Americans dropout of college, and there is an increase from the 1960's when one in five discontinued their studies (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)

While other studies show that a great number of college dropouts come from low income families. The U.S Department of Education established that 41% of low income students enrolled in a four-year institution and succeeded to graduate within five years. For the higher income students it was established that it jumped to 66%. Of the low income students that did not return, 47% left the college in good academic standing (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

According to Thomas (2002) factors that impact on dropout rate are whether other families understand the importance of HE, are they supporting and taking responsibility of their students studies (Thomas: 2002:28).

Factors that contributed to the dropout of students in the college are as follows: Financial challenges, student's expectations of college (academically) do not match with the reality the minute they are at the college. As such they are not motivated and prepared in their study skills (Martindale, 2010:1)

Thomas (2002: 426) suggests that there are areas that were identified in the empirical research which impacts on the student dropout rate and their performance which are the following:

2.2. 1 Academic preparedness

In USA the higher education is linked to an increase in student withdrawals or lower levels of completion to greater student diversity especially new students because they are not academically prepared to study at HE (Thomas, 2002: 426).

Lack of choice induction by colleges influence the students not to be academically prepared as such impact on the academic match. As such students end up not having any expectation about what studying for a qualification in higher education would be like (Thomas & Yorke, 2012:69).

2.2.2 Academic experience

In addition to the academic preparedness of the student is the curricula, the quality of teaching and learning, the relationship of students with the staff, the flexibility of the institution time-table and deadlines. The way students are academically assessed (Thomas, 2002: 426).

2.2.3 Institutional expectations and commitment

In USA the students who register at colleges at first they are committed to their studies and they have institutional expectations. They also wanted the institution they were attending to realise their goals, but if the institutional expectations are not met their commitment will be affected. (Thomas, 2002:426)

The other factor contributing to dropout rate of students at colleges is that a number of college students are employed, either full time or part time. Since 1993 there is an increase of 4%, because 39% of college freshmen work 16 or more hours per week (Gose, 1998).

Callender & Kemp (2000) cited by Thomas & Yorke (2012: 70) state that part – time employment of student contributes to the dropout rate at the college. According to Robbins & Bourdieu (1993) cited by Thomas et al. (2012) says that “working class students were less successful not because they were of inferior intelligence but because the curriculum was “biased in favour of those with which middle class students were already ex-curricular familiar” (Robbins, 1993, 153).

According to National Centre for Education Statistics, there is a high dropout rate of African American and Hispanic students. Also those students who are the first ones to attend the college in the family with limited English proficiency are at a higher risk of dropping out. Only a few students who dropout at the end they are able to complete their education, whilst those that come back to the college normally do not complete their studies immediately. (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2011:1)

According to Martindale (2010), it is estimated that 40% of college students will not graduate their higher education, with 75% of these students leaving within their first two years of college (Martindale, 2010).

According to the new students 2003 Survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA's Graduate of School of Education and Information Studies, it was discovered that most of the Americans students spend less time studying (Higher Education Research Institute, 2003).

According to Fulton (cited by Maton 2005:692) suggest that come to the college with their own problems and expect the college to get solutions for them, the other factor is that these students come from families which have difficulty over problems of independence at the rise of adolescence (Maton, 2005).

First year students are confronted with a stressful situation of a transition from a high school to a Higher education environment, difficulties in learning the study habits of a new academic environment and interpersonal relationships with other student. All these factors contribute to their dropout rate at the college (Parker, Summerfieldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2004).

Some of the factors contributing to the dropout rate of students in the college are beyond the institutions, for example lack of transport to attend studies can be challenging the student studies (Thomas, 2002)

According to these literatures Tinto (1975 & 1993); Benn (1982); Astin (1984); Johnes (1990); Pascarella & Terenzini (1991); Moortgat (1997); Berger & Braxton (1998); Ozla et al (1998 cited by Thomas, 2002), there are factors which impacts on the performance and retention rate which are as follows: Institutional practices, social attributes as well as interacting personal

The 2002 research conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute in America, point out that 65.3% of freshmen do not have enough money to complete their studies (Higher Education Research Institute, 2002:51).

In 1999 the South African government funded the disadvantaged students in order to enable them with their studies. National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), study bursaries and loans worth 2.5 million were awarded to disadvantaged students in 2009. It is established that over 140 000 students as an estimate, have benefited from the bursary (ieasa-studysa organisation, 2010).

Unfortunately these loans and bursaries do not cover the full costs of study; instead struggling students are unable to cover living and other cost. Then they end up not completing their studies at the required time.

Thomas & Yorke (2012) state that students from low income backgrounds battle financially but they receive bursaries to cover their studies even though is insufficient, because they end up not completing their studies (Thomas & Yorke: 2010:70)

Mthembu (2011) at the Annual SATN (South African Technology Network) conference state that one factor that contributes to dropout rate in Higher Education is the lack of enhancing technology in education. Tertiary institutions must invest in Teaching and Learning Technology (TLT) by having appropriate infrastructure and technical staff in order to support academics (Mthembu, 2011:193).

Adams (2011) states in his research report that" the Umalusi report (2009) alluded to the scarcity of skilled professionals within the various sectors as being a challenge for the colleges since the possible applicants for placement was extremely small". The FET sector needs skilled NCV lectures that will be able to deliver in the teaching and learning environment (Adams, 2011:30).

The other contributing factor to dropout rate of students in the colleges is the NCV programme that is too theoretical with minimal practical competencies and the students need also the practical competencies (Adams, 2011:27)

According to the Human Sciences Research Council, social factors contributing to this challenge are as follows:

- Financial difficulties among poor black students
- Students from low income and less educated families are the most likely to dropout.

The Department of Education is planning to broaden student enrolment in the FET colleges to over 1 million students by 2016 (National Plan for Further Education and Training Colleges in South Africa, 2004)

According to the National Plan for Further Education and Training Colleges in South Africa (2004:30) there was a need to increase the enrolment in the NCV programmes because of the youth unemployment rate, on the other hand there is significant minimal of the throughput rate of students performance at the colleges (National Plan for Further Education and Training Colleges in South Africa).

After the merger of FET colleges a study was conducted to establish whether the process was successful, and it was discovered that it was successful due to the fact that the pass rate of students increased from 1.1% to 2.7% in two years (2years)

However over the long run of eight years research showed that although the pass rate increase with 1.6% immediately after the merger (Powel & Hall, 2002:59), less than 18% of the students who enrolled for NQF 2 in 2007 wrote the NQF 4 examination in 2009 (Gewe, 2010:11).

South Africa's higher education faces many challenges which are as follows: uneven quality across the sector, low post-graduate numbers, high student dropout rate and attracting and retaining high level academics and managers especially blacks.

This study will investigate the dropout rate of college students at Westcol Further Education and Training College – Randfontein (Gauteng)

2.3 Conclusion

This literature review enables the researcher to have a view of other key findings from the other pieces of literature regarding factors contributing to the drop-out rate of NCV learners in the FET Colleges locally and globally.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the methodology and the data collection instruments used, these are interviews and a detailed set of questions. It also introduces and profiles the participants in the study, research ethics, validity and reliability, significance of the study and its limitations.

3.2 Research Approach

Qualitative research methodology was used in order to investigate the factors that contribute to the dropout rate of NCV programme students in the Further Education and Training Institutions. Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social action, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. The researcher interprets phenomena in terms of the meaning that people assigns to them (Mc Millan and Schumacer, 2006: 314).

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007:51) qualitative research is concerned with understanding the process and the social and cultural contexts, which underlie various behaviour patterns and mostly interested with exploring the why questions (Nieuwenhuis;2007:51).

Qualitative research believes that the world is made up of people with their own assumptions intentions, attitudes, beliefs and values and that way of knowing reality is by exploring the experiences of others regarding phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis; 2007:55; Fouche and Delport, 1998:74) argue that in qualitative methodology rests on the belief that valid understanding can be obtained through accumulated knowledge acquired at first hand.

Qualitative research acknowledges inter – active relationship between the researcher and the participants as well as participants and their own experiences, and how they have constructed reality based on those experiences. These personal experiences, beliefs and value narratives are biased and subjective, but this kind of

research accepts them as true for those who lived through the experiences. Through the stories and experiences of the respondents are the medium through which we explore and understand reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:55).

3.3 Research Design

The qualitative research design that was used for this study is phenomenology. The researcher collected data on how individuals make sense out of particular experiences or situations. Phenomenology allows the researcher to conduct interviews with informants directed towards understanding their perspective on lived experiences. A case study on the other hand, examines a case over a period of time using multiple sources of data found in the setting. A case can be selected because of its uniqueness or to illustrate an issue (McMillan and Schumacer, 2006:26). The entity that the case study researches is the Westcol Further Education and Training College in Randfontein.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Primary Data

Data collection used for this research was a designed and detailed set of questions that guided the interviews to corroborate the secondary data about Westcol College (Randfontein) that was gathered.

Also unstructured interviews referred to as in depth interviews were conducted (Greef, 1998: 292). These unstructured interviews allow the researcher to ask questions and follow up probes are produced during the interviews itself. Unstructured interview is completely open-ended in character and differs from other approaches in that it allows the interviewee to explain the situation, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the subjects' point of view (Clarke, 1999:73)

Unstructured interview is focused, discursive and allows the researcher and participants to explore an issue. It is used to discover individual's perceptions, opinions, facts and forecasts and their reactions to initial findings and potential solutions (Greef, 1998:293). Unstructured interviews with college staff were conducted.

The researcher started first by establishing a relationship of trust with participants by starting all the session with a sensitization session with all the participants before commencing with the research. (See Appendix 2) The researcher held separate sessions with each participant. The aim of the sensitisation session was for the introduction of the researcher, reasons for the researchers visit at the college and the research process that the research plans to follow. Lastly the researcher wanted to emphasise the need for honesty and trust during the research process.

3.4.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data was collected from the Department of Education Annual Reports, Relevant documents from Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) addressing issues of the FET colleges.

3.5 Sampling

Non – probability sampling method was used to collect primary and secondary data. Sample comprises elements of a population considered for inclusion in the study (Strydom, 1998: 193). Qualitative research is based on non-probability and purposive sampling. Samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena that the research is investigating (Mac Millan and Schumacher, 2006:319)

The sample comprised of at least ten (10) respondents drawn from the following levels in the institution:

Management of the college (3), Educators (4), Programme manager (1), Administration head - student affairs(1) and a Career Guidance person were chosen as sampling at the college in order to get the findings of the dropout rate in the college of Westcol in Randfontein. Interviews were conducted with the three management of the college, three educators, Programme, Administration head-student affairs and a Career Guidance person.

3.6 Data Analysis

De Vos (1998:333) shows that data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Data analysis is an ongoing process that

involves the coding and categorizing data. Themes will emerge from the data rather than imposing them prior to collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:365)

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are vital aspects in quantitative research, but in qualitative research the researcher is the data gathering instrument. It is accepted that involving multiple methods of data collection which lead to trustworthiness (Nieuwenhuis 2007: 80).

Interviews and document analysis were used so that the result of the study can be regarded as credible and trustworthy. Validity of qualitative design is the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meaning to both the researcher and the participants (McMillan & Schumacher; 2006:324)

3.8 Limitations and Ethical considerations

The researcher obtained a Consent letter from the Head of Department of Gauteng Department of Education in order to conduct this research at the Westcol College (See the attached authorisation as Appendix 1). The study was also approved by the Graduate School for Public and Development Management at University of Witwatersrand.

The respondents were advised about the nature of the research, scope and the purpose of the study conducted. The participants will have to sign a consent form (Creswell; 2009:89). In this instance the participants did not sign any consent form, the reason being that students were not research participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was assured by making a point that no participant names were mentioned in the report. Participants were identified only through their interviewing sequence that is (Respondent 1 or Respondent 2).

A limitation of the study is that the Westcol College in Randfontein was selected purposively even though it differs with certain aspects from the other FET colleges in South Africa. As such this college does not represent other FET colleges in the country.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the approached, methodology, data collection instruments that were implemented in this study. All these instruments made it possible for the researcher to be able investigate the factors that contribute to the dropout rate of students at the college.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will look at the data collected through conducting interviews and using a detailed questionnaire from different management levels. The section presents the findings by discovering factors contributing to the dropout rate at the Westcol College in Randfontein.

De Vos (1998:333) indicates that data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Data analysis is an ongoing process that involves the coding and categorizing data. Themes will emerge from the data rather than imposing them prior to collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:365). A number of themes emerged and they were condensed into key themes which are learner related factors and college related factors.

4.2 The Profile of Westcol College

4.2.1 Westcol Further Education and Training College in perspective

According to Mogashoa (2011) Westcol Further Education and Training College is an institution that offers education service to the public and industries in the Westrand of Gauteng. Its strategy is based on economies of scale, by acquiring and merging with other educational institutions that has a location advantage.

Between 2003 and 2011 Westcol FET has merged with 1 campus and acquired 5 other campuses, in this period legislation forced Westcol FET to merged, demerged and remerged with one of the campuses. Currently Westcol FET provides a service in the following campuses: Carltonville, Westonaria, Randfontein, Magaliesberg and Krugersdorp (Mogashoa, 2011).

The latest statistics indicate that Westcol FET forms part of 6 campuses and one corporate office, where it employs a total of 300 personnel. The corporate office is seen as the strategic leader of the college, it is the one that directs the college and

sets the milieu (corporate culture) for the whole of Westcol FET. The corporate office originates from a merger between Technical College Randfontein and Technical College Carltonville in 2003 (Coetzer, 2011).

4.2.2 History of Randfontein campus

Westcol FET was formed on the 12 August 1968 and it was known as Randfontein Trade School. It started operating with the following personnel:

- 1 headmaster;
- 4 lectures;
- 2 female administrative staff members;
- 3 black supporting staff;
- 70 Apprentices and 2500 students

(Westcol FET, 2007:3).

During these early times, Randfontein Trade School, pass rate seemed to be abnormally high, as 68% of the students passed their course. Since this time in history the lecturers job satisfaction and performance was motivated through an increase in annual wages. Hence the lecturers and staff salaries were higher than the average salaries of the department of education and the artisans industries. (Westcol FET, 2007:3)

In July 1971, Randfontein Trade School extended its operations. This expansion lead to the school moving to a new property and subsequently offering new services, that fell outside the schools, scope of practice. Therefore the strategy and name of the school changed to “Technical College Randfontein” (Westcol FET, 2007:3). On 14 October 1974, it was announced that Technical College Randfontein, part time courses grew with 23% for the period 1973-1974. This was due to the fact that the Technical College Randfontein expanded their services, as they were providing the following services to the public which are as follows:

- Standard 7 (grade 9);
- National Technical Certificates (NTC) levels 1, 2, and 3;
- Advanced Technical Certificates (ATC) 4, and 5;
- National Diploma;
- T courses (Westcol FET, 2007:3).
- By 1976 the Technical College Randfontein was offering evening courses to the public, these courses included:
 - Flower arrangement;
 - Typing;
 - Know your motor;
 - Basic mathematics;
 - Standard 9 and 10 (grade 11 & 12);
 - T1 and T3 and;
 - Government Certificate of Competency (Westcol FET, 2007:3).

The Technical College Randfontein had an innovative and performance driven culture that aimed to increase the pass rate of the students, by providing job satisfaction to employees, through rewarding employees with an above average remuneration.

4.2.3 Westcol Further Education and Training mergers

In 2002 it was announced that the FET Colleges are to merge. This was due to the apartheid regime, disadvantaging FET Colleges in specific districts. The aim of the mergers was to help FET Colleges in sharing their resources, such as practical workshops or colleges serving the industries with apprentices and artisans (Gewe, 2001:139). Subsequently the Technical College Randfontein and the Technical College Carletonville merged to form a new college, Westcol FET (Westcol FET, 2007:3)

4.3 Data generated through interviewing respondents

4.3.1 Learner related factors

4.3.1.1 Bursaries

Respondent 1 said that most of the students do not know the purpose of being granted the bursary, the reason being that students cannot spend the money wisely. Instead of spending money for their studies and transport they buy expensive clothes and end up dropping out their studies. These sentiments were shared by respondent 3 when he said:

“Why is the number of dropouts so high? Granted, some students drop out because they are really not interested in obtaining a higher education but they only enrolled to get a bursary in order buy clothes for themselves”(Respondent 3, Interview, 29 November, 2012)

According to respondent 2 learners have the tendency of dropping out of the college once they have been paid the bursary they have applied for which includes travelling allowance and accommodation.

Respondent 5 and 6 are saying that students are not taking the bursary very serious because it is taken as a grant, not much advocacy has been done about its importance to the students studies.

“Students are dropping out after receiving bursary and then go to another college to register and then receive bursary for the second time”.

(Respondent 5and 6, Interview, 29 November 2012)

Respondent 9 supports the view and said that “Bursaries should be administered by Financial people” who will be able to do the checks and balances before the issuing out of these bursaries, because learners think that these bursaries are a right but not being responsible. (Respondent 9, Interview, 29 November 2012).

Respondent 8 mentioned the fact that another contributing factor to dropping out is that:

“Most of the students during their school days were walking from home to school. Now they are compelled to use public transport because of the distance to be travelled to college. Even though they have applied for National Student Finance Aid Scheme (NSFAS) Bursary, lack of finances lead the students being unable to afford transport to get to the college because of late bursary payments, however it is also noted with concern that there are students who also enroll with us for the purpose of acquiring a bursary rather than studying, as soon as they receive the fund they disappear”.

(Respondent 8, Interview, 29 November 2012)

There was a lot of unhappiness from the respondents regarding the issue of NSFAS Bursary because other students do not enroll at the college for the purpose of studying but for satisfying their needs with the bursary, this is one of the factors contributing to students dropping out and not completing their studies at the required time.

According to respondent 9 is that bursaries should be administered by financial people because the challenge is that the guidelines of the Bursary scheme gives the learners the opportunity to fail three modules/subjects out of four and still receive a bursary. (Respondent 9, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.1.2 Finance Issues

According to respondent 1 and 3 learners who do not have the financial capability to pay for their studies they would rather drop out at the college (Respondent 1, Interview 29 November 2012). Respondent 2 maintained his view and said:

“Learners that do not have the financial capability to pay for their studies would rather cease their studies”(Respondent 2, Interview, 29 November 2012).

4.3.1.3 Low income of families

Students that are from low income families are extremely poor and they dropped out because their parents cannot provide for their families. The other challenge is that

these learners during their high school days they were receiving school nutrition daily, now unfortunately the feeding scheme is not available. They are expected to bring along lunch boxes for themselves. (Respondent 8, Interview, 29 November 2012).

4.3.1.4 Lack of parental involvement

According to respondent 10, 7 and 8 most parents of Westcol FET are not involved in their children's education. They do not want to take responsibility of their future (Respondent 10, 7 and 8 Interview, 29 November 2012).

4.3.1.5 Parents lacking vision

According to respondent 8 if there is a lack of vision in education by parents, it creates a problem for the learners because their performance will be affected. Respondent 8 supported the abovementioned view and said,

“Education background of immediate family members, if their family members did not finish their course. They feel this can be an option for them as well.”
(Respondent 8, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.1.6 Relocation of families and Instability

Relocation of families to other places brings instability to the student's studies because this is not good for building academic success. (Respondent 8, Interview, 29 November).

4.3.1.7 Lack of transport/Absenteeism

Respondent 9 mentioned that most learners are absent from the college because they do not have money for transport. They end up performing badly in their studies and later they drop out of the college (Respondent 9, Interview, and 29 November 2012).

According to respondent 10 learners are bunking classes and this affects their studies. They end up missing tests and examinations then drop out of college. (Respondent 10, Interview, 29 November 2012)

According to respondent 3 and 10, lack of transport is one of the factors contributing to Drop out at Westcol. Respondent 10 supported his view and said,

“Transport problems lead students not to attend their studies and that affect their performance and the institution.” (Respondent 10, Interview, 29 November 2013).

According to respondent 2, is that transport to and from the college may in a number of instances contribute to the high absentee rate. Respondent 3 supported the view and said:

“Absenteeism of students is the order of the day, thereby losing valuable teaching and learning. By doing so they do not attain the minimum requirement for examination purposes and they realize at an early stage that for some subjects they will not be resulted”. (Respondent 2, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.1.8 Socio economic issues

There is a universal agreement amongst all the respondents that the socio-economic factors mentioned below, contribute to the drop out of NCV programme students at Westcol FET.

- Drug Abuse
- HIV/AIDS
- Pregnancy of learners
- Lack of good nutrition

According to respondent 1, the college is experiencing a low level of nutrition and it affects the performance of both the learners and the college. However, currently the college is feeding twelve thousand students (12000). (Respondent 1, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.1.9 Lack of academic preparedness

All the respondents agreed in unison of one voice that it is very difficult to identify the cause of dropping out of students from the college, because the problem is influenced by a number of factors. Respondent 3 maintain the view and said,

“Some of the students drop out because they are too lazy to apply themselves, while others drop out because they are really not interested in obtaining a higher education and only enrolled to please their parents or because their friends were going to college. However, these students seem to be in the minority. In some cases Students are not being prepared for the academic work, inability to cope with the competing demands of study, family and jobs.”

(Respondent 3, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.1.10 Lack of fundamentals subjects

According to respondent 9 most of their learners lack the foundation of Fundamental subjects for an example, Mathematics and English. She maintained her view and said

“The fact that most students do not understand English makes classes difficult”. (Respondent 9, Interview, 29 November 2012)

One of the factors contributing to the drop out of NCV programme learners is the lack of fundamental subjects. Respondent 2 emphasized his view and said:

”One of the major factors that can be contributed to students not completing their studies is that, a fair number of learners do not have the required background in specifically Mathematics which forms the back bone of a number of study fields”.(Respondent 2, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.1.11 Employed students

According to respondent 8, students battling with finances end up applying and getting a job during the day and can no longer attend classes (Learnerships and Apprenticeship). (Respondent 8, Interview, 29 November 2012).

4.3.1.12 Wrong choice of programme

Students coming from high schools, most of the time get frustrated by the choice of the programme. They do not choose the subjects according to the Replacement test they are writing. They choose programmes just to satisfy their friends or parents not according to their potential (Respondent3, Interview, 29 November 2012).

4.3.2 College Related Factors

4.3.2.1 Underqualified lecturers and lack of commitment

Respondent 1, 3 and 9 agree that some of the lecturers at Westcol FET are underqualified and they are not committed in classes and they do not support the students in their studies. Learners end up ceasing their studies because they are discouraged. (Respondent1, 3 and 9, Interview, 29 November 2012).

According to respondent 1 and 3 is that unqualified lecturers affect the performance of the learners and the college, as a result this will contribute to drop out of students studying the NCV programme (Respondent 1 and 3, Interview, 29 November 2012).

4.3.2.2 Challenges with NCV curriculum

Grade 9 learners that have registered for NCV programme cannot cope with the amount of work they are given, respondent 9 stated and said,

“The full NCV programme is difficult for the Grade 9 learners; they do not cope with the vast amounts.”(Respondent 9, Interview, 29 November 2012).

According to respondent 10, Grade 12 learners who have passed and accessed the Westcol FET feel there is no challenge for them; instead it is a repetition. Respondent 10 maintained his view and said,

“The multi graded classes are far reaching because those that are advanced find the classes too easy and boring and they end up absenting from the classes. On the other side learners who are at a lower level find the classes too difficult and struggle to understand the content”. (Respondent 10, Interview, 29 November 2012)

Respondent 3 also agreed to the fact that Grade 12 students tend to be frustrated by lower level of the fundamental subjects they are studying for the second time. The other challenge is that the NCV programme is too long. It should be a semester course not a year course because this leads to absenteeism of learners. He supported his view by saying,

“Students with Grade 12 tend to be extremely frustrated by studying the Fundamentals: Life Orientation, English and Mathematics or Mathematics literacy at lower level again. They tend to stay away due to this frustration and the fact that they spend another three years in the FET sector to obtain the same qualification twice”.(Respondent 3, Interview, 29 November 2012)

Most of the learners cannot cope with the NCV programme curriculum and they end dropping out of their studies, respondent 2 supports the abovementioned view and said:

“A great number of learners cannot cope with the content of the curriculum of the study that they have enrolled for. Very much applicable as example, Information Technology and Computer Science, Mathematics, Computer related subject in the Business Studies and Computer Aided Drawing only to mention a few”.(Respondent 2, Interview, 29 November 2011)

According to respondent 5 and 6, curriculum of NCV programme is not well structured especially the practical part as such the theory part suffers. (Respondent 5 and 6, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.2.3 Lack of back ground in Information Technology

Most of Westcol FET lecturers lack the background of Information Technology (IT) they cannot use the equipment. This lack of knowledge affects the performance of both the learners and institution, (Respondent 10, Interview, 29 November 2012).

According to respondent 5 and 6, lecturers lack the knowledge about Technology and this leads to a decline of learners performance(Respondent 5 and 6, Interview, 2012)

4.3.2.4 College accepting Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN)

According to respondent 2, Westcol FET is accepting most learners who have low Intelligence Quotiene (IQ) that is learners with special needs. These learners drop out from the secondary schools and this affects the performance of the students and

the college. The Higher Education expects colleges of Further Education and Training to admit also learners with learning difficulties, in return they become discouraged because they are battling with the NCV programme curriculum.

Respondent 2 maintain his statement by saying:

“Most of the learners that have accessed the Westcol are a crop of learners that are very slow, battling with their studies. As such NCV programme students have no direction”. (Respondent 2, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.3.2.5 Lack of educational resources

According to respondent 4 other factors contributing to the dropout rate of learners is the lack of resources and non improved facilities, the reason being that it is not easy to work in an area which is not conducive for teaching and learning. Students need to be exposed to adequate educational resources so that they learn without difficulties and get more benefits. (Respondent 4, Interview, 29 November 2012)

4.4 Conclusion

There was confirmation from the respondents who participated in the interviews, that there are factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV programme learners at Westcol College in Randfontein. The following chapter will analyze and interpret the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the dropout rate of learners in the NCV programme at Westcol College. It also presents an analysis and interpretation of data obtained by relating it to literature sources.

The findings of the results cannot be generalised to other campuses or colleges but limited to one campus. They reveal the perception of the respondents who are the following: managers, educators, Programme manager, Administration head- Student Affairs and a Career Guidance person.

The themes mentioned below were identified to analyse the case study with the intend to investigate the factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV programme learners.

5.2 Data generated through interviewing respondents

5.2.1 Learner related factors

5.2.1.1 Bursaries

According to ieasa- studysa organisation (2010) the South African government funded the disadvantaged students for their studies by giving them the bursaries and loans (NSFAS) worth millions. In 2009 over hundred and forty thousand students received the bursary (iesa-studysa organisation, 2010).

According to the respondents was that, learners at Westcol received bursaries for their studies and transport, but the challenge was that the loan and the bursary do not cover the cost of study and the struggling students are unable to cover the costs. They end up not attending classes then drop out of the college.

According to the respondents learners access the college to get the bursary in order to buy expensive clothes, instead of spending money for their studies and transport. The other reason was that learners are not interested in enrolling at the college to

obtain higher education but rather needed the bursary to satisfy their personal needs.

The respondents also mentioned that learners register at the college and after receiving the bursary they drop out. Then they register again at another college so that they can receive the bursary for the second time.

The researcher held the same view as that of ieas-studysa organisation and those of the respondents that most of the learners did not utilise the bursary for their studies and transport. Instead their priority was to use it for their interests. These learners, who received bursary from one college, then register again at another college for the sake of receiving another bursary. What they did was a fruitless expenditure on the Department side because the bursary that was paid for the second time, it could have benefited other learners who are battling with finances to further their studies.

The department of education needs to come up with a system of monitoring or a controlling system of issuing out of bursaries, because what the researcher has found in the literature review did not happen.

5.2.1.2 Finance Issues

Financial challenges is one of the factors contributing to the dropout of students in the college because learners end up not being motivated and prepared in their study skills (Martindale, 2010:1). According to respondents was that learners who lacked financial capability to pay their studies, would rather cease attending.

Therefore, the researcher aligns herself with the view that students who do not have financial capability to pay their studies end up dropping out in the college. Finance is very vital in education so that quality education can be delivered.

5.2.1.3 Low income of families

The U.S. Department of Education (2011) argues that a great number of college dropouts come from low income families. The department established that 41% of low income students enrolled in a four year institution and succeeded, while on the other side 66 % of higher income students succeeded (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

The respondents maintained the view that learners from low income families are extremely poor. Some students drop out because their parents cannot provide for their families. The researcher supported the view that learners coming from extremely poor families they are struggling with transport and the payment of their studies. They come to the college hungry and do not eat anything during the day, because the same learners used to get school nutrition when they attended their high school.

5.2.1.4 Lack of parental involvement

Thomas (2002) argues that parents who are not taking the responsibility of their student's education impact on their studies and later lead to their dropout at college. He also says that other families do not understand the importance of Higher Education (Thomas, 2002:28).

According to Futon (cited by Maton 2005:692) maintains that learners come to the College with their own problem and expect the institution to get solutions for them. The other factor is that these students come from families which have difficulty over problems of independence at the rise of adolescence; the parents do not want to take any responsibility of their children's future (Maton, 2005:692).

All respondents maintained the view that parents are not involved in their children's education, they did not want to take the responsibility of their children's future. The researcher supports fully the view of Thomas and the respondents by saying that she sensed the feeling that the college has a challenge of parents not being involved in their learner's education.

Most of the parents especially from the disadvantaged background do not want to take the responsibility, to them if the learner is attending classes it is okay. They do not bother about their performance or giving assistance to their studies. This is a challenge for Westcol College because in order for their students to get quality education all stakeholders must play their role.

5.2.1.5 Parents lacking vision

Thomas (2002) argues that other families do not understand the importance of Higher Education as such they are not supporting and taking the responsibility of their students studies (Thomas, 2002:28).

According to the respondents was that if there is a lack of vision in education by parents, it creates a challenge that will affect the students performance. The respondents said the education background of the immediate family, plays a vital role in the students studies.

The researcher maintained this view and said that parents are supposed to take the responsibility of their student's studies in order to minimise the drop out of NCV programme.

5.2.1.6 Lack of transport/Absenteeism

According to Thomas (2001) is that there are some factors which contributes to the dropout rate of students which are beyond the institutions, for an example, lack of transport to attend the studies can be a challenge (Thomas, 2001).

According to the data presented by the respondents, most learners are absent from the college because they do not have transport. They end up missing tests and examinations as such their performance is affected. The other challenge is that other students used to walk from home to school, now they are compelled to use public transport because of the distance to be travelled to the college. It is evident that the lack of finances due to late payments by the bursary scheme, lead to absenteeism of learners.

The researcher aligned herself with the view that lack of transport affected the institution and the learner's performance, because they would be absent from the college. Learners also bunk classes and do not attend their studies, missing tests and examinations and lacking behind with their college work. As such they are no longer motivated to attend classes; ultimately they end up dropping out of the college. This is a huge challenge for the college performance because respondents mentioned that absenteeism of students is the order of the day, thereby losing

valuable teaching and learning. Learners do not obtain the minimum requirements for examination purpose and they end up dropping out of the college.

5.2.1.7 Socio economic issues

According to Gury (2007), living conditions of students affect their studies as such they can influence the probabilities of dropping higher institutions without graduation (Gury, 2007).

All the respondents have the same opinion regarding socio economic factors that contribute to the drop out of students at Westcol College. The college is affected by learners being involved in drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and learner pregnancy. The college is also experiencing a low level of nutrition and it affects the performance of both the learners and the college.

The researcher concurred with Gury and the respondents regarding the view because she found out that Westcol College learners are infected and affected by this deadly disease called HIV/AIDS and learner pregnancy. Meaning that learners would be absent most of the time from the college and as such their performance would be affected.

The researcher observed that the college is feeding 12000 learners from their budget, as a way of helping and motivating them to attend their studies because they were used to the school nutrition during the high school days.

5.2.1.8 Lack of academic preparedness

According to Thomas (2002), in the United State of America the higher education is linked to an increase in student withdrawals or lower levels of completion to greater student diversity especially new students because they are not academically prepared to study at HE (Thomas, 2002:426).

The researcher has found that this is also happened at Westcol College. Some learners were not academically prepared in their studies, they had enrolled at the college to please their parents or they have followed their friends at the college.

The respondents have spoken in one voice that some learners at the college are not academically prepared. They are lazy to study while others are not interested in obtaining a higher education.

5.2.1.9 Lack of Fundamentals subjects

The National Centre for Education Statistics (2011), cites that there is a high dropout rate of African American and Hispanic students. Also the first ones to attend the college in the family with limited English ability are at higher risk of dropping out (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2011:1)

The respondents agreed with the view that most students are having difficulty in understanding English and lacking the required background in Mathematics. The researcher has the same opinion that learners who are eloquent speakers do not encounter problems in their studies because it is easier for them to understand the content.

5.2.1.10 Employed Students

According to Callender and Kemp (2000) cited by Thomas and Yorke (2010) state that part-time employment of student contributes to the dropout rate at the college (Thomas and Yorke, 2010:70)

Gose (1988) argues that a number of college students are employed, either full time or part time. Since 1993, there is an increase of 4% because 39% of college freshmen work 16 or more hours per week (Gose, 1998). The abovementioned factors contribute to the dropout of students at the college.

According to the respondents was that learners who have the challenge of finances, end up being employed and it becomes difficult for them to attend their studies because they are suppose to work during the day (Learnerships and Apprenticeship). This is a universal problem where you will find that most students are employed on part time basis or end up being employed full time because of financial challenges at home. Unfortunately such students end up dropping out of the college in order to save funds for their studies.

5.2.1.11 Wrong choice of programme

According to Gury (2007), students who are not admitted into their choice of Faculty can probably dropout Gury (2007:52) (citing Thomas, 2003 and Moullet, 2006).

Thomas and Yorke (2012) argues in the research that if United Kingdom institutions cannot engage student during the pre-entry process, regarding the subject choice.

That can lead to the dropping out of students in the institution (Thomas and Yorke, 2012:67).

The researcher agreed with the view and maintained that students need to choose the NCV programme according to their potential which will be reflected by the replacement test that they would have written. The reason being that they will be able to perform well in their studies, they will not encounter much difficulty.

According to the data presented by the respondents, was that Westcol students coming from high school got frustrated by their choice of programme. The reason being that they do not choose the programme according to the replacement test they have written. Instead the programme was chosen just to satisfy the friends or parent, that lead to frustration and dropping out of the college.

5.2.2 College related factors

5.2.2.1 Unqualified lecturers and lack of commitment

According to Adams (2011) states in his research report that “the Umalusi Report (2009) alluded to the scarcity of skilled professionals within the various sectors as being a challenge for the colleges since the possible applicants for placement were extremely small”. The FET sector needs skilled NCV lecturers that will be able to deliver in the teaching and learning environment (Adams, 2011:30).

Thomas (2002) argues that curricula, quality of teaching and learning, the relationship of students with the staff, the flexibility of the institutions time table and deadlines and the student academically assessment process needs the committed and qualified lecturers(Thomas, 2002: 426).

According to the data presented by the respondents there is support of the views of Thomas and Adams stating that, some of Westcol college lecturers are underqualified and they lack commitment. This action affected the performance of the institution and the students. Eventually it leads to the dropout of students at the college.

The researcher concurred with the view that the effectiveness of any educational institution depended on the quality of teaching and learning, skills, motivation and qualified and commitment lecturers.

5.2.2.2. Challenges with NCV curriculum

According to Adams (2011) the other contributing factor to dropout rate in the college is the NCV programme that is too theoretical with minimal practical competencies and students need also the practical competency (Adams, 2011:27).

According to Robbins (1993) cited by Thomas (2012) says that” working class students were less successful not because they were of inferior intelligence but because the curriculum was “biased in favour of those with which middle class students were already ex-curricular familiar” (Robbins, 1993:153).

First year students are confronted with a stressful situation of a transition from a high school to a Higher Education environment, difficulties in learning the study habits of a new academic environment and interpersonal relationship with other students. All these factors contributed to their dropped out rate at the college (Parke, Summerfieldt, Hogan and Majeski, 2004)

According to the respondents the Grade 9 learners cannot understand the content, because the level is too high and the amount of their studies is a lot thus they cannot cope. Unlike, the Grade 12 learners who have passed high school and accessed the college. They are at an advanced level classes are too easy and boring. Ultimately they absent themselves from attending classes.

The researcher shared the same mind regarding the view of NCV curriculum for the reason that, it is not well structured especially the practical part and the theory part suffers. The challenge was that the lecturers are used to offering theoretical classes where ‘chalk and talk’ is the order of the day.

Whereas, the new NCV curriculum on the other hand wants lecturers to implement the Outcome Based Education (OBE) in their teaching which is more practical than theoretical. It would be easier for the lecturers to implement the OBE approach, so

that they are able to measure if they have attained specific outcomes before continuing to the next theme.

5.2.2.2 Lack of Background in Information Technology

According to Mthembu (2011) at the Annual South African Technology Network (SATN) conference state that one factor that contributes to dropout in Higher Education is the lack of enhancing technology in education. Tertiary institutions must advance in Teaching and Learning in Technology (TLT) by having appropriate infrastructure and technical staff in order to support academics (Mthembu, 2011:193).

All the respondents agreed to the view that most of Westcol lecturers lacked the background of Information Technology. That lack of knowledge affected the college and learners performance. The researcher observed that lecturers lacked the enrichment of Information Technology in their institution, they cannot use the IT equipment and that on its own affected performance of the college and learners which contributes to dropout rate of NCV programme learners.

5.2.2.3 Lack of educational resources

There was a universal agreement amongst the respondents that the environment at this college is not conducive. There is a lack of educational resources and non improved facilities that makes teaching and learning environment not favourable for provisioning of quality education. The college management and the college council must ensure that adequate resources are provided for quality teaching and learning to take place in a conducive environment.

5.2.2.4 College accepting Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN)

The researcher has learned from the respondents who participated during the interview that, most of the learners that have accessed the college have educational special needs (low Intelligence Quotient - IQ).

These learners have learning difficulties and they battle with their studies or the NCV programme curriculum. Finally they become discouraged and drop out of the college. On the other hand, the Higher Education expects the Further Education and

Training Colleges to perform and produce skilled students. Not considering the kind of students that access the FET colleges every year.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter centres around the findings based on interviews and document analysis performed regarding the factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV programme learners in the Westcol College.

There is evidence from the respondents that, learner and college related factors contributed at the college. That is, lack of finances, lack of parental involvement, lack of transport and absenteeism and wrong choice of programme to mention a few. If the above mentioned factors are not properly addressed, there will not be proper quality teaching and learning in a suitable environment that would produce the required skills in South Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a broad outline of the previous chapters. Based on the findings and the analyses of the study, conclusion and recommendations to Westcol College will be presented.

The purpose of this research is to investigate which factors contribute to the dropout rate of NCV students at the FET colleges. In order to identify these factors the Westcol College in Randfontein (Randfontein campus) has been used as a case study, because the purpose is not to generalise the findings, however to create the space of conducting a research.

The primary research question was “what are the factors contributing to learners not completing their studies”? The secondary research question was “how would the learner related factors or college performance contribute to the dropout rate”? The Westcol College like many other colleges in the country is performing well, even though there are challenges that affect the performance of the learners and the college.

6.2 Conclusion

Based on the two key themes that emerged in the study, the following conclusion can be drawn for the research:

6.2.1 Learner related factors

It is evident that learners from low income families lack the financial capability to pay for the studies and transport, even though the Higher Education is issuing out bursaries to learners. It is nevertheless not enough to cover to their needs. There is no monitoring system of issuing out bursaries by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Parents are not involved in their children’s education. It is evident that socio-economic issues like drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, learner pregnancy and lack of good nutrition contribute to the dropout rate.

6.2.2 College related factors

It is also evident that the NCV programme curriculum has challenges; there is a lack of fundamental subjects, wrong choice of NCV programme by learners and unqualified lecturers who affect the performance of the institution and the learners. Lastly, the lack of resources makes it difficult to have a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

Based on the finding it is vital to conclude this study by stating that it is evident that learner related factors and college performance contribute to the dropout of NCV programme learners at Westcol College in Randfontein.

6.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that the Department of Higher Education must have a monitoring system that should be used by the Further Education and Training Colleges, to avoid duplication of issuing bursary to one person. There is evidence from the respondents that the colleges need a financial person to monitor the issuing of bursaries, because students drop out of the college after receiving the bursary and register again at another college and receive yet another bursary at that college.

The Department of Higher Education must have a system of involving parents in their children's education. The department must also review the NCV programme curriculum in order to avoid learners that are trapped in the pipeline. Learners must be promoted to the next level only if they have passed all the subjects.

Strict measures must be implemented by the Higher Education when it comes to the selection of programmes/subjects. Learners must not be allowed to choose subjects that they are going to battle with in the future or choose subjects that are being chosen instead by their friends or to please their parents.

The Department of Higher Education must ensure that they employ qualified lecturers so that they are able to deliver quality education, so that the Further Education and Training colleges can produce good performance. The Department must also ensure that there are adequate facilities and educational resources to create an effective teaching and learning environment, in order to achieve uniform goals and objectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Letter of Approval – Gauteng Department of Education

Appendix 2

SENSITISATION SESSION

Purpose:

1. I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, studying Masters Degree in Public & Development Management.
2. The purpose of the visit at the college is to conduct a research on the Factors contributing to the dropout rate of NCV programme learners in Westcol College.
3. Your participation and contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Benefits:

1. The respondent's contributions could assist with future planning of quality teaching and learning at the Further Education and Training Colleges.

Confidentiality:

1. To protect your confidentiality, no identification information about participants will be recorded in the research findings.
2. Research records will only be utilised for the purpose of the study.
3. All the information shared during the research findings is confidential and it will not be presented to any person.