An Exploration of High School Learners' Perceived Utility of Career Guidance in a Public Township High School

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Masters in Social and Psychological Research – Research Report Declaration

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Dedication

This research report is dedicated to my late Father, Martin Mahlatse Mailula. It still pains me that he passed on a few months before he could witness me embarking on this journey. Nonetheless, I am eternally grateful that he encouraged and motivated me to pursue the Master's degree before his passing. Robala ka Khutso Ngwato a Ngwato.

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Abstract

The current study explored high school learners' perceived usefulness of career guidance in a public township high school. The sample consisted of twelve learners from a Gauteng township high school in Mamelodi. The main aims of the study were to explore township learners' perceptions of the approach used during career guidance in school and the quality of information received. The role career guidance played in readying learners to make career related decisions was also explored. The study was guided by the Systems Theory Framework of career development and was qualitative in nature. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data and the thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data. The main findings highlighted that learners believed career guidance could be an integral aspect of their career choice process. They were, however, not satisfied with the career guidance process they experienced. Inadequate information and teacher involvement were some of the issues highlighted. Learners also reported unsatisfactory experiences with regard to career expos because of a variety of reasons including overcrowded sessions and insufficient time allocations to engage with career advisors. These factors were found to substantially diminish the role career guidance plays in aiding learners to make sensible career choices. The research study suggests that in order for learners to be effectively guided in their career decision making process, teacher involvement and the quality of career choice information and need to improve and be more bespoke. Furthermore, events like career expos should be given careful consideration before schools encourage students to attend.

Keywords: Career guidance, township high school, learners, Life Orientation, Career expos,

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Understanding career guidance is important in the high school context because of factors such as the constantly changing world of work, the growing impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and socio-economic factors that are all influencing career possibilities (Maree, 2020). Career guidance is especially applicable in the secondary school context where learners have to make informed career related decisions as they prepare to conclude their school careers and begin new journeys. This is because aspects such as the 4IR continue to have far reaching implications not only for people that are currently in the world of work, but for people that are still planning to enter the labour market in the future (Maree, 2018; Maree, 2020). Thus, the changing world of work is also impacting on the facilitation of career guidance, where learners need to be equipped with relevant career related information to navigate this space (Maree, 2018). When learners have a clear understanding of their career opportunities and choices, they are able to make effective decisions concerning their careers, and to hopefully pursue those chosen careers. In the South African context this can help break the cycle of poverty often experienced by people in disadvantaged communities. These are just some of the many important reasons why research in career guidance continues to be necessary.

1.1 Research aims

The study aimed to contribute to literature on learners' experiences of career guidance and counselling in previously disadvantaged schools by exploring and trying to understand their perceptions of the process in a township public school setting. Furthermore, it aimed to understand if the career guidance was perceived as useful or not for informing career decisions.

1.2 Rationale

The story of South Africa as a democracy is often dominated by the systemic levels of inequality brought about primarily as a result of the apartheid era (Chisolm, 2012; Teeger, 2015). And while a discussion on the role of the post-apartheid government is also important in that regard, any discussion regarding the state and provision of essential services like healthcare and education is best understood in the context of the impact of apartheid. The current research is interested in developing a better understanding of the way career guidance is experienced in a township high school.

The changing world of work and the emergence of new careers require an effective equipping of learners, so that suitable career decisions are made. Career guidance is aimed at assisting

individuals to choose career opportunities that are suitable for them. This is achieved by using the process of supporting students to recognize their unique qualities and areas of development, through presenting and discussing ideas such as mindfulness, dynamic abilities, aptitudes and other factors (Varalakshmi & Moy, 2009).

Career guidance is fundamental in a high school student's life because it is during this time when they start seriously exploring their career options, interests, as well as where they see themselves in the future. These decisions have the potential to shape students in a profound way. This is probably even more important in underprivileged settings where there is poor access to quality information and expertise, fewer accessible role models, sub-optimal community dynamics that often discourage interest in various careers and other resource constraints that may lead students to feel there are no tangible options for them (Njoko, 2018; Ramjit, 2015). The lack of effective career guidance and counselling can impact on a learner's ability to make informed career decisions, which may result in issues such as tertiary dropouts (Dama, 2018; Dabula & Makura, 2013). Therefore, as there is a lack of research focused on understanding career guidance in the township context, the current research assessed the perceived utility of career counselling in a township public high school. The study aims to contribute to the limited research on the lived experiences of students with regard to career guidance in South Africa's township high schools.

1.3 Outline and structure of the study/research report

The research report consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction and outline of the research report. Chapter two provides a review of the literature. This will consist of an overview of the historical and present context of South Africa's education system as well as the implications on career guidance for learners in public township school settings. The chapter will also describe various career guidance and development frameworks relevant for the South African context, particularly disadvantaged schools. The chapter then concludes by describing the theoretical framework which underpins the current study.

Chapter three will discuss the research methodology approach used. This includes the research design, sample, sampling procedure, data analysis, reflexivity. Chapter four discusses the results of the research which are comprised of four themes and their subthemes. Chapter five discusses and expands on the research results by answering the research questions central to the current study. Lastly, chapter six discusses the limitations, implications for future research and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 South Africa's historical context and the impact on education

Over two decades post-apartheid and the move into a democratic state, there is still strong evidence of inequality and social injustice in the public services that are offered to South Africans (Bock, 2018; Finn et al., 2014; Spaull, 2013; Strauss & Liebenberg, 2014). South Africa's Gini Coefficient rate, which measures income or wealth inequality within a country or population, was already high during the emergence of the democratic government at 59.3 percent (Schneider, 2018). This rate further increased to 63.4 by the year 2011 and the latest available statistics indicate that it is now approximately 0.65 (Schneider, 2018). Apartheid played a central role in creating this inequality as it was an ideology used for the separation of various racial groups in South Africa (Spaull, 2013). It was characterised by a structured separation and marginalisation of the country's Black people (i.e., African, Indian and Coloured), and denied them access to political, economic, and socioeconomic powers and rights (Mapadimeng, 2012). This was done through the use of unjust apartheid laws which ranged from prohibiting Black people from voting to restricting their access to certain public spaces reserved exclusively for White people (Teeger, 2015). South Africa's history with institutionalized segregationist and apartheid policies that segregated Whites from non-Whites (Africans, Coloureds, and Indians), non-whites from each other, and ethnic groups among Africans is a significant factor separating it from other countries (Parashar, 2014).

Apartheid was a structure put in place to deprive the majority of South Africa's population (i.e., Black people), from having fair and equitable access to the same resources and facilities as White people, simply because of the colour of their skin (Graven, 2014). Land distribution and utilisation played a huge role in the segregation process (Strauss & Liebenberg, 2014). Through the 1913 Land Act and 1936 Land and Trust Black Act, Black people were only allocated 13% of land, despite being the larger population in the country (Cousins, 2007; Strauss & Liebenberg, 2014). They also experienced limited possibilities in terms of opportunities to work and they were further deliberately subjected to lower quality public services. Education was one of the key services, along with healthcare, that did not escape this fate (Seekings, 2007). Furthermore, for Black people that were fortunate enough to be employed, violence and abuse were often experienced in the workplace, especially at the hands of their supervisors

(Knoch, 2016). Black people were also often subjected to violent criminal activities in their local areas, especially due to the lack of support by the government in ensuring their safety (Knoch, 2016).

The biggest struggle regarding overcoming the consequences of apartheid has been in the effort to undo economic challenges such as increased unemployment and poverty, which were primarily caused by the structure of racial exclusion (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2006). Post-apartheid the democratic government's aim was to put systems in place that were meant to not only address past injustices (e.g., segregation due to skin colour), but also ensure a sense of equality and prosperity as outlined in the Constitution. Unfortunately, the effects of the systematic categorization and segregation of people in terms of race are still rife years after apartheid, as large parts of the current generation continue to experience them (Smith, 2011). The effects are most clearly seen in the increased inequality and poor basic services provided to Black people. As stated earlier, issues including unemployment, education, healthcare and basic infrastructure (e.g. the reliable provision of water and electricity) have not progressed in a manner that suggests South Africa's socio-economic structure is significantly better off since apartheid (Connolly, 2013; Gibson, 2012; Nnadozie, 2013; Schneider, 2018) A clear indication of this is the fact that Black communal protests in the democratic era are predominantly about government's perceived failure in providing consistent quality services to its people (Knoch, 2016).

2.2 The repercussions of apartheid and poor governance on the education system

In the apartheid era the educational sector was characterised by segregated educational institutions for learners of different racial groups as well as imbalanced regulations, curriculum and funding that severely disadvantaged Black people (Smith, 2011). In order to fully comprehend the deep negative impact of the substandard education provided under apartheid for Black people in general, it is important to consider education within the wider economic and political processes and see it in the context of complex social realities (Chisholm, 2012). That is, to understand educational inequality in relation to its ability to directly influence, and be influenced by, other forms of social inequalities (McKeever, 2017). This is most clearly seen when observing how offering a second-class quality of education to the marginalised, weakens their opportunities in the labour-market and entrenches their poverty (Spaull, 2013).

The calculated barring of Black people from a decent educational system and skilled occupations under apartheid has contributed significantly to the current high rate of unemployment (Government Communications Information Systems, 2014). This rate was steadily at the 29.1 % mark in 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). However, the COVID19 pandemic has significantly increased the unemployment rate to 30 %, spiking the number of unemployed individuals to 7.1 million in a short space of time (Trading Economics, 2020). According to Harvie (2020, para. 7) "South Africa's poorest are the most at risk, and the Covid19 crisis will deepen the division between the countries richest and poorest, as the experiences will be different".

The democratic government has also contributed to many of the issues that the country is faced with (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). It has been argued that the main shortcoming has been its failure to implement the strategies and plans that it proposed to improve on the state of the country's education (Mestry, 2013). For instance, regardless of government's attempt at combining higher learning institutions and ensuring access to all schools, previously black only institutions are still unable to deliver a good quality of education (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Mncayi & Dunga, 2016). Furthermore, the government was held liable for failing to provide a proper educational environment for children in the Eastern cape, because of the prevalence of mud schools in the province (Skeleton, 2014). The Limpopo textbook dilemma where learners had not been provided with learning materials also shed light on the country's poor management and ineffectiveness pertaining to the access of basic education (Connolly, 2013).

Social class is the primary cause of inequality problems in education, and some argue that one of the reasons for that is policy formulation that does not take into consideration the people that are affected by it (Vally, 2018). An effective policy formulation and execution is characterized by its ability to represent the interests, understanding and social dynamics of its people (Vally, 2018). Furthermore, despite legislative reforms meant to eradicate inequality (e.g., South African Schools Act, 1996b), children from previously disadvantaged areas are often restricted from attending private schools due to their language policies and high tuition fees (Mestry, 2017). An example of the former was the School Governing Body (SGB) of a school in the Western Cape, namely Mikro Primary School, openly refusing to accommodate 21 Black learners as a result of the language policy which stated that all learners must be instructed through Afrikaans (Mestry, 2017).

The democratic state of South Africa is still faced with an education system that perpetuates inequality. Therefore, while access to basic education is readily available to most, aspects such as school uniform remain obligatory even though they are expensive for impoverished and unemployed African parents, while more affluent schools, typically dominated by white learners, are well equipped as a result of, in large part, old apartheid structures (Tshivhase-Phendla & Mashau, 2010).

While apartheid policies and structures played a central role in creating and entrenching inequality in the South African education system, the post-democratic government also has much to account for given the persistent levels of inequality seen under its leadership. For instance, in relation to infrastructure, public schools in rural areas often do not have science labs and computer facilities, and this negatively impacts on learners' science and maths education (Khumalo & Mji 2014). Furthermore, such infrastructural limitations also often impact on access to information (Ngoepe et al., 2017). A 2018 government report indicated that 19% of public schools had illegal pit toilets, 86 % did not have labs, 77% did not have a library and 42% were not equipped with recreational structures (Amnesty International, 2020).

The democratic government's limitations in providing quality services has negatively impacted on the quality of education, specifically in poorer areas including townships. In addition, it has impacted how learners receive education in South Africa as this is generally dependent on socio-economic status and race (Amnesty International, 2020). For instance, even though the state has an all-round circulated education plan, administrative issues in districts such as delays in the allocation of funds to schools are often a limitation for the management of education in local areas (Boateng, 2014; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Also, lack of resources and the location of a school can impact significantly on the offering of career guidance. Thus, career guidance in a public township school which is the focus of the current study is one of the potential unfortunate effects of prevalent public-school issues.

2.3 Townships schools in South Africa

"Township" is a term used in South Africa to describe the less developed urban regions which were set aside for "non-white" people during the 19th century until the introduction of a democratic country (Ramnarain, 2016). Despite its initial meaning, the term "township" is still used, often to define regions that are being developed through, for instance, the housing subsidy

programme (Albien & Naidoo, 2017; McGaffin et al., 2015). Townships remain located on the city peripheries and were intentionally separated from the characteristically European city centre by either a natural or artificial separation (Jurgens et al., 2013). Townships are also referred to as peri-urban areas because they have both rural and urban characteristics (Albien & Naidoo, 2017). Due to their different geographic characteristics, some townships are situated in such a way that access to resources is possible (McGaffin et al., 2015). The schools built to serve people who live in townships are therefore referred to as township schools even though 'public school' is a more accurate description in some respects.

Mamelodi, which is a Township area in Pretoria where the current study was conducted, is heavily populated and consists of many people with a low socio-economic status (Ruene, 2010). Like many other South African townships, Mamelodi is prone to "township issues" such as lack of service delivery, poor quality of housing, informal settlements, overcrowding, high rate of crime and poverty (Jurgens et al., 2013; Ramafamba & Mears, 2011). Due to some of the issues highlighted, Mamelodi is recognized as one of the priority areas for development by the City of Tshwane (Ramafamba & Mears, 2011). In recent years, and as a result of recognizing that better quality education is required in these areas, there has been an emergence of private township schools such as Curro Academy which, as a result of their nature, are not considered public schools.

Government's responsibility after the end of apartheid has always been to develop a South Africa where basic education was not only prioritized but deemed an essential requirement for all children (Amnesty International, 2020; Boateng, 2014; Department of Basic Education, 2014; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Mestry, 2013; Molapo & Pillay, 2018; Skeleton, 2014). However, the majority of learners from township areas are still confronted with the challenges that were created as a result of the apartheid system. Bhana (2012) argues that schools are generally not resistant to the social context in which they are located. Thus, when compared to township schools, suburban schools which were initially reserved for white learners but are now accommodating of all (mostly middle class) learners normally have the best resources and are situated in communities with higher-economic status (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Thus, despite the move into a democratic era and interventions formulated by the current government to create an equal education for all, the majority of learners in underprivileged communities are still faced with many challenges as a result of systemic inequality.

Examples of this inequality are seen in schools in the rural areas of South Africa where, aside from the significant infrastructure problems, there is a struggle to employ and retain suitably qualified teachers due to the lack of resources and growth opportunities (Khumalo & Mji; 2014; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Township schools also face specific challenges. For instance, when compared to private schools, public township schools often have class numbers that surpass the recommended proportion of 40:1 for primary schools and 35:1 for high schools (Mestry, 2017). This has many potentially negative consequences for students and teachers.

For the current study, the issue of interest is career guidance in township areas. This is because South Africa's education crises has deepened the social struggles of its people, and with the constantly changing world, many people are often faced with the harsh reality of these struggles, including the country's youth. For example, despite South Africa's population consisting mostly of young people, the unemployment rate in this age group is relatively high (Mncayi & Dunga, 2016; Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2019; Meterkamp et al., 2019). During the first quarter of 2020 approximately 41.7% of young people aged between 15-34 years old were unemployed (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2020). Furthermore, unemployment tends to impact on other societal issues such as poverty and lack of proper infrastructure (Dagume & Geyke, 2016). Career guidance can play a pivotal role in ensuring youth, especially from previously disadvantaged areas, are exposed to the various career possibilities so they can be inspired to dream and study hard. In addition, the process can assist in directing learners to scarce skills opportunities in South Africa, and this could possibly assist in alleviating employment issues in the country.

With the already intensifying rate of unemployment and the low quality of education received by learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, there is also the impending reality of the 4IR. Thus, it is certain that the world is moving at a faster pace, and for the country to adapt there must be an extensive improvement which will enable it to catch up to these worldwide developments. It is imperative that these scholars are exposed to career prospects that will enable them to make good decisions that are in line with where the world is moving. Young people often end up in low paying employment opportunities or unemployed (Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2019). The mismatching of skills was found to be the biggest cause of unemployment in South Africa (Farooq, 2011; SAQA, 2012; Mncayi & Dunga, 2016; Dagume & Geyke, 2016). Sutherland (2020) argued that South Africa's economy is not suitable for the 4IR, as a result of many aspects such as unemployment caused by its people not having the relevant skills, and the country's weakness in terms of policy implementation. However, exposure to

career prospects is not enough, a quality education and access to funding for further development is crucial. The current study, in the context of township schooling, is interested in understanding how career guidance is experienced and perceived in this unequal education value chain.

2.4 Career guidance and counselling

The concepts of career guidance and counselling are distinct. Career counselling is defined as the process of communication between a counsellor and a client, which consists of the application of psychological theory, and a recognized set of communication skills (Kidd, 2006). Herr (1997) argued that career counselling assists with self-understanding, the understanding of career paths and the concerns related to these processes. Maree (2009) postulated that career counselling is defined by the assumption that the client is the only expert or authority for themselves. While another definition stated that counselling is the process of providing information during a single or many encounters with a trained professional (Mogbo et al., 2011). According to Abrahams et al (2015), career counselling consists of a continuing process of engaging the world of work by selecting career opportunities that are readily available and characterized by different aspects. Counselling helps to provide options that are related to information that has been provided to an individual, to assist with making informed personal choices (Mogbo et al., 2011).

Career guidance, on the other hand, is an activity which ensures that people receive the skills required to make choices and decisions about their future (Jayasinge 2001, as cited in Chireshe, 2012). It consists of information, guidance and basic counselling services to assist students in making educational, training and occupational choices (Varalakshmi & Moy, 2009). Hodkinson (2008) suggested that "the main aim of career guidance is to increase the quality of the career decision-making process, leading to an increase in the number of good decisions, which ultimately leads to less educational wastage and reduced unemployment" (p 2). The career guidance process is one that is continuous and allows learners to become aware of the interrelationship between their capacities, interests, family, work, and lifetime roles in relation to theory and career prospects (Dama et al., 2019). It consists of providing career information such as career pathways, courses and job-related opportunities (Watts, 2013). In the South African context, this process is meant to be primarily facilitated by the Life Orientation (LO)

course teachers (Nkoane & Alexander, 2010). From the definitions, it can be deduced that career guidance mainly focuses on information dissemination to help people shape their career decisions.

The career guidance process should be holistic in nature and should be initiated by a trained teacher that is ready to handle different aspects that are presented during the career decision process. There are clear differences between career guidance and counselling, such as counselling mainly consisting of one-on-one sessions, and guidance being more broadly focused on the collective through providing information to learners and giving them direction. The current study favours an approach in which career counselling is, to a reasonable extent, framed in the broader context of career guidance (Jayasinge 2001, as cited in Chireshe, 2012). In so doing, reasonable conceptually flexibility is created given the prevalent inequality in terms of access to services such as career counselling in South Africa for the underprivileged. Career guidance is, therefore, understood to consist of basic counselling and it is defined as the process through which the necessary support, resources and knowledge are provided to learners in schools in order to help them with their career decision-making process (Singh, 2016).

There is no doubt that learners need to be equipped with the relevant information and necessary tools in order to assist them in making informed decisions about their careers. Career guidance, therefore, is not only about selecting a specific career path but establishing the ways in which one can integrate into society and make meaningful social contributions (Maree, 2016). This is an important aspect for collectivistic contexts such as most areas in South Africa. In the South African environment, particularly in the township context, lack of resources means that guidance teachers are expected to play the role of a career counsellor even if they might not be qualified (DoE, 2011; SAQA, 2009).

2.5 Career guidance in South African schools

Some of the key steps taken in ensuring quality education for all include the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Furthermore, because of previous imbalances, the South African Department of Basic Education acknowledged diversity as an important aspect to career guidance programmes (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2016) The NQF aims to include previously marginalised South Africans into the education system (Keevy et al., 2012; Thobejane et al, 2012; Singh, 2016;). In addition,

the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) together with the SAQA introduced a policy framework which aimed to drive the career guidance information and services in the country (SAQA, 2012). Thus, SAQA was developed to support the NQF's intended aims of improving equal learning in the country, especially career guidance (SAQA, 2009).

In the schooling context, career guidance is a component in the Life Orientation subject curriculum, and it is a mandatory subject for all learners (Watts, 2013). "The Life Orientation subject addresses skills, knowledge and values about each individual, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, careers and career choices" (Department of Education, 2011). According to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), one of the aims of the subject is to prepare learners through providing the necessary resources that will help them make well-informed decisions (DoE, 2011). The subject curriculum plan refers to career development as careers and career choices (SAQA, 2012). The following outlines some of the stated teaching topics from grade 10-12 for careers and career choices (DoE, 2011):

- Knowledge about each person in connection with the demands of the world of work.
- Evaluating personal expectations concerning careers of interests, where factors such as eligibility, chances of success and satisfaction, as well as expectation versus reality are addressed.
- Address admission requirements for tertiary courses.
- Reasons and effects of unemployment and to help learners create innovative ways of preventing joblessness by teaching on opportunities such as entrepreneurship, formal jobs, informal jobs, community work and many others.
- Job-related trends and needs.
- Creation of short CVs to apply for employment and/or tertiary funding.
- Help to identify opportunities in multiple job areas, where factors such as research skills, salary packages and other aspects are addressed.

All the above stated LO topics should be effective in addressing career-related issues if implemented well. In addition, besides the stated aims of the teaching plan concerning career guidance, the Department of Basic Education organizes career exhibitions for learners to attend (SAQA, 2012). Learners from township schools rely on the Life Orientation subject for their

career guidance and counselling process, and in order to receive the necessary advice, skills and resources.

Life orientation covers topics such as values, through the values education component (Maphalala & Mphofu, 2018). Values education consists of the following factors: the development of the self in society, health, social and environmental responsibility, constitutional rights and responsibilities, the world of work, as well as physical education (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2018).

Despite its important covered topics, the subject has often shown limitations, especially in its implementation phase. Dama (2018) found that L.O teachers understood their career guidance roles as consisting of helping students realize who they are as well as exploring their potential. However, a study that focused on L.O teachers training requirements for effectively executing career guidance highlighted that teachers were not properly equipped to effectively facilitate the process (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Furthermore, Diale (2016) conducted a study in the Gauteng province in which it was found that L.O teachers were not supported and developed in their careers as facilitators of the subject. Thus Hartell et al., (2013) argued that teachers often felt unskilled and demotivated because they failed to implement the subjects' curriculum in the classroom, such as career guidance.

Jacobs (2011) conducted research which aimed to understand how learners viewed LO, and it was found that there was a clear distinction between the intended aims of the subject and its actual outcomes in the classroom, due to its implementation process. Furthermore, learners commonly found the subject uninteresting, pointless, and irrelevant (Jacobs, 2011). But, despite the failures of the subject, at a particular South African school, it was found that learners still had confidence in their LO teacher, and they were satisfied with the content knowledge received through the subject (Magano, 2011).

Career guidance was implemented with the hope that social problems such as youth unemployment could be proactively addressed (Ho & Leung, 2016). However, Mncayi and Dunga (2016) argued that the lack of an effective career guidance consultation is one of the causes of unemployment, as students often choose courses that have low level skills or could delay them in securing a job placement. As a result of inadequate resources, learners are often unprepared for the transition of high school to post high school opportunities.

Aspects such as the lack of resources, deficiency in expertise and lack of comprehension by some members of institutional learning support teams in managing multicultural teams, often

result in school districts struggling to handle and execute career guidance and counselling effectively (Mahlangu, 2011). Thus, Dama et al. (2019) found that learners were not successfully prepared for the job market, as a result of the ineffectiveness of the career guidance and counselling offered as a component in the Life Orientation subject. Misconceptions about careers in low socio-economic areas often result in learners not being able to make constructive career decisions (Albien & Naidoo, 2017). In addition, these misconceptions are further enhanced by the lack of exposure to quality information about career development (Albien & Naidoo, 2017).

Dabula and Makura (2013) conducted a study aimed at exploring the perceived impact of a career development programme in the Eastern Cape rural and urban schools, as well as its effect on tertiary education access. It was found that learners were confused and lacked confidence in making career choices because of inefficient provision or the complete lack of career guidance programmes in their schools (Dabula & Makura, 2013). In research conducted by Maree (2009) which looked at strategies set by higher education institutions which were meant to combat obstacles as a result of the changing world, it was established that there is still a great deficit in effective and good career counselling strategies in South Africa.

In a study focused on identifying the requirements of South African learners who used the NQF and Career Advice Services helpline service, it was found that career guidance should be readily available and less expensive for high school learners (Singh, 2016). In order to provide better services for learners, more research aimed at understanding learners' career related needs from their own perspective should be conducted (Singh, 2016). Jonck (2014) found that there is an interrelationship between learning encounters, career related individual certainty, subject fulfilled expectancies, and information of career interests. Dabula and Makura (2013), also found that the career guidance and development curriculum was often inadequate and resulted in learners who faced challenges as a result.

2.6 Career guidance and counselling in Public Township Schools

In the South African context, career choices for many high school learners are accidental, consist of rushed decisions, are imposed by external factors, and are not made through a continuous process of conscious decision-making, self-discovery and sense of alignment to the

world of work (Dabula & Makura, 2013). If this is the case when speaking broadly, research on career counselling in disadvantaged areas takes on greater significance. The research studies below corroborate this view.

Maree (2016) argues that underprivileged people cannot afford professional career counselling services that are offered by private practitioners, and only a few teachers are trained to administer career counselling effectively. The legacy of apartheid and the failures of consecutive post-apartheid governments has contributed significantly to subpar career counselling services in township schools. These services have shown a clear lack of coordination and have been found to be ineffective when compared to those experienced in private schools (Walters et al., 2009).

The following studies highlight learners' experiences and perceptions of career guidance in the rural and township context: Jonck and Swanepoel (2015) postulated that South Africa is faced with reconciling and rectifying past inequalities and the lack of skills as a result of previous injustices. They, therefore, conducted a study to assess the career guidance administered in high schools, with a focus on grade 10 pupils' interpretation of the influence Life Orientation teachers have on the selection of their subjects. They found that learners did not find their life orientation teachers useful in relation to career guidance (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015).

Ramjit (2015) conducted a study which looked at Black unemployed high school dropout's perceptions of career guidance. Furthermore, it was also found that the career guidance offered to learners in disadvantaged schools partially contributed to the unsatisfactory career choices made (Ramjit, 2015). Njoko (2018) conducted a study which looked at the experiences of learners in relation to acquiring university access information. It was found that learners had limited channels for accessing information, especially as a result of initiatives such as the Central Applications Office, which is a system used in South Africa to administer university applications (Njoko, 2018).

Learners in disadvantaged communities often rely on alternative avenues to career guidance, as they have found these to be effective when compared to receiving career guidance in classroom. Cook and Maree (2016) conducted a study in which they compared a career guidance intervention program and LO career guidance activities in two low socio-economic schools. It was found that learners preferred the intervention programme over what they were usually taught in class.

For learners to transition successfully into the adapting world, they need to move beyond what the NQF is currently offering, and rather focus on a continuous learning and exploration process (Hatting, 2018). If career guidance facilitators, in this case, Life Orientation teachers, are not developed and provided with the necessary 4IR skills, then this could pose a threat to the learners, as they might end up being undeveloped. Thus, Kayembe and Nel (2019) argue that the 4IR is more likely to enhance the already existing inequality in the education system. Therefore, the career counselling process needs to be proactive to ensure that learners from low socio-economic backgrounds do not continue to remain at the disadvantaged end.

Simply asking learners what they would like to do after high school completion is not helpful in this day and age because by the time, they enter the world of work a large portion of jobs will have disappeared (Butler-Adam, 2018). Learners need to be active and to contribute to the economy in an effective way, while they also make educational choices for their personal development (Jonck, 2015). It is for all these reasons that the current study is interested in understanding the lived experiences of high school learners about the perceived efficacy of career guidance. In order to do this effectively it is important to ensure a framework that can be utilised in a multi-cultural setting in a rapidly changing world is applied. Therefore, relevant frameworks and techniques for South African learners need to be highlighted, especially for those in disadvantaged schools. Research and theory have helped to identify several career counselling frameworks and interventions, and these will be discussed briefly below, whilst one will be used as the chosen theoretical framework for the current study.

2.7 Career counselling frameworks

The career counselling frameworks highlighted below are aimed at combating the issue of poor guidance and counselling in schools. While these frameworks are for career counselling, they are also somewhat applicable to guidance.

Narrative career counselling focuses on helping people to create and recreate their own personal narrative, in relation to their own careers (McMahon, 2006, as cited in McIlveen & Patton, 2007). Narrative counselling involves the counsellor assisting an individual to present a preferred role in relation to their career, based on available opportunities, and then placing them in a position for the process of achieving this career goal (Maree, 2019). It is seen to be

valuable and relevant to South Africa's context in that Africans' lived experiences are often characterised through the process of enacting stories (Maree et al., 2006).

The Social learning theory of career decision making framework argues that people develop preferences for activities as a result of learning experiences; and that beliefs about themselves and their world are attained by direct and indirect educational experiences (Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990). The theory recognizes the interchange between a person's genetic aspects, environmental circumstances, learning experiences, cognitive and emotional reactions, as well as performance abilities that enable the construction of different career choices (Krumboltz, 1976). According to Krumboltz (2009) learning experiences occur in two ways. The first way, instrumental learning, happens when a person is positively reinforced or punished for a specific behaviour. The second way, associative learning experience, occurs as a result of observing the environment or the behaviour of others with its outcomes and thus wishing to emulate those specific behaviours (Krumboltz, 2009).

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was constructed as a way of comprehending the ways in which career and academic interests are developed, as well as how career choices are implemented (Lent & Brown, 2013). The SCCT is concerned with certain cognitive mediators through which learning experiences inform careers, the manner in which aspects such as interests, abilities and values interrelate as well as with specific theoretical paths by which people and contextual factors influence career outcomes (Lent et al., 2002).

Maree (2020) argues that for career counselling to meet the basic criteria of contextual relevance, there should be an implementation of both the narrative and quantitative approaches in the African context. However, what could help learners think critically and realistically about their future life prospects during the career guidance is the possible use of other qualitative participatory visual strategies such as mind mapping, photo voice and group discussions (Smit et al., 2015).

The above-mentioned frameworks and interventions have been highlighted as relevant and important for South Africa's career counselling context. That is, they are culturally accommodating and socially aware of the learner's context. Furthermore, the frameworks do not only consider the current social aspects of the learners, but they are also mindful of South Africa's historical context. Thus, when a technique considers social aspects of the individual, they can effectively become part of the career decision making process. Therefore, there is a

need to explore to what extent these techniques are being utilised and how they are perceived by their recipients in township areas.

Exploratory research embraces using theory in order to assess its explanatory strength and predictive power, and to also make sense of a previously defined segment of reality (Reiter, 2017). Skyttner (2005) argued that theories are important for dealing with real world problems and they act as the setting of the research. Therefore, the current study will adopt the Systems Theory Framework (STF) (McMahon, 2005) as a broad theoretical framework.

2.8 Systems Theory of career development as a Theoretical Framework

The Systems Theory was initially pioneered by Von Bertalanffy (1972), who developed the General Systems Theory. The General Systems Theory is based on the idea that an organism is best understood through the consideration of different aspects, as opposed to one in isolation (Bertalanffy, 1972). The function of the System Theory is to tackle real world predicaments (Skyttner, 2005). The theory assumes things/events are interconnected and should be comprehended with that in mind (Bertalanffy et al., 2008; Skyttner, 2005)

Urie Bronfenbrenner contributed significantly to the work of the systems theory by introducing the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). The theory is based on the notion that an individual's development is shaped by different settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). It is further argued that an environment's ability to function effectively as a developmental background is influenced by the interactions of all the social situations, including mutual communication and information between them (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The Systems Framework of career development (STF) recognises that a person, as a career decision maker, has different characteristics which include interests, religion, gender, knowledge and disabilities, as well as sources of aspirations which consist of family, peers and school (Patton & McMahon, 2015). The theory allows for clients seeking career development and assistance to be viewed within the contexts of their lives, as well as active agents for influencing their surrounding contexts (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). As a result, the framework is based on a constructivist approach to career development (Watson & McMahon, 2006). The systems theory of career development framework takes into consideration the environmental-

societal system such as political decisions, historical trends, globalisation, socio-economic status, employment market and geographical location (McMahon & Patton, 2018).

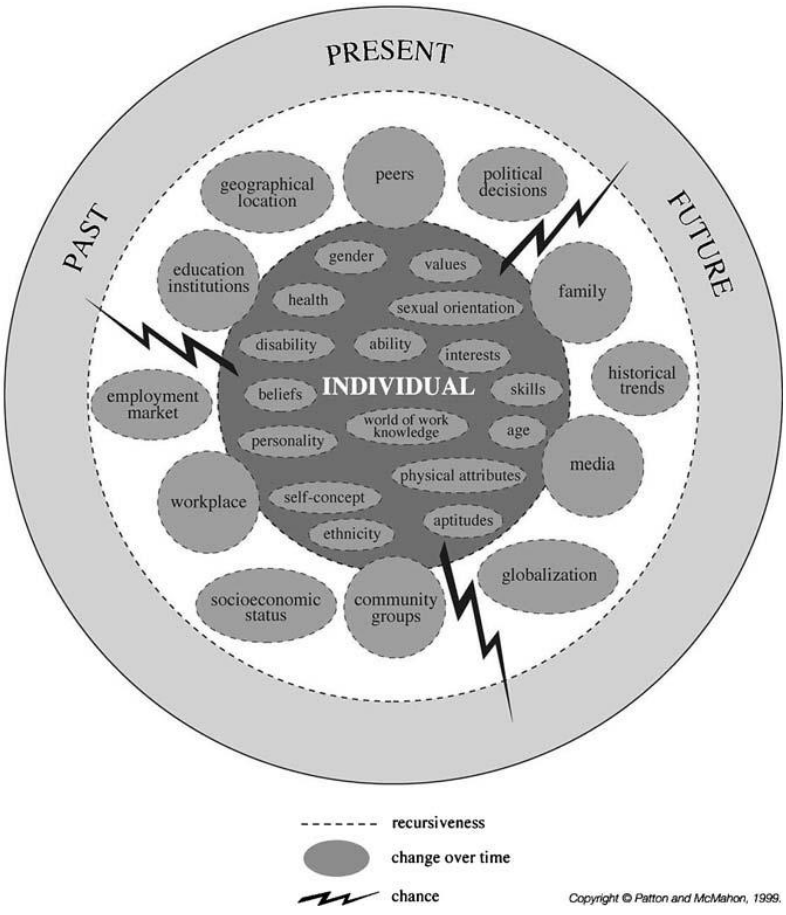
The STF is comprised of what is referred to as content and process influences to career decision making (Watson & McMahon, 2006). Content factors consist of intrapersonal aspects, contextual aspects as well as environmental influences (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Watson & McMahon, 2006). All these factors are highlighted in Figure 1. Process factors of the framework consist of recursiveness, change over time as well as chance as important factors for the different content influences (Watson & McMahon, 2006). Recursiveness highlights the important exchange between an individual as well as other systems, change over time is depicted by the process of the past, present and the future all coming into play, lastly chance considers factors which an individual has no control over (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). "fundamental to understanding the STF is the notion that each system is an open system, and an open system is subject to influence from outside and may also influence that which is beyond its boundaries" (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 154). For instance, it is argued that a serious economic disaster happening in a society is likely to have an undesirable or negative influence on a child's later developmental process, for the duration of their life expectancy (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Learners having to make informed career decisions will certainly be influenced by different contexts pertaining to this process. Not only do they have to navigate through the government system that has a significant impact on their learning, but they might also have challenges with not having effective support from their local social contexts. In South Africa, socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and the lack of financial resources might also significantly impact on learners' career decisions. All of these aspects are important and should be taken into consideration when learners are choosing their careers. The STF takes into consideration the idea that an individual exists within a bigger contextual system (Watson & McMahon, 2006).

The framework is considered a meta-theoretical framework which openly blends in other theories; hence it can be applied in different aspects such as career counselling, career education and career guidance (Watson & McMahon, 2009). All this makes the systems framework an overarching one within which many concepts of career development described in most career theories can be understood (Patton & McMahon, 2006). It is therefore relevant

for the current study, since the aim is to explore the perceived utility of career guidance using a comprehensive interpretive tool. The framework has also been shown to be an effective multicultural approach to career counselling across different countries, cultures and career counsellor training (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Therefore, the framework provides the most flexible and context sensitive evaluative characteristics for the aims of the current study.

Figure 1: The Systems Theory Framework of career development



2.9 Research Aims

The aims of the research are:

1) To explore township high school learners' perceptions of the approach used during career guidance sessions.
2) To explore township high school learners' perceptions of the quality of information received during guidance sessions.

3) To explore township high school learners' perceptions of the role career guidance plays in their readiness to make career related decisions.

2.10 Research questions

1. How do township high school learners characterise their career guidance experience?
2. How do township high school learners perceive the quality of information received during their career guidance process?
3. What are township high school learners' perceptions of the quality of career guidance they receive in relation to assisting them with making career decisions?

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter will describe the research design, sample, sampling strategy and analysis approach used by the current study. In addition, the chapter will describe the data collection procedure followed and ethical considerations for the research. It is important to mention upfront that the research took place in the context of a global pandemic which had a significant impact on most of the methodological components of the study. This pandemic was caused by COVID-19, an acronym of Coronavirus disease 2019 (Cascell et al., 2020). The virus, which is known to be highly contagious and more dangerous for the elderly and those suffering from comorbidities, causes illnesses ranging from mild colds to more severe diseases such as acute respiratory syndrome (Cascell et al., 2020). As a result of the virus's high contagion potential, many nations, including South Africa, took extreme precautions to protect their citizens. These precautions included nationwide lockdowns, standardised social distancing practices and the promotion of self-isolation where appropriate. The current research occurred under these conditions and meant that a high degree of flexibility was required, particularly regarding how data collection could be carried out safely and effectively.

3.1Research design

The current study's research design objective was qualitative cross-sectional and exploratory, and the design was situated in the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative methods are used in the social sciences when the objective is to make sense of how participants experience events and situations (Maxwell, 1996). The qualitative research approach is generally characterised by an interpretivist stance, instead of a positivist one (Guest et al., 2014). The interpretive paradigm aims to comprehend peoples' worldviews and meaning making in relation to their personal stories and/or behaviours (Guest et al., 2014). The interpretive approach is concerned with understanding the subjective meanings of participants and its quality, while a positivist approach focuses on what can be empirically observed and measured (Krauss, 2005; Rahi, 2017). The qualitative research approach is distinguished by its objectives, which relate to comprehending certain aspects of social life, and its methods which usually give rise to words instead of numbers for data analysis (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

The value of qualitative research in the context of understanding lived experiences is that it does not work with themes that are constructed before the research procedure begins (Willig, 2001). Instead, it is concerned with the meanings assigned to events by research participants themselves. Therefore, it explores the reasons behind peoples' thoughts and feelings in relation to their behaviour. This also enables inferences regarding the meaning that people ascribe to their encounters to be made (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

The method purposefully focuses on a relatively small group of people and experiences, instead of a large sample (Maxwell, 1996). However, the approach is sometimes criticised for its limitations in scientific rigour as a result of its perceived lack of transparency in the analytical procedures, as well as the results solely comprising of the gathering of people's personal opinions (Noble & Smith, 2015). Scientific rigour is usually expressed in the context of trustworthiness, which consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In spite of this criticism its explanatory power and more focused, in-depth and personal approach were considered ideal for addressing the current research's aims of how learners experienced career guidance in township schools. Furthermore, while there is also concern with regard to its ability to generalise findings to the whole population, it is important to note that the fundamental aim of a qualitative study is to generate an understanding and insight into a phenomenon, and not to necessarily generalise (Boddy, 2016; Rahman, 2016).

3.2 Sample

Twelve participants took part in the current study in order to ensure that most or all participant perceptions could be uncovered, but not so large as to result in the emerging data becoming repetitive and unnecessary (Mason, 2010). The desired sample was achieved, and the demographic characteristics are summarised in table 1 below. The twelve participants were Grade 12 learners in the same Mamelodi high school based in Gauteng. While participants were all from the same school and grade, they were spread across different Grade 12 classes. There were eight female and four male participants. All the research participants were Black, and their ages ranged between 17 and 20 years of age. Information of the Parents occupation was also collected to get a better understanding of their contexts. In addition, their subject choices were also collected in order to gain a better understanding of their career paths and the

impact these subjects had on their career goals. The school had a system where subjects are categorized into three different groups, and they include the following: Science subject stream, which consists of choosing subjects that are scientific in nature i.e., Physical science and Life sciences. The second stream is the Commerce stream which consists mainly of choosing business and commerce subjects namely, Accounting, Economics and Business studies. General subject stream is a term used to describe subjects where learners mainly have social science subjects such as History, Geography and Tourism (Fundi, 2020). Instead of having the aforementioned subjects in the General stream, learners can also add subjects from the other two streams (Science and Commerce) as it tends to not be strict about the combination they can have.

Table 1 *Sample demographic description*.

Participant	Age	Gender	Subject choice	Parent occupation
1	18	Female	General stream: History, business studies & geography	Mother: Recycler Father: Deceased
2	20	Male	General stream: History, geography, life sciences	Mother: Tavern owner Father: Tavern owner
3	19	Male	General stream: Geography, business studies & Tourism	Mother: Unemployed Father: Unemployed
4	18	Female	General stream: Business studies, Tourism & Economics	Mother: Unemployed Father: Unemployed
5	17	Female	General stream: History, Business studies & Tourism	Mother: Administrator Father: Unknown
6	19	Male	General stream: Tourism, Geography, Business studies	Mother: Unemployed Father: Painter
7	18	Female	General stream: Business studies, Tourism & Geography	Mother: Businesswoman Father: Teacher
8	18	Female	General stream: Business studies, Tourism & History	Mother: Teacher Father: Piece work
9	18	Female	General stream: Business studies, Economics and Tourism	Mother: Supervisor Father: Unknown

10	19	Male	General stream: Tourism, Business studies & Geography	Mother: Piece work Father: Absent
11	20	Female	General stream: Economics, Business studies & Tourism	Mother: Receptionist Father: Unknown/Absent
12	20	Female	General stream: Geography, Tourism & Business studies	Mother: Unemployed Father: Absent

3.3 Sampling strategy

An effective sampling strategy allows the researcher to choose suitable participants who can provide relevant information aimed at answering the research question/s (Opdenakker, 2006). A purposive non-probability sampling strategy was used for the current study. This enabled the selection of participants based on specific characteristics salient to the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Specifically, participants in this study had to be enrolled in a public school that was in a township area in Gauteng. In this instance participants came from a school in Mamelodi which is based in Pretoria. Purposive sampling is based on the idea that the selected participants are knowledgeable and or equipped to provide information that addresses the research problem (Opdenakker, 2006). This sampling strategy is based mainly on the researcher's discernment and may at times elicit researcher bias (Panacek & Thompson, 2007; Sharma, 2017).

3.4 Procedure

Following the development of an interview guide (see appendix H) and confirmation of approval to carry out the study from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Wits University (see appendix A), the researcher requested (see appendix B) written permission to conduct the research from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The DBE provided written consent shortly thereafter. The DBE sent another letter soon after communicating that due to the pandemic, researchers nationally were not allowed on school premises for the purposes of conducting their research.

Based on this safety directive, social distancing protocols and the general need to act responsibly in looking after the welfare of everyone involved in the research process, a remote

method of gathering data was adopted by the researcher. Two schools were identified and approached via email as well as telephonically. However, a response was received from only one.

The Principal at the responsive school received the following documents via email; a letter requesting access permission (see appendix C), the ethical clearance certificate from the university ethics committee (see appendix A), the Department of Education's approval and the letter denying access onto school premises. After receiving a formal letter of approval from the school and given the strict lockdown rules outlined by the DBE, the principal took the initiative to approach the Grade 12 learners on behalf of the researcher and invited the potential participants to consider taking part in the research. Learners that were interested in taking part in the research provided their details to the school principal so that the researcher could formally invite them to participate.

The list of potential participants was received via WhatsApp and the learners were contacted telephonically and invited to take part in the study. The researcher then gave an overview of the research study and its aims. Only the first twelve participants to show interest in the study were considered due to the sample target. The researcher then asked permission from these participants to send the information sheet (see appendix F) and consent form (see appendix G) using WhatsApp, and to only use this platform once they have familiarized themselves with the documents. WhatsApp was considered a convenient way of sending the documents since most of the learners did not have access to email accounts but most of them had access to a mobile phone with WhatsApp. The interested learners were given two days to read the information sheet and decide if they wanted to take part in the research.

As the interviews were going to be conducted using, WhatsApp, for practical and ethical reasons the researcher provided each participant with airtime to the value of R50 in order to eliminate the data costs involved because of participation in the research. A suitable day and time for the telephone interviews was discussed with the participants beforehand and on the agreed upon day, the interviewer sent the airtime to the relevant participant for them to purchase data. Then they were contacted to start with the interview. Participants were again requested to give their consent verbally before the interview started, and this was recorded.

After attaining the verbal consent, the researcher explained the study's aims again and participants were informed that they did not have to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. They were also informed they could withdraw from the research at any time.

After all of this was done the interview commenced (All the ethics considerations are discussed more specifically in the ethics section later). WhatsApp video calling was determined as the most appropriate form of data collection because it allowed for probing or follow up questions to be presented without disturbing the participant's own flow in responding to the questions (Farooq & De Villiers, 2011). Furthermore, social cues could also be easily observed.

WhatsApp video calling was not foreign to the participants, corroborating Farooq and De Villiers' (2011) argument that social media platforms and telephone use can be effective when interviewing the youth, due to their familiarity with these platforms. The use of video calling for most of the interviews gave the researcher a better chance of building a rapport with participants. In instances where video calling was not practical i.e., participants not being comfortable using video calling or experiencing network problems, voice calling was successfully used instead (Vogl, 2013).

The length of the video call interviews ranged between 25-35 minutes. The voice calling interviews were only slightly shorter. Only two of the twelve interviews were conducted through a voice call. These were considered a last resort because telephone interviews are usually shorter as a result of the response rate, potential distractions and the researcher's inability to discern social cues (Mathers et al., 2007). After each interview had been completed the researcher saved the recording and transcribed it in preparation for thematic analysis.

3.5 Instrument

A semi-structured interview method was used for data collection (Adams, 2015). The nature of semi-structured interviews is such that, despite the proposed set of questions, the interview should ultimately be a conversation between the interviewer and the participant, hence they are also referred to as conversational interviews (Longhurst, 2003). Through this form of data collection, the researcher allows themselves the opportunity to actively listen to the participant as they openly share their experiences and perceptions (Longhurst, 2003). Participants were assured that the interview was not an assessment or a task that they needed to excel in, but rather a conversational engagement with the researcher.

The interview questions were prepared and guided by literature on career guidance (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Furthermore, the questions were informed by the Systems Theory of career

development, which meant the integration of the participants demographic factors, career interests, career guidance information and knowledge. The aim of the approach was to allow participants to elaborate on their own experiences of career guidance with the use of flexible and guided probing by the researcher. Examples of questions asked included: “Where did you receive your career guidance/counselling?” “Was any career related information shared during the sessions? If so, what was that information?”

3.6 Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the thematic analysis approach. This approach consisted of analysing the interview transcripts to identify common themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis identifies, organizes and offers an understanding of patterns of meaning across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It aims to select themes which talk to the research aim/s, question/s, research context as well as the theoretical framework (Roberts et al., 2019). This analysis consists of communicating an interpretive story about the data in relation to the research question (Clark et al., 2015). Thus, it was deemed suitable for the research topic, design and method of data collection because it can uncover typical approaches to the way a topic is talked or written about (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Thematic analysis has often been considered the most flexible form of data analysis, and it is regarded as the starting point of most data analysis in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is concerned with evaluating both the implicit and explicit data collected and requires the researcher to be fully invested in the analytic process (Guest et al., 2014).

The thematic analysis process consisted of transcribing the verbal data into written data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was then coded where codes from the data were developed by selecting fundamental elements of the text (Nowell et al., 2017). Then the identified codes were used to create and search for relevant themes, and this allowed the coded data to be evaluated to point out similar and intersecting aspects between the codes (Braun & Clarke 2012). A theme is recognized when there is a patterned response that occurs across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, similar patterned responses were searched for in the data. The relevant themes were then reported.

Thematic analysis is known for its flexibility and it also permits one to go back and forth through the data (Nowell et al., 2017). The analysis does not follow a single theoretical approach, and it can be used in various theories and epistemological approaches (Joffe, 2012). The fact that there is no clear set criterion or guideline for conducting a thematic analysis, despite its popular use in qualitative research, can be problematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012; Nowell et al., 2017). However, despite its lack of set guideline, thematic analysis can be used for both deductive and inductive analysis and can reveal both explicit as well as implicit aspects of the analysed data (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

3.7 Ethical considerations

Government imposed restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that various ethics factors needed to be considered before any data could be collected. The major consequence of the restrictions was that the data collection process had to be modified from face-to-face interviews to remote interviews.

After demonstrating that the researcher would take all the necessary safety precautions, ethical clearance was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Wits university. In order to conduct the interviews permission from both the Department of Basic Education and the selected school's principal was obtained.

Ethics clearance was granted on the basis that participation in the study was strictly voluntary and participants could withdraw from the research at any given time. Participants were also assured that the information they provided would be kept confidential and that only broad themes would be reported, through the use of coded data to safeguard their identities. While the nature of face-to-face data collection meant that anonymity could not be guaranteed, the researcher ensured that confidentiality would be maintained by allocating numbers to participants during the reporting of the results to protect their identity (e.g., using 'Participant 1' instead of the name of the student). Furthermore, participants were assured that the recordings were kept safe in a password protected laptop, where only the researcher and the supervisor could have access to them.

As a result of the likely age of most of the leaners, the researcher was cognisant of the fact that some participants might be under the consenting age required for ethically participating in

research. A guardian consent form was prepared in case some of the participants required it (see appendix E). Parents or legally authorized guardians must give consent in the case of minors taking part in a research (Kumar, 2013). All the participants except for one, were over the age of 18, and thus did not need parental consent to take part in the research.

Language barriers were taken into considerations, thus where necessary translating and communicating in the participants' and parents' preferred language was considered and certainly used by the researcher. And this was done by the interviewer during the interviews. Furthermore, in terms of support post the interview process there were no identifiable risks the participants could have experienced as a result of taking part in the research. However, participants were made aware that if any psychological distress arose, they could contact a Social worker from the Joburg Child Welfare, who was available telephonically. Furthermore, participants were informed that they could access a summary of the research report upon requested.

3.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a self-critical account of the research project used to determine rigour in the research (Nowell et al., 2017). It involves self-reflection by the researcher in order to determine how this influences the decisions that were made throughout the process. This process allows the researcher to be aware of their own assumptions, biases, beliefs and presuppositions which ultimately impact on the study (Cypress, 2017). It consists of researchers questioning their relationship with the research context, research participants and the research data (Corlett & Marvin, 2017). Clearly defining the relationship, the researcher has with the participants can create a sense of trustworthiness and understanding of the research (Dodgson, 2019). According to Day (2012) reflexivity is conceptualized in different ways, and how a researcher conceptualizes reflexivity impacts on the expected outcome of the research. Furthermore, due to the notion that the researcher is the research instrument, their identity is very important in qualitative research (Dodgson, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted a positional reflexivity. This means that reflexivity is evaluated using aspects such as race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality (Cousin, 2013). The researcher was a Black student who could relate with the participants as someone who also went to a public township high school. Thus, the participants were able to

identify and relate with the researcher in this regard. As a result, a shared category with participants was more likely to elicit a sense of trust and disclosure (Hurst, 2008, as cited in Cousin, 2013). The participants' experiences were important for the researcher, not only as someone who was a researcher but as someone who was able to identify with their struggles of having to make career decisions. Thus, the researcher was also able to identify with the participants because she was a black learner from a previously disadvantaged school, who then had to transition to post high school opportunities. In addition, the fact that the researcher spoke the same language as the participants was also beneficial because there were no language barriers, and the participants were probably more prone to engaging with the researcher.

Some participants were open to taking part in the research in order to help the researcher through their participation in the study. For certain participants, the researcher was perceived as a career advisor who was going to help them make career decisions, and this could have been their main reason for taking part in the research. Thus, this perception had to be reconstructed before and during the actual interview. In addition, some participants perceived the researcher as someone who would be able to bring change in relation to the way in which career guidance was conducted in their school.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the emergent themes from the data analysis conducted using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From the analysis, four clear themes were identified by the current study whose primary aim was understanding learners' perceptions of career guidance in a public township high school. The themes provided important insights regarding learners' perceptions and can be summarized as follows: 1) Career guidance as a critical enabler; 2) The facilitatory role of the school and LO teacher; 3) Insufficient quality of information and 4) Self-guided career choice research. The themes and their supporting subthemes will now be described and extracted quotes from the collected data will be used to corroborate the existence of each theme.

4.1 Theme 1: Career guidance is a critical enabler

Participants' views concerning career guidance indicated that there was a clear appreciation for the important role it can play in their lives. Learners, in general, have been found to be open to the idea of receiving guidance and information when making career choices (Singh, 2016). When participants were asked to share their views on the role career guidance could play in their lives, they all consistently highlighted the importance of being guided and counselled so they could make informed decisions regarding their studies and careers. This is supported by the subthemes and extracts that are provided below.

4.1.1 Sense of direction

Most of the participants stated that learners are often not informed about what they can do following high school, therefore seeing career guidance as important for giving a sense of direction. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> *Participant 1: Like now, some matrics don't know what to do next year. Some learners are planning to take a gap year, whilst others are considering enrolling for courses they*

do not like. Where they then waste their time, and they realize later when they are employed that they are actually not happy with their job.

Participant 7: Yes, I think it's helpful because right now as we speak, there are people that don't know what they are planning to do next year.

Participant 9: So, career counselling is helpful in terms of being able to express what is in your heart in relation to a specific career you would like to venture into. This helps you not be confused about your career as well as the subject choices; it helps us align our subjects with the subject streams, so that we are not confused. They can guide you in terms of how you can relate your subjects to the career that you want. So, career counselling is helpful for me because it helps us to not become confused.

Participant 1 and 7 highlighted the confusion matriculants are often faced with during the transition from high school to post high school opportunities, and Participant 1 placed additional emphasis on the issue of time being wasted as a result of incorrect career decision-making processes. Participant 9 reflected on different aspects covered by the career guidance process which ultimately gives a sense of direction that taps into an individual's interests and passions, including choosing the relevant subjects at school and beyond.

4.1.2 A better understanding of career prospects

Career guidance as part of the curriculum aims to aid in ensuring that learners comprehend themselves and their world better (Mogbo et al., 2011). Participants indicated that they believed career guidance helps give a better perspective in terms of future career prospects, and the participants shared that if they were equipped with the relevant career-related information, they would be better able to understand different career prospects. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

Participant 4: When you are counselled and given information, you become knowledgeable about something; you basically have more information.

Participant 8: It is better to be counselled and advised on careers because there are certain careers that we do not even know of. So, it would be very helpful if people came to us and told us about the different careers so that when we get to university, we are

then not confused. For instance, I chose BCom Law, but I might find out later that this is something that I can't do. That's the problem we have in public schools.

Participant 12: Everyone wants to become something in life. The more the teachers give us information, the more motivated we become to study and to work hard because we are mindful of the information and definitely do put it to use.

Participant 8 placed emphasis on the fact that there are certain career options they might not be aware of, and that career guidance could play an important role in that respect. Participant 12 shared her understanding of the important role teachers can have in providing career-related information, and how this can better improve their personal lives. This participant showed enthusiasm for the prospect of being guided by her teacher when making career decisions, thus its importance as a critical enabler in facilitating the career decision-making process was recognized by all the participants, especially when this process is facilitated by their Life Orientation teacher.

4.2 Theme 2: The facilitatory role of the school and Life Orientation Teacher

In South African schools, career guidance is, at the very least, supposed to be facilitated in an ongoing manner in the Life Orientation course offered from grade 7 through to learners' matric year (Singh, 2016). The CAPS teaching document clearly highlights the different career guidance topics for each grade by term. The topics include developing learners' abilities to identify trends in the marketplace, and their understanding of requirements for tertiary admission (DoE, 2011). Ensuring that learners are exposed to career-related events such as career exhibitions and open days is also important. The following subthemes highlight the ways in which the learners experienced the support provided by the school.

4.2.1 Reality versus expectation

Teachers are expected to play a specific role in the career guidance facilitation during class, whereby learners should be exposed to different career guidance topics in the classroom. Teachers as career guidance facilitators have the duty of educating learners and introducing

them to a wide range of career fields (Ngoepe et al., 2017). The majority of participants stated that teachers often do not give them career-related information in the classroom, and if this information was given then it was usually minimal. In fact, most of them could not recall ever receiving any career guidance information from their teachers. For those that received the information, it was vague, and they were not confident about the information they received. Unless they approached teachers directly outside of the classroom setting to ask for this information, students did not get much from the career guidance experience. Instead, the participants stated that they were guided by their teachers on how and where to access career-related information, thus fulfilling one of the expectations of a career guidance teacher. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> *Participant 5: Well one teacher said that we have to take this thing very serious. And before choosing or going to a specific institution, you have to google about it. They even said that even if it means that you have to go to the university to get the information directly from them, then you have to do so.*
>
> *Participant 6: No, the only information we get at school is textbook related. So, they only teach us about how to live a good life and such things.*
>
> *Participant 9: Our teacher does not give us such information. She only advises us of places we can go to for this information.*

Many of the participants stated that they were often directed to where they could access career guidance. For instance, participant 5 stated that she was advised by her teacher to go to a university for career guidance information, and this was corroborated by participant 9 as well. Participant 6 stated that the information they receive is from the textbook, however, it was not clear if this was in relation to career guidance only, or for the general content knowledge covered in the subject. The participant was not clear as to what kind of information this was, but there was clearly an expectation to receive more from the teacher. Furthermore, the teacher only using the textbook as a resource could possibly highlight career guidance limitations in the classroom. Overall, there seemed to be a heavy reliance on learners being sent to career exhibitions where participants hoped that they could receive relevant information. As a result, all the participants spoke about career expos.

4.2.2 Reliance on career expos

The career guidance experience is broader than the exposure to career expos. Thus, in addition to the minimal direct involvement of teachers in providing meaningful career guidance as well as a perceived reliance on career expos, the participants' descriptions of their experiences indicated that no one in the school seemed to play an active role in engaging the participants consistently on life after matric. What did come out very strongly was the fact that career exhibitions were a popular mechanism for exposing learners to different career options hence, most of the participants mentioned career expos as a possible information channel regularly facilitated by their high school. In particular, a specific career guidance session held at a local hall was mentioned during the interviews. This is highlighted through the following excerpts:

> *Participant 4: We were taken by the school to a career guidance exhibition which took place at Vista, where we were helped and told about different careers.*
>
> *Participant 7: Okay so I have never really spoken to my LO teacher, but at school there was a trip where we went to the hall. And there were people from universities, colleges, and stuff. And they were explaining about career choices, and they also tried to help us with applications.*
>
> *Participant 8: Okay, so a teacher came to our class to inform us about a career guidance event which will be taking place at Ikageng Hall. So, the event took place there, and there were people who were helping us to apply at universities and all that.*

The participants above highlighted that they were taken by the school to a local hall for assistance with career guidance. It is not clear as to whether the teachers were present or not during the event, but it would be assumed that for the purpose of easy facilitation, the teachers would be present on the day. Furthermore, the participants in the current study were registered for a general subject stream and most argued that it determined their exposure to career guidance opportunities. As stated previously, this categorization consists mainly of choosing Humanities and Social sciences subjects as well as adding subjects from the Science and Commerce stream. According to the participants who elaborated on their subject choice as a limitation to career guidance opportunities, the General stream is usually not prioritized in their school because it is not considered as significant or difficult when compared to the other two streams. This then limits the opportunities the participants were often exposed to in their school.

4.2.3 Subject choice determines how career guidance is experienced

Several participants mentioned that subject choices affected how they experienced career guidance at school. They shared that learners who chose science and maths subjects were often prioritized for career guidance exhibitions. As a result, they felt that a sense of inequality existed within their school for those who made "unpopular" subject choices. They also indicated that there was a limitation in terms of the career guidance expos they were exposed to, which obviously impacted on how they perceived the usefulness of these sessions. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> *Participant 2: Science learners are often prioritized for those opportunities. So, they often attend a lot of these programs, while we only went there once and that was the end of it.*
>
> *Participant 5: Science students are always taken to such opportunities, and you can see through the pictures that these people were having serious conversations. Like it's not fair, while we are only taken there to sign and to go home.*
>
> *Participant 11: I think the information could have been useful for other learners. Because they focused more on science and business information. But it helped me somehow, somewhere…*

The participants highlighted that because of their school subject choices they often had limited experiences of career guidance expo opportunities. Participant 5 stated that the science learners were given most of the attention during career guidance expos. When participant 11 described her experience, she stated that the information received was not really helpful for her and stated that it could have been useful for the other learners who were present. This highlights the fact that she was not really a priority in these sessions. This is also highlighted by Participants 2 and 5 in the below extracted quotes, who further implied that this perceived unequal treatment does not only exist in relation to career guidance opportunities, but their school life in general.

> *Participant 2: But they consider the other learners as more important than us, because they believe that science subjects are difficult, and they feel that they need more information.*

Participant 5: We are not treated equally in the school institution. Science students are treated like VIP's while we are treated like general people.

Both participants emphasised that due to subject choice, science students are more likely to receive preferential treatment, while students who do not choose science subjects do not receive the treatment. Participant 2 stated that this could be as a result of the perception that science subjects are difficult and therefore require more attention. Their perceptions imply that the science learners receive additional helpful resources, when compared to learners with general subjects. As a result, they believe that they often receive inadequate career guidance information and experiences. Teachers should play a facilitatory role in the career guidance process, which consists of helping learners choose suitable subjects. This experience may be different for learners based on their subject choices. Thus, based on the interactions with the participants, there is a general idea that the school and teachers could do more in facilitating the career guidance process.

4.3 Theme 3: Inadequate quality of information and support

This theme highlighted the general experiences the learners had with respect to career advice that eventually contributed to unsatisfactory experiences. Participants consistently indicated that various elements relating to career exhibitions led learners to look for their own information. Some of these elements included limited time constraints and information; overcrowding because of attendance from too many learners from different schools and the lack of customized guidance sessions . The lack of direct teacher involvement highlighted in theme two also contributed to feelings of an inadequate career guidance process, and so did the perceived differential treatment received by learners who did not choose science and maths as school subjects. All these factors will be discussed below.

4.3.1 Limited information

With regard to career expos, participants described the career guidance information they were provided with as limited and/or generic. They stated that they were presented with application information of universities and colleges participating in the expo, and this information

consisted mainly of pamphlets. They then had to fill in forms in order for them to be contacted by the different institutions, however, there was some confusion as to what the forms were for because they did not understand why they needed to fill them in. Some participants said that they filled in the forms only for the sake of being present on the day. Indeed, the main purpose of the session seemed to be getting the high school students to fill in application forms, and not necessarily assist them in choosing appropriate careers. This is highlighted through the following excerpts:

> *Participant 2: What we did was when we got there we sat down, and a white guy approached us and told us that the reason why we were there was so that they could tell us about the things that we could consider doing next year…*
>
> *Participant 5: We did nothing okay… We just entered the hall and some guy told us to sit down. There was a guy who spoke to us about different institutions, where he said to us okay this is UP, UJ, TUT, this is Stellenbosch blah blah blah, until he mentioned all the universities. And then he was like okay guys, please stand up and go fill in information if you want to do a course there.*
>
> *Participant 9: Because they gave us like basic information, and from there it was like we were on our own... Like it was somehow, and not really detailed. Because there were certain things we didn't know, and only got exposed to somewhere else. So, you see why I think that it's not helpful for me…*

The participants seemed frustrated when elaborating on their experiences of attending the career expo session, mainly due to the limited information they were given. Both participant 2 and 5 discussed an encounter in which someone told them about the purpose of the day and how they were then told to fill in application forms without necessarily receiving sufficient context. Furthermore, participant 5 openly expressed her frustration and this was also clear through the tone of her voice. Participant 9 highlighted how the session was not useful for her as well and indicated that the information received was very basic.

4.3.2 Limited interactions

The career exhibition that was attended by most of the research participants also had an influx of learners from other schools, which then limited their interaction with the career advisors.

Therefore, the participants indicated that learners could not ask questions or get clarity on the information they received. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> *Participant 2: So, we were in a group, hence there wasn't a chance for us to ask questions. In addition, we were not the only school that was present there, because I think there were like three schools that were present in the single hall. So, you wouldn't have been able to ask, and you just had to take the pamphlets and to leave.*
>
> *Participant 6: …and so that we are allowed to raise hands and ask questions if we had any, and them answering you. That is how it was supposed to be done.*
>
> *Participant 9: We can't even ask questions because they usually allow a few people to ask questions, whilst there's many of us who want to ask questions.*

All the participants argued that engaging with career advisors on a one-on-one basis was important for them. Participant 2 stated that overcrowded sessions meant limited interactions with career advisors. Participant 6 argued that the general experience should be to allow learners to ask questions if they had any, while Participant 9 stated that only a few people are usually allowed to ask questions at such events.

4.3.3 Overcrowded sessions result in time severe constraints

As a result of the attendance by other learners from other schools in the local area, the session was not only limited in terms of learners receiving information from career advisors, but it was overcrowded as well**.** This limited its effect and purpose for the learners, and led to a quick and generic experience which resulted in the participants receiving an unfulfilling experience from the expo. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> *Participant 2: we were not the only school that was present there, because I think there were like three schools that were present in the single hall. So, … you just had to take the pamphlets and to leave.*
>
> *Participant 3: Because other schools had to come in, so we had to leave to go back to our school.*

Participant 6: But on that day, they didn't really explain in detail as to how we can do all of those things. We were many at that time... And we had to fill in application forms, but it was just chaotic because there were a lot of people there.

Participant 9: No, you know what's happening, I don't usually attend career what what, because when we get there it becomes a mess, and we can't really hear what's happening. So, I told myself that I will never attend, unless if a few people are chosen to attend.

The participants who attended the career exhibition all stated that the event was overcrowded and that limited their time for receiving useful information as well as engaging with a career advisor on site. The learners seemed frustrated by the issue of overcrowding, and most of them felt that it did not make any difference whether or not they attended these sessions. This is supported by Participant 9 who stated that she usually does not attend career guidance expos unless she is aware that only a few learners will be in attendance.

4.3.4 Lack of customized information sessions

Participants highlighted the specific ways in which they preferred to see the career guidance process being undertaken, and many of them would have preferred the sessions to be customized to their own needs and interests. This is highlighted in the following excerpts.

Participant 2: Okay, so let me elaborate first right…. If you were someone who was planning to go to university, you would have found the information useful for you and would have probably rated it a ten out of ten. But if you are someone like me who is not interested in going to university, you wouldn't give it a rating of ten, you would probably give it a rating of six for instance or even a four. Because we are not the same so those that want to go to university found it useful.

Participant 5: They should have asked if we were sure about what we want to do. They should have brought in people to assist us based on an aspect of interest. Like if you are interested in history go there so that they tell you what to do, and if you are interested in a certain subject then they should tell you what to do. So, telling us about universities doesn't help. They tell me that I can apply and that's fine, but what am I applying for?

Participant 6: How they should have done things for instance, if there were people who were interested in, let's say, humanities courses then they should have been given their own room. And those that were interested in sports should have been given their own room. So that these things could be explained thoroughly to us.

Participant 2 did not find the session useful as a result of the generic information they were provided with. Participants 5 and 6 placed emphases on career guidance that caters to each learner's specific interests. Participant 5 further stated that it is simply not enough to encourage learners to apply, especially if they are not sure what they want to do. These experiences, along with the limited support received from the school, resulted in the participants feeling frustrated and feeling like they are not receiving the best career guidance experience.

4.3.5 Career guidance at school

Most of the participants did not recognize the interactions they had with their teachers as useful, however, the limited few who did have these interactions described their experiences in a very brief but positive manner. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

Participant 4: She gave us different career options, so I chose to become a teacher.

Participant 7: The teacher said that there are people that can consider working, whilst others can go to university and others can go to colleges. This will depend on what we would prefer. He guided us and advised us about different options, and he said that we should not take a gap year.

Participant 8: Yes, so actually the topic we touched on involved identifying one's goals, vision, mission, and such things. As well as what you are good at, so that you can fulfill your career.

Participant 4 described an instance where a teacher gave them different career options they could choose from, and she found teaching to be suitable. The participant did not go into too much detail in terms of the exact information they received, but she seemed satisfied with it. Participant 7 stated that their teacher advised them of the different options in terms of tertiary opportunities, especially in relation to their preference, but ultimately advised them against taking a gap year. These experiences were clearly positive but very brief, and they seemed to provide partial assistance as these participants still opted for alternative avenues to receiving career guidance.

4.3.6 Alternative avenues

Some of the participants took the initiative provided by the career guidance experience. Two examples of these were participants seeking advice from their mentors, and the use of social media to connect with people on relevant social media platforms. The participants seeking guidance through the use of other avenues was an approach they found to be more useful compared to either engaging with teachers or career exhibitions. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> *Participant 8: I got information from a group chat called Prince what what… and it helped a lot. It's a group chat, and there are people who help you with applications*.

> *Participant 10: …but I attended one that was held at the library and was hosted by ITA college. But that was related to sports information. So, I managed to apply, and I am now communicating with them through WhatsApp.*

> *Participant 11: Like, I have a mentor. So, whenever I talk to my mentor, she is always telling me about career choices. So, most of the time I get this kind of information from her. And I am one person who likes asking questions…*

Participant 8 was able to receive helpful information for university requirements through the use of a social media application, while participant 10 attended a career exhibition which was related to his own career interests. With both these participants, communication with career advisors did not end on the day of the first contact, but the guidance process continued on a regular basis. Participant 11 described a relationship she has with a mentor she has relied on for career-related information. She emphasized that she tended to ask a lot of questions and her mentor was the best person for answering all of her questions. This suggests that some participants chose to supplement the support received from school and career expos with a self-guided career choice research process.

4.4 Theme 4: Self-guided career choice research

Since the main aim of the attended career guidance expo was to give information on applying at tertiary institutions, the experience led to most participants being unsatisfied with the engagement. Furthermore, most of them were not happy with the interactions they had with their teachers, i.e., the participants did not really receive information on employment opportunities and so most of them resorted to a form of self-guidance instead. Many of the participants did this by taking the pamphlets provided and did their own research. Morgan, et al. (2014) argued that learners probing their possible career prospects usually must find their own way during this difficult career choosing process. This is highlighted in the following quoted extractions:

> *Participant 5: They gave us the pamphlets right… so I went home, and I read all of them, and that's when I found some things that were interesting. But then I found the information at home, and not specifically at the hall.*
>
> *Participant 8: So, in order for me to find out more about BCom Law I had to do my own research. Because they did not really provide, for instance, information related to what BCom Law consisted of, or what it was related to. They did not give us specifics in terms of career related information, for instance with teaching, how many years does it take, where can one teach and other related information.*
>
> *Participant 11: So… you have to go out to find more information for yourself. Because they only give you basics, and you need to do the rest.*

The participants took the information they received from the career exhibition to look for more information. Therefore, despite feelings of frustration with the lack of usefulness of the process, the career exhibitions and advice from teachers still inspired some of them to explore opportunities on their own. The self-guided research was also inspired by most of them identifying the need to be employed after completing their matric year or tertiary qualification. They therefore understood the importance of seeking opportunities that were aligned to the desire to be employed.

4.4.1 The prioritization of quick and easy employment over a desired career

The unemployment rate in South Africa is an undeniable issue of concern, and it certainly does impact previously disadvantaged people (Oluwajodu, 2015). All the participants raised

concerns about employment prospects after completing their matric, and even after attaining the qualification they desired. This was as a result of the high unemployment rate in South Africa as well as the sense of urgency to try and create better lives for themselves and those around them. When engaging with the participants, it was established that most of them were eventually not going to pursue the careers which they initially dreamed of. The possibility of being unemployed limited the options they had as most of them only considered career prospects that would be able to possibly help them with securing employment opportunities quicker. This is highlighted in the following quoted excerpts:

> *Participant 1: I have always wanted to become a policewoman, who specializes in doing forensic work. But I feel like teaching is a very good course besides the others. Because I feel like there is no way I can wait for five months without working, after the completion of the course. This is because teaching requires that one does practical work, I will therefore have the experience, for when I apply for jobs.*
>
> *Participant 2: I have always wanted to become a lawyer, but I realized that it might take a while. Because I am not patient with myself when it comes to school. My plan is to look for employment, either in the SANDF/Military or to become a Traffic Officer. I am hoping that once I have started working, I will get enough money in order to do the law qualification part-time.*
>
> *Participant 6: Okay so I have many goals right… So, I just want to start with the simple things in my life, so that I can increase as I am living. So, there's certain things which will require you to look at your situation. For instance, when considering medicine, you can see that you won't be able to afford the costs, or maybe even law and you find that you have wasted money. So, I just want to start very simple*.

Participant 1 is faced with the predicament of possibly not finding employment after attaining the qualification she has always wanted to pursue. Due to the fear of being unemployed, she identified teaching as a quicker path to employment. Participant 6 stated that he has goals he would like to achieve; however, he is always brought back to the reality of his current financial situation and how it serves as a disadvantage to pursuing his goals. Starting simple for him meant pursuing a career which would ensure that he would be able to secure employment, and in this case, teaching was that career. After securing employment, he would then pursue his desired dream career.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The current study aimed to explore and understand learners' perceptions of the usefulness of career guidance in a public township school. In order to do so, the following three research questions were explored:

- How do learners characterise their career guidance experience in township public schools?
- How do learners perceive the quality of information received during the career guidance process?
- What are learners' perceptions of the quality of career guidance they receive in relation to assisting them with making career decisions?

The thematic analysis conducted produced four themes that can help answer these research questions. The four themes were:

- Career guidance as a critical enabler
- Facilitatory role of the school and the LO teacher
- Inadequate quality of information and experience
- Self-guided career choice research.

5.1 Learners' characterisation of career guidance in the township public high school context

The current study found that participants considered career guidance an important supporting mechanism for making career decisions. This validated the finding made by Maree and Molepo (2007) who determined that there is an urgent need to enable career guidance for South African pupils, specifically in previously disadvantaged schools where such services have been found to be lacking. The participants stated that career guidance could possibly eliminate confusion when making career decisions, and could therefore play a constructive role in their decision-making process. They highlighted three important reasons why they considered career guidance to be essential: effective career guidance can help give a sense of direction, aid better decision-making and provide a broader understanding of career prospects.

In relation to giving a sense of direction, the participants expressed how they, and many of their peers, did not know what to do after completing their matric year. This is consistent with Ramjit's (2015) finding that learners considered career guidance as an important aspect in their education process. Ramjit (2015) focused on black participants who were unemployed and were from previously disadvantaged schools, and some stated that the main reason for their unemployment was not being guided properly when choosing their career path. This highlighted some of the perceived implications of the lack of good career guidance in such contexts. The participants in the current study also stated that being guided when making career decisions also helps give a better understanding of different career prospects that might be available to them. In relation to better understanding career prospects, participants indicated that the career-related information they received was limited. They therefore understood the role of career guidance as providing a better understanding of career prospects and characterised it as something that could improve their career choices and motivation for studying.

Since the participants understood effective career guidance as a process that could possibly eliminate confusion when making career decisions, they also made suggestions as to how the process could be better facilitated. Most of the participants seemed to be supportive of a career guidance process that was narrative in nature. Narrative career counselling gives the client the opportunity to construct their own careers through actively engaging with the guidance counsellor about their interests, concerns, knowledge and aspirations (Cochran, 2019). It intends to help people create and recreate their own personal narrative, in relation to their own career (Chen, 2002; McMahon, 2006; Mcilveen & Patton, 2007). Many of the participants stated that where necessary, they should have been afforded the opportunity to engage with a career advisor and/or their teacher during this process. This sentiment was similar to Magano's (2011) finding that learners value personal and in-depth interactions with their LO teachers, especially in relation to important life decisions such as career choices. The study aimed to comprehend learners' perceptions of LO teachers in facilitating the subject in the classroom in a Gauteng township high school (Magano, 2011). Supplementary to these interactions, their interests are taken into consideration and they should be given the opportunity to seek clarity if and when they needed to. The perceived lack of involvement by teachers - as key role players in learners' career guidance process - meant that they are not giving themselves the opportunity to become fully invested in the process of assisting learners. The Systems Theory Framework (STF) of career development states that career counsellors should identify themselves with a

client's system of influences through helping them narrate their own story as influenced by the same systems (McMahon et al., 2015). Therefore, this theory may explain why most of the participants in the study were against the idea of simply just receiving information, and instead argued that career guidance should be an in-depth engagement between them and a career advisor.

In further explaining why career guidance at school was important, some participants indicated that challenges such as the lack of financial resources and stifling unemployment limited the number of role models they could consult with in their community. The STF is cognizant of the idea that when making career choices, people are often influenced by different factors such as their families, peers and community members (Patton & McMahon, 2015). The fact that the participants believed they did not have enough role models in their immediate environments outside of school was a limiting factor in their career guidance experience. The participants' remarks are consistent with Tomaszewski et al., (2017) finding that students from low socio-economic backgrounds, particularly poor families, were more likely to struggle with transitioning to university or not even making it due to their disadvantaged backgrounds, i.e., low socio-economic backgrounds characterized by unemployed community members. Thus, they found that career guidance and positive school experiences were more likely to improve the learners' successful transitioning (Tomaszewski et al., 2017).

The STF of career development places emphasis on social career influencers which include educational settings, the family, peers, and community groups as restrictors and/or mediators of the career decision-making process (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Parent occupation was included in the demographic part of the current study's interview questionnaire. This was done to understand the type of background participants came from, which can also significantly influence learners' comprehension of available career opportunities. Parents of the participants in the current study had low-paying casual jobs and some were unemployed; only a few had traditional careers such as teaching and office work. As a result, the majority of participants did not necessarily look to their immediate family members for career guidance. In fact, most participants were hoping to receive relevant career-related information from their school, so they could change their family situations and play a positive role in the community. This would therefore suggest that participants not only see the school context as a place where they can get valuable information related to career guidance, but they also trust that the school is a fundamental tool for alleviating poverty and unemployment. This can be seen as a profound characterization of career guidance and the role it can play in their lives. It also supports the

STF's view that learners consider the educational context as an integral part of making their career decisions, particularly when factors external to that environment are not seen as adequately supportive (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

5.2 Township learners' perceptions of the quality of information received during their career guidance process

Useful career guidance information should include information such as access to bursaries, tertiary course requirements and subject choice decision-making frameworks (Maila & Ross, 2018). Once participants had confirmed the main sources of their career-related information, they were asked to elaborate on the perceived quality of information they received, both during the career exhibition as well as in their Life Orientation classroom. It emerged that participants felt they experienced very limited career guidance support in that respect. For instance, many participants stated that the information available to them was only based on applying at tertiary institutions after completing their matric. This finding was broadly aligned to Maree's (2015) who found that learners from disadvantaged areas acquire minimal to no career guidance and information when making career-related decisions (Maree, 2015). This is often caused by the lack of teacher training for career guidance in the classroom (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019).

The current study found that the LO teacher's role in facilitating the career guidance process was often perceived to be very limited and seemed to imply that there was a disconnect to the teaching activities stipulated in the Life Orientation CAPS teaching document which promotes a more active role by the instructor. The teaching plan requires that certain topics be covered by teachers in class, such as learners being equipped with information on the latest trends in the marketplace, even if they attend career exhibitions and other information sharing sessions (DOE, 2011). However, the participants indicated that they were not satisfied with the information received because they felt that most of the relevant topics related to career guidance were not covered; thus, resulting in them feeling unequipped. These findings are consistent with studies that found that learners are often not pleased with the career guidance process because factors such as labour market needs and subject requirements for tertiary are not discussed in classrooms (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Maharaj, 2016). A potentially deeper

implication of this finding, confirmed by Hartell et al (2013) in their study, is that teachers' teaching plans often contradict the department's teaching guidelines (Hartell et al., 2013).

Maila and Ross (2018) found that the absence of proper career guidance results in a lack of proper information being shared with students. Thus, the teacher's role pertaining to career guidance in the current study was found to be limited to referring participants to avenues for accessing information. In addition, most of the participants did not find the subject useful for career-related information. Only a few of the participants were able to access career-related information from their teachers in rare cases where this information was directly requested.

Mogbo et al., (2011) advocated for the importance of effectively implementing career guidance and counselling resources in Nigerian schools, where it was argued that all relevant stakeholders needed to be involved in this process. Similarly, to the South African classroom context, the study found that simply referring learners to places where career guidance is provided was not enough as teachers can play an integral role because of their rapport with students (Mogbo et al., 2011). Therefore, it was suggested that teachers need to also take the initiative of actively facilitating this process in their classrooms. Unfortunately, because this was not the case, learners were not satisfied with the information received. Indeed, in direct contradiction to Mogbo et al's., (2011) recommendations, it was found that career expos were often used and heavily relied upon to expose learners to career guidance.

All participants described career expos as the main avenue for receiving career guidance information. It was found that career expos were events that participants often attended to receive career-related information. It has been noted by researchers that career expos should be offered as a supplementary option for learners as they are given the exposure to information and people in various prospective career fields (Ngoepe et al., 2017). Unfortunately, participants highlighted that during these career expo sessions they received information which was largely focused on how to apply at tertiary institutions. While the participants indicated that this information was important, it was still deemed as insufficient. The participants stated that learners often received pamphlets but could not ask any questions pertaining to their careers of interest during the career expos. This finding was not surprising because career expos usually consist of many exhibitors who are there to promote their organisations/institutions as efficiently as possible. The unfortunate result in many instances is that insufficient time is allocated for learners to receive more helpful information (Chireshe, 2012). This may have been why participants felt their general experience was inadequate and left them feeling

confused. When elaborating on their exposure to useful information during these events, participants described the information they received as insufficient and very basic. Participants' general understanding was that career expos should help with career-related information in a more substantial way than was the case.

Furthermore, with regard to career expos, participants consistently raised the issue of not having an environment that was conducive for them to effectively explore the guidance process extensively. They highlighted different factors, including the limited time given during career exhibitions due to the large number of schools being present during such events. This may have been indicative of the fact that many township schools rely on career expos as the primary method of facilitating career guidance for learners. They also indicated that information was mostly distributed via pamphlets and learners were asked to apply to tertiary institutions on the day of the event. This made participants feel like the career expos were more about getting learners to apply to institutions instead of providing empowering information they could consider before deciding which avenue to pursue (tertiary or otherwise). The participants also described the career expo sessions as being overcrowded and very chaotic at times. According to the participants, most schools in the area attended at the same time, indicating that there was always the same issue of overcrowding and limited resources during these events in general based on previous experiences. As a result, the learners expressed dissatisfaction with not only the quality of information received, but the process in general. Most of the participants indicated that they could not engage with an advisor or ask any questions they had. This is consistent with Njoko's (2018) findings that learners' experiences of career expos consisted of overcrowding and limited interactions as well as information, which left them dissatisfied. However, this finding contradicts the Ngoepe et al., (2017) finding that learners in the rural schools of Makgabeng village in Limpopo were happy and felt well-informed as a result of attending career expos. This was because learners in that study reported being exposed to different career fields, having information that thoroughly prepared them for their tertiary studies, and felt motivated to pass their matric as a result (Ngoepe et al., 2017). Participants in the current study pointed out that career guidance expos did not make much of a difference to their career choice process, and that because of frequent negative experiences, they opted not to attend further expos or were selective of the sessions they wanted to attend.

Participants stated that because of the large number of attendees during career expos, they were unable to understand or read through the pamphlets onsite so that they could get clarity on questions they had. Furthermore, due to the problems encountered by participants such as

limited interactive sessions and limited information from both the LO teacher and the career expo, participants found these experiences unpleasant and unhelpful.

Participants also reported experiencing a one-size-fits-all approach to career guidance and indicated their expectations were not met because information was solely based on the assumption that all the learners wanted to be enrolled at a tertiary institution. This perceived one-size-fits-all approach was considered unconstructive for the career guidance process by learners (Jonck, 2015).

Since most learners in the current study raised concerns of not experiencing a career guidance approach which allowed them to have one-on one-sessions and sessions which catered specifically to their needs, this process should ultimately aim to consider the learners' context, especially in public township schools, and it should include factors such as prior knowledge, experiences, and learners' goals (Nkoane & Alexander, 2010). When schools consider a constructivist or narrative approach to career guidance, they afford themselves the opportunity to be part of the system of influence in the learners' career decision-making process (Watson & McMahon, 2006). A more personalised approach in the school environment might give students a more personalised experience and better information compared to the one-size-fits-all approach they often experience.

In relation to impacting participants' career guidance experience and exposure to quality information, subject choice was also raised as an important factor. This was perceived to be true in relation to both the number of career exhibitions learners were exposed to, as well as how helpful teachers tended to be when asked to give career advice. The participants in the current study suggested that science and maths learners were taken to more career exhibitions when compared to learners who did the general subject stream (i.e., social science and, to a lesser extent, commerce focused subjects). Furthermore, a number of participants stated that this issue was not only limited to career exhibitions but to how they were generally treated in their school. The perception that subject choice impacts the quality of the career guidance information received was seen as perpetuating the idea that maths and science are more important than other subjects. Furthermore, some participants in the current study indicated that this made them feel like their career aspirations were not deemed as important, and that they were not a priority in their school.

Subject choice impacts the kind of tertiary programmes a learner can choose (Maila & Ross, 2018). Some participants only found out during career exhibitions that their subject choices did

not align with their desired careers. Some participants expressed their dissatisfaction for what they perceived to be an ineffective subject selection process in grade 9. Indeed, a number of the participants expressed the issue of not being equipped or guided when choosing their school subjects at grade 9 level. They indicated that this resulted in them having to make important decisions on their own without a full comprehension of how they should choose relevant subjects for their future prospective careers. This is consistent with Nkoane and Alexander's (2010) observation that learners usually do not have a full understanding of the subject choice process in schools and its implications, and fully supports the participants' views regarding the questionable quality of information learners receive during their career guidance experiences.

Some participants stated that following their career guidance process at school, they only discovered at a later stage that they could not pursue a certain desired qualification because it required certain subjects which were not part of their chosen subjects. This left them feeling like they did not receive proper career guidance when choosing their subjects, which then impacted their career options. Maila and Ross (2018) argued that learners are often unable to enrol in their desired university programmes due to the failure to meet the required subject choices. The rest of the participants were planning to pursue their dream careers by going to tertiary to complete their specific desired courses however, they also raised the issue of unemployment as a concern. According to Maree (2009), South Africa's career patterns have been distorted by aspects such as the country's apartheid history, the lack of sufficiency in career counselling acquired by black pupils as well as the failure of the apartheid system towards black people. The STF for career development places emphasis on how historical trends and learners' context significantly impacts their career decision-making process (Watson & McMahon, 2009). Thus, when the career guidance process is effectively implemented, it can allow learners to pursue their dream careers instead of just seeking employment opportunities due to their socio-economic status. The effectiveness of the career guidance process could be implemented by teachers who choose to play an active role in the process.

5.3 Township learners' perceptions of the impact of career guidance on their career decision making process

Overall, participants found both the classroom setting and career exhibitions insufficient or even detrimental at times for helping to inform their career decisions. Firstly, it was established that teachers were often perceived as not being directly involved in the career guidance process. This led to perceptions that they did not play a significant role in providing career guidance for pupils because the career guidance process outlined in the CAPS document was not fully implemented in class. This is consistent with the finding that life orientation teachers are perceived as not adequately involved when it comes to helping learners make career-related decisions, thus rendering the process ineffective for informing career decisions (Jacobs 2011; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Maharaj, 2016; Mtemeri, 2017). These findings, however, contradict Albien and Naidoo's (2016) finding which showed that learners considered their LO teachers as useful sources of information and support. The study further highlighted that learners found the school institution useful for informing and assisting with career decisions (Albien & Naidoo, 2017). These findings are also aligned with Njoko's (2018) findings that learners in three rural Kwa-Zulu Natal schools found valuable information from their teachers, especially because they made efforts in assisting learners with such information. Thus, learners' experiences of receiving career guidance information from teachers could be influenced by teachers' readiness and willingness to offer them such services. While the findings seem to be mixed across studies, these differences might be partly due to the differences in learners' expectations in the different settings the studies took place in and/or the teachers' motivation (e.g., provincial, rural, etc). Perhaps what one learner perceives as an unhelpful pamphlet or piece of advice another learner may see as very helpful. It is also possible that even though rural schools are plagued by many resource constraints, due to their remote locations, relying on career expos is not a readily available option. Teachers may, therefore, be more motivated to share any information that could potentially give students a clearer understanding of the career options available.

Learners' experiences in terms of career guidance and counselling are influenced by the role teachers play in the process. A possible reason for the perceived reluctance of teachers to actively facilitate the career guidance process in the classroom may be because of limited training to actually do so. Various studies have indicated that teachers are not guided on how to facilitate career-related topics for learners (Hartell et al., 2013; Jonck & Swanepoel 2015;

Cook & Maree, 2016; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). As a result, teachers often lacked various skills which play a contributing factor in researching about the latest trends in the world of work, and effectively engaging learners on these (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019).

Since STF for career development places emphasis on how historical trends and learners' context significantly impact their career decision-making process (Watson & McMahon, 2009), the insufficient support and training provided to teachers contributes significantly to learners' experiences of career guidance and counselling (Ramjit, 2015; Maharaj, 2016). In addition, as a result of inequality perpetuated by the apartheid system, which has continued under the current government, previously advantaged and affluent schools are more likely to have better access to professional and trained career guidance practitioners when compared to public disadvantaged schools (Ngoepe et al., 2017). The current COVID-19 crisis has only highlighted other salient differences such as remote learning readiness between these different schools. These issues again highlight the STF's perspective that previous and current political and geographical circumstances can play a huge role in learners' experiences of career guidance.

With regard to the career expos, the consensus was that information was available however, it was very basic, limited and it did not align with most participants' personal interests, needs and expectations. This is consistent with Jonck and Swanepoel's (2016) finding that factors such as the learner's aptitudes, personality, interests, and self-concept for career guidance are usually not taken into consideration when information on career prospects is provided. This limits the information learners receive, and thus negatively impacts their career decision-making process. Jonck and Swanepoel (2016) found that despite the limited guidance received, most learners in their study were still satisfied with the information, whilst only a few were not. The response to the career guidance information could have been attributed to the learner's intrinsic motivation for receiving information i.e., understanding, interests and strengths (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2016). These findings seemed to contradict the many participants in the current study who felt negative about the career-related information and process. The few learners who were not satisfied in Jonck and Swanepoel's (2016) study raised similar concerns around the issues of insufficient career-related content, as well as the additional information they required.

Career guidance should be holistic, contextual and learner centred. This is when the approach is considered constructivist in nature, meaning that individuals construct their own career-related story or meaning making in order to inform their career decision (Watson & McMahon,

2006). Many of the participants who attended the exhibition were not only hoping to be given the opportunity to receive clarity concerning their interests, but to also ask questions if they had any. The aim was to have an interactive career guidance session, and they understood the importance of receiving information that was aligned with their interests, hence they were not pleased with the basic information they received.

Most of the participants experienced uncertainty and discomfort because of their overall career guidance experience. They, therefore, did not find the process useful for informing their decisions. The participants were not oblivious to the fact that information was provided, however they felt frustrated by the way in which it was provided, as well as its limitations. This perception confirmed the argument that even if career guidance exists in schools, it is often limited; thus, a number of participants opted to take some responsibility for this process.

Participants opted for a self-guided approach which allowed them the opportunity to gather career-related information that was suitable for their needs. The participants found the self-guided experience worthwhile in comparison to the guidance they were offered at school. This finding relates to the fact that learners relied on alternative avenues for career guidance. For example, some of them reported relying on the media for career-related trends and information (Maree & Cook, 2016). Most of the participants in the current study seemed comfortable with their self-guided process as a supplementary mechanism to the support received from teachers or career exhibitions. Certain participants even stated that they had already started searching for information long before they attended career exhibitions. Self-guided career guidance seems to be a trend for many learners in general. For instance, Ngoepe et al (2017) conducted a study in public rural schools where it was found that most learners already had a clear understanding of the careers they wanted to pursue even before they attended career guidance expos. The learner's career-related knowledge was mainly impacted by their family members and friends, however they still found the career expo useful for informing and them about information that they were not previously aware of (Ngoepe et al., 2017). Providing the proposition that maybe career expos are used by most learners to get a better understanding (and to receive additional information) of what they have. This finding clearly contradicts the expectations of career expos for learners in the current study, as most of them were expecting to receive the bulk of their career-related information during the expos.

Themes covered in the LO curriculum are meant to aid in alleviating social issues such as unemployment and skills scarcity (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Young people need to be trained and equipped with the necessary skills and information in preparation for the workplace (Dagume & Gyeke, 2016). Furthermore, graduate employability in South Africa is often influenced by the type of qualification one has, and it has been argued that there is a concerning gap between the required skills for employment and the qualifications held by graduates (Mncayi & Dunga, 2016; Meyer, 2017). An important factor that emerged from the study was the issue of employment opportunities after matric and beyond. Learners showed that they were aware of the reality of South Africa's unemployment rate, and most of them seemed to be concerned about this issue. This may have been one of the motivating factors for learners seeking career information on their own as participants emphasised the reality of the pressure to urgently seek employment. It also explained why some participants seemed to prioritise securing employment instead of pursuing their desired careers.

The need for information on university entrance is important (Oyediran-Tidings et al., 2019) however, this information is not the only information required by learners. Learners need to be equipped and better prepared for the highly competitive labour market reality which will most probably have an impact on their lives after completing their high school career. In line with feeling this extreme pressure, all the participants highlighted the importance of being employed or earning an income instead of pursuing their dream careers. Their self-guidance research was often influenced by the sense of urgency to be employed instead of an understanding of their interests and potential careers. Furthermore, it seemed that most participants were willing to delay or not fulfil their aspirations and/or dreams due to this sense of urgency to be employed. Professions like being a teacher or a metro police officer were mentioned as areas where the chances of employment were believed to be high therefore describing these as attractive options even though many participants indicated they were not really interested in them. Fifty percent of the participants stated that they decided to look for career information that was not related to their dream careers as a result of their family circumstances such as finances, which could not afford them the opportunity or the time to pursue their desired careers. As supported by the STF, the effects of the environment and time are evident in this case.

Career-related sessions are effective for informing career decisions only when they consist of information related to career and employment opportunities (SAQA, 2012). It was clear from the overall experience that the career guidance the participants received was not conducive in addressing the issue of employment opportunities. Participants indicated that they did not

receive helpful information concerning employment opportunities, and in rare cases that this information was received, it was still considered minimal.

The STF to career development often considers time as an attribute to the different systems and influences (McMahon & Patton, 2018). One participant who raised the issue of subject choice and time emphasised that she could not achieve her dream career, but that she desired to be employed as soon as she had completed her studies. She was willing to settle for what seemed like a profession which guaranteed quick employment, and in this instance the profession was teaching. Concerning the issue of time, another participant stated that he could not pursue his dream career because he had already failed twice, and he felt that time was not on his side, thus planning to look for employment instead of pursuing tertiary education after his matric year. Career development and guidance through the STF aims to align an individual's past, present and future influences (Watson & McMahon, 2006). Since most participants stated that their parents were unemployed and/or worked general jobs, the sense of urgency to be employed could have also been a result of participants feeling the pressure to create a better life for themselves and their unemployed parents.

Career guidance that is up to date with the latest career trends can help learners identify a wide range of opportunities. However, the latest effective career guidance techniques still cannot guarantee successful career decision-making processes especially in a disadvantaged school context where factors such as pursuing easy employment instead of meaningful career paths is more likely to be a trend as a result of learners' backgrounds. This further perpetuates the cycle of poverty caused by the apartheid system and the pre-existing poor governance. Besides, in order for researchers and practitioners in this field to be effective in the current times, it is important that they remain relevant and useful for those that are seeking career counselling services by comprehending and utilising world trends that are related to this field (Maree, 2013). Chireshe (2012) argued that besides helping learners and graduates to identify their dream occupation, career guidance also assists in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities. However, Dzomonda and Fatoki (2019) found that young people are often misguided and misinformed about starting their own businesses, and this is because of the lack of effective career guidance and awareness. This is consistent with the argument that career guidance does not take a holistic approach and it does not effectively equip learners for post high school opportunities because of inadequate information and skills (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2016; Maila & Ross, 2018). Furthermore, if such factors are not taken into consideration when providing

career guidance, unemployment problems in the country will worsen and the inequality gap will widen.

It is important to highlight that since most of the participants found the LO subject and related career guidance experience ineffective their willingness and effort to receive information from the subject was also questionable. Jonck and Swanepoel (2016) argued that the adequacy of information is usually determined by the learner's inherent motivation to receive information. In addition, it cannot be denied that demographic aspects and the type of school a learner attends have an impact on the perceived adequacy of career guidance (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015). However, just because teachers and the school are mainly responsible for the career guidance process, learners are still not exempt from having a sense of responsibility in the process as well. This is further supported by the STF which stated that intrapersonal factors, such as beliefs about a particular occurrence, can significantly impact how it is received (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Participant 9 in the current study raised a variety of issues, which questioned some of the other participants' efforts in being active agents of their own career guidance process. The participant was registered in the same subject choices as all the other participants in the study however, the participant argued that learners do not take career expos seriously, especially when they know that they will not receive some form of reward for their attendance. This is highlighted in the following quoted excerpt:

> *Participant 9: No, like you know what the problem with school kids is. So, what they did was pamphlets were distributed to the entire school. And it mentioned specific dates we would be able to attend, because we were not allowed to go at the same time. For instance, if it was grade 11, then all the grade 11s would attend, and then maybe the grade 10s would follow next week. So, the problem with school kids was that they were not attending, and you would only find like five people there. And then there would be other schools as well. So, some of them would not attend if they were not offered food. So that's what they would usually do.*

The issue concerning meals was raised by participant 5 below, who stated that their unfair treatment in relation to career exhibitions often demotivated them from attending such events.

> *Participant 5: It was quick, and after then they did not give us food, like we had hoped, because we were asked if we had certain allergies. So, they only gave us pamphlets.*

This participant highlighted that when they attend these events, they often do not receive any meals, while she was aware that the science and maths students receive them. Again, as

supported by the STF, the lack of resources and the socio-economic status of these participants could be significant contributors to how they generally respond to career guidance related opportunities. Despite the issues raised by participant 9 concerning learners' lack of seriousness in attending these events, she ultimately did state that she was also selective of the sessions she attended, and this depended on different factors. Ultimately, socio-economic issues also play a significant role in learners' career guidance process, and these issues simply cannot be ignored.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The following chapter will provide a conclusion to the research report by highlighting its limitations, theoretical and practical implications, as well as future research directions. The research aimed to gain an understanding of high school learners' perceptions of career guidance in township public schools, and specifically the role it played in informing and helping them with their career decisions. The research report further aimed to understand perceptions regarding the quality of information received during the process, and its effectiveness in helping learners make informed career decisions.

The overall findings highlighted that participants were predominantly not satisfied with the career guidance they received. Participants argued that career guidance was a vital process in their overall education. The career guidance sessions consisted of limited information which was not helpful for informing their career decision-making process. The process failed to address both personal interests and the broader social issue regarding unemployment. The learners also raised the concerns of not being able to have meaningful interactions with teachers and/or career advisors to assist with this process. Ultimately, they all perceived career guidance as an important process for their overall educational success, future career prospects and a tool which could assist in addressing the cycle of poverty and other social issues. The challenge, however, will be ensuring that learners' experiences are improved going forward.

6.1 Limitations of the study

The current study was conducted under COVID-19 conditions, and the regulations around the pandemic had an impact on how the research was conducted. The initial intent of the study was to conduct interviews in two township schools in order to attain a better understanding of learners' experiences of the career guidance process, however, due to limitations and restrictions, only one school in the township area showed an interest in granting the researcher access. It would have been better to understand the perspectives of learners from another school in the same township context. Since the interviews were conducted online, establishing rapport via online communication was a limitation because the participants could not have a face to

face interaction with the researcher. However, the use of video calling might have helped in terms of addressing this issue.

The study consisted of students as participants for the sample, and some seemed to not have sufficient information of the career expo details. Some learners did not understand intrinsic details of the career guidance expo, such as the actual tertiary institutions that were represented on the day, therefore, bringing in a teacher or LO Head of Department's (HOD) perspective could have helped with providing intricate information about career guidance sessions. As a result, the generated views from the learners only were considered a limitation of the study. Learners were given the opportunity to use their own language, when responding to the interview questions. However, some still preferred to use the English language. Although this was accepted by the researcher, some participants who still preferred to use English had challenges with articulating certain things, thus using their home language or a combination of both may have yielded better results. The study was cross-sectional in nature, and the participants were in their grade 12 (final) year of high school. Since career guidance is supposed to start from grade 9 where learners have to choose subjects through some form of guidance, a wider sampling strategy (e.g., interviewing grade 9, 10, and 11 students) could have possibly yielded better results in terms of providing a comprehensive representation of their experience.

6.2 Theoretical and practical implications

From a theoretical perspective, it can be concluded that the Systems Theory Framework was relevant and important in helping the current study understand learners' career guidance experiences. It has shown itself to be effective in the township high school settings as it provides useful insights about the various factors affecting the learners' experiences. The framework maintains its relevancy due to the fact that it is not only mindful of the present and the future, but takes the past into consideration as well. This is particularly important given South Africa's political history.

In practical terms, a number of implications emerged from the study's findings. Firstly, the role of the LO teacher was highlighted as an important aspect in the career guidance process. Based on the curriculum, the school and the teachers play a fundamental role in guiding and informing learners about their career decisions. This becomes especially critical in communities where learners may not have access to enough role models or proper resources for a meaningful career

guidance process. Life Orientation teachers should be provided with proper and effective training, as well as guidance in facilitating the process in the classroom. This is key for learners in disadvantaged schools where career guidance could possibly aid in improving their lives as well as their communities. Furthermore, Life Orientation teachers should know how to conduct research in order to keep up with the latest career trends so that learners can be guided on the relevant careers.

Secondly, it is possible that township high schools place too much reliance on career expos which in turn undermines the experience of the learners. In addition, if learners experience overcrowdings during these sessions, schools could maybe consider having school career guiding sessions for learners instead of having the learners attend communal career guidance sessions. Maybe school-based sessions could provide better experiences in terms of information dissemination

Thirdly, there may be a broader need for the department of education to implement more rigorous quality control mechanisms to ensure that what is outlined in the curriculum is actually implemented in the classroom. Finally, it may be the case that teachers feel ill-equipped to handle the career guidance process and if that is the case, an intervention addressing this issue is required. The findings have highlighted that if teachers are not well-equipped and/or invested in the process, this then significantly impacts the learners' experiences of the process. Lastly, since schools are partially responsible for organizing expos, maybe the equipping of teachers with important skills and resources for planning these events should also be taken into consideration in order to effectively assist learners with the process of making career decisions.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Learners in the current study highlighted that subject choice tends to have an impact on their career guidance experience where, as a result of the subjects they chose, they often experienced limited career guidance opportunities. This subject choice was initially an issue since learners were often not effectively guided when they had to choose their subjects in grade 9, hence the issue of subject choice should be explored further in order to gain a better understanding of learners' experiences as a result of their subject streams. Since the study also highlights lack of resources and proper training of LO teachers as career guidance counsellors, research on how teachers perceive their competence for career guidance in the classroom could shed light

on understanding how their experiences then ultimately impacts that of the learners' experiences.

The current study uncovered learners' concerns with career guidance expos as their main source of information, further highlighting the challenges they had with the expos, such as overcrowding. It would be interesting to conduct more research that would aim to gain a better understanding of career guidance expos and their usefulness for the career decision-making process. Lastly, it would also be interesting to conduct a comparative study of learners' experiences in both a public school and a more affluent school in order to gain a better understanding of how these two populations are finding the experiences. This could also further assist in gauging the extent of career guidance in the South African schooling system.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Mailula

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H20/05/16**
PROJECT TITLE	An exploration of high school learners' perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Miss K Mailula
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	22 May 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Minimal
EXPIRY DATE	14 June 2023

DATE 15 June 2020 **CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Prof S Millo

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ Signature

____/ 05 /2021 Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: DBE Request for Permission

DBE Request for Permission

Department of Basic Education

06 Hollard Building

Marshaltown

Cnr Simonds and Main Street

01 May 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at Gauteng Department Schools.

My name is Kutloano Mailula, and I am registered for a Master of Arts degree in Social and Psychological research at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am writing this letter to request permission to do research at the Department's learning institutions. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project. My research is on high school learners' perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools. The aim of my research is to find out about learner's perceptions of the usefulness of career counselling in helping them make career decisions. The reason why I have decided to explore this topic is because career counselling is an important aspect in a high school student's life. I am especially interested in how learners in township schools perceive career counselling because this is an under-researched area of significant importance.

The research will entail collecting data from a range of ten to fourteen high school learners in grade 11 and 12 through the use of semi-structured interviews. I will be asking a set of questions regarding their experiences and perceptions of career counselling and this will take approximately 45 minutes. I will invite individuals from high schools in the Mamelodi (Pretoria) and/or Cosmo City (Johannesburg) areas to participate in this study. The interview will ideally take place on the school premises and on a day that is agreed upon with the Principal and participants. It will also take place after school hours.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain precautions such as social distancing, wearing a mask during the interview process and hand sanitizing will be taken into consideration. However, if a face-to-face interview is not practical during the time of data collection, remote communication would be used to engage with the participants. Thus, the interviews would be conducted telephonically.

The interview with participants will be audio recorded, and the recording will be kept safe in a password protected personal computer. Participants will have to attain signed informed consent from their parents/guardian before they can take part in the research, due to the fact that they are likely to be under 18 and therefore considered minors. I will provide the learners with the consent forms that need to be signed. In addition, participants will be asked to give their written or verbal assent before the interview begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially and identities (their names and the name of the school) will be kept anonymous. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The results will be communicated as a research report which will be available online through the university library. Participating in the study will not advantage or disadvantage potential participants in any way and they will be reassured that they can withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at the Department's learning institutions. The permission letter should be on the Department's letterhead, signed and dated. It should also refer to me by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Kutloano Mailula
Contact: 0791901294
Email: kutloanommalenake@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Sifiso Mlilo
Email: sifiso.mlilo@wits.ac.za

Appendix C: Schools request for permission

Schools request for permission

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at the school

My name is Kutloano Mailula

I am registered for a Master of Arts degree in Social and Psychological research at the University of the Witwatersrand, in the School of Human and Community Development. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project. My research is on high school learners' perceived utility of career counselling in two public township high schools. The aim of the research is to find out about learner's perceptions of the usefulness of career counselling in helping them make career decisions. The reason why I have decided to explore this topic is because career counselling is an important aspect in a high school student's life. I am especially interested in how learners in township schools perceive career counselling because this is an under-researched area of significant importance.

The research will entail collecting data from a range of ten to fourteen high school learners in grade 11 and 12 using semi-structured interviews. I will be asking a set of questions regarding their experiences and perceptions of career counselling and this will take approximately 45-50 minutes. The interview will ideally take place on the school premises and on a day that is agreed upon with you and the participants. It will also take place after school hours.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain precautions such as social distancing, wearing a mask during the interview process and hand sanitizing will be taken into consideration. However, if a face-to-face interview is not practical during the time of data

collection, remote communication would be used to engage with the participants. Thus, the interviews would be conducted telephonically.

I would like to invite learners from your school to participate in this study. The learners should be in grade 11 and 12. If they agree to participate in the study, the interview with the participants will be audio recorded, and the recording will be kept safe in a password protected personal computer. Participants will have to attain signed informed consent from their parents/guardian before they can take part in the research, since they are likely to be under 18 and therefore considered minors. I will provide the learners with the consent forms that need to be signed. In addition, participants will be asked to give their written or verbal assent before the interview begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially and identities (their names and the name of the school) will be kept anonymous. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The results will be communicated as a research report which will be available online through the university library. Participating in the study will not advantage or disadvantage potential participants in any way and they will be reassured that they can withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your school. The permission letter should be on your school's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Kutloano Mailula
Contact: 0791901294
Email: kutloanommalenake@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Sifiso Mlilo
Email: sifiso.mlilo@wits.ac.za

Appendix D: Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

An exploration of high school learners' perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools

My name is Kutloano Mailula, and I am registered for the Master of Arts in Social and Psychological research at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project. My research project is investigating high school learners' perceptions of career counselling in public township schools. The aim of my research is to find out about learner's perceptions of the usefulness of career counselling in helping them make career decisions.

As part of this project, I would like to invite your child to take part in an interview session with me. This activity will involve me asking a set of questions and them responding, and this will take approximately 45 minutes. Your child will also have to give consent to taking part in the study. With both your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device (optional). The audio recordings will be stored in a password protected personal computer. Due to the COVID-19 regulations such as social distancing, the interviews will be conducted via phone, specifically WhatsApp video calling. As compensation for data usage, they will be provided with data amounting to the value of R50 maximum. However, in the case where it won't be possible to use video calling, a normal phone call (not WhatsApp) will be used.

Besides the data compensation, participants will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and they will take part in the study at no cost (i.e., there is no payment required). There are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating in the study. They may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if they do not want to. Although I

will know who they are, confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that is personal. The information they give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else, besides my Supervisor. I will be using a false name, such as Participant A or Respondent B to represent their participation in my final research report. If they experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview and resume another time if your child agrees. Although there aren't any foreseeable risks pertaining to the study, in the case where your child might need counselling services, these will be provided at no cost.

If you have any questions at any time about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request (optional). If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email: hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Masters Student
Kutloano Mailula
kutloanommalenake@gmail.com
0791901294

Supervisor
Dr Sifiso Mlilo
sifiso.mlilo@wits.ac.za

Appendix E: Guardian Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Guardian Informed Consent

An exploration of high school learner's perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools

I …… (name and surname) allow my child ……. (name and surname) to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what his/her participation will involve.

(Please circle)

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may conduct the interview with my child via WhatsApp video calling	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information she/he provides may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study, for academic purposes, subject to ethical clearance attainment	YES	NO
I agree that the research report may be published and used for conference presentations	YES	NO

…… ……. (signature)

…….. (name of parent/guardian)

…….. (date)

…….. (child contact detail)

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet (Learner)

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Participant Information Sheet (Learner)

An exploration of high school learners' perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools

Good day

My name is Kutloano Mailula, and I am a Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I am required to complete a research project. My research topic is: An exploration of high schools' learners' perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools. My research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sifiso Mlilo. The aim of this research project is to find out how career counselling is helpful in your career decision making.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview session. This activity will involve me asking you a set of questions, and you responding to the questions, and will take approximately 45 minutes. If you are under the age of 18, a written and signed consent form would be needed from your parents/guardian before you can participate in the research. Also, with your permission, I would like to record the interview using a digital device (optional). Due to the COVID-19 regulations such as social distancing, the interviews will be conducted via phone, specifically through WhatsApp video calling. You will be compensated for the data, with purchased data amounting to R50 maximum. However, in the case where it won't be possible to use video calling, a normal phone call (not WhatsApp) will be used.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project. Apart from the data compensation, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. Although I

will know who you are, confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that is personal, and the information you give to me will be kept safe. I will be using a false name to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview and resume at another time if you agree. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge at the Joburg Child Welfare (optional). The name of the counsellor is Thabile Tshabalala, and the contact details are 011 298 8500.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional). The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password protected computer. With your permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers (optional). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Researcher:
Kutloano Mailula,
Email: kutloanommalenake@gmail.com
Contact: 079 190 1294

Supervisor:
Dr Sifiso Mlilo
EmailSifiso.mlilo@wits.ac.za

Appendix G: Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Participant Consent Form

An exploration of high school learners' perceived utility of career counselling in public township high schools

Kutloano Mailula (Researcher)

I, ……, agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree to not having my name or any of my personal details being mentioned in the research	YES	NO
The researcher may use what I say without mentioning my name or revealing my identity	YES	NO
I agree to doing the interview via WhatsApp video calling	YES	NO
I agree to the interview being audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used without mentioning my name, after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers only if they also get ethical clearance.	YES	NO
I agree to having the research published and used for conference presentations	YES	NO

……. (signature)
……. (name of participant)
……... ……. (date)
……. (Contact detail)

Appendix H: Interview Schedule

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Interview Schedule

An exploration of high school learners' perceived utility of career guidance in a public township high school

Introduction

My name is Kutloano Mailula, and I am a student at Wits University. Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research study. I would like to remind you that if you feel uncomfortable or would like to stop the interview at any time, you can do so by letting me know.

Cluster 1: Demographics

1. How old are you?
2. Which grade are you currently in?
3. What is your home language, and what is your preferred language of communication?
4. Where do you live?
5. What do your parents do for a living?
6. Tell me more about yourself.
7. What have you always dreamt of becoming?

Cluster 2: Career guidance/counselling session

1. Where did you receive your career guidance/counselling?
2. Which language was used during the session?
3. What did the process entail?
4. What was discussed during your career guidance/counselling session?

Cluster 3: Information sharing

1. Was any career related information shared during the sessions? If so, what was that information?

2. Did you find the information useful?
3. What other information would you have liked to receive, that wasn't included in the session?

Cluster 4: Career guidance/counselling for making career related decisions.

1. What are you planning to do after completing high school?
2. What informed this decision?
3. How much of a role would you say career counselling played in this decision?
4. Would you say it is important for learners to be counselled and guided when making decisions about their career? Why?
5. How would you rate the quality and usefulness of the career guidance/counselling you have received?

Conclusion

Conclude interview by thanking the participant, asking if they have any further questions and indicating that I would be happy to address any questions they may have regarding the research after the interview.