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Factors that influence the employability of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates. A comparative study of two TVET colleges in the Gauteng Province.

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ABSTRACT

Technical and Vocational Education Training Colleges in South Africa have undergone major transformation since the advent of democracy. The White Paper for Post School Education and Training (PSET) speaks to the need of creating partnerships between TVET colleges and employers, in order to secure workplace-based training opportunities for TVET students which could in turn create employment opportunities for TVET graduates (DHET, 2013). The White Paper on PSET (DHET, 2013:11) states that, "Colleges should be rooted in their communities, serving its community as well as regional and national needs. They should primarily provide education and training to members of their own and nearby communities and develop skills for local industry". The above explains the objective of this research report which is to assess the effectiveness of the TVET colleges in its immediate communities and the country. The research study examined the factors that influence the employability of TVET graduates, doing a comparative study of two TVET colleges in the Gauteng province.

The TVET colleges have been criticised by skills development experts, researchers and the business sector that they are not fulfilling their responsibilities and should do more in order to be responsive to the needs of the industry. In response to these critiques, the government has invested huge financial resources in the TVET sector. Over the years, the funds allocated to the TVET colleges has been increasing. In 2018, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) allocated R10.7 billion of its higher-education budget to the TVET colleges (Pandor, 2018).

The research study was carried out in the Gauteng Province at two TVET colleges and four local businesses. The data was collected by means of interviews with staff members from the TVET Colleges, local businesses and the DHET, using qualitative data collection methods.

The research analysis chapter was divided into four main themes. The first theme is titled, curriculum challenges and it discusses the misalignment that exists as a result of the outdated curriculum and equipment. This theme found that some of the curriculum used at the TVET colleges have not been updated in decades and this affects the alignment and responsive of the TVET colleges to the needs of its immediate community. The second theme focused on the workplace-based training programmes and the type of skills obtained by the TVET students during these training programmes. The readiness of students for the workplace was presented in the third theme, demonstrating that colleges need to improve its training programmes in

order to prepare students for the transition from college to the workplace. Finally, the fourth theme was the employability of TVET graduates by local businesses which discussed some of the factors that influence student's employability, such as delayed certificates and unqualified lecturers.

In conclusion, the research report found that the TVET colleges were perceived by business as not being aligned and responsive to the skills needs of local businesses. The findings illustrate that TVET colleges are inundated with challenges which if addressed with urgency could improve the quality of graduates they produce. The employability of graduates to a large extent is a reflection of the quality and functionality of the TVET colleges.