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**Investigating the usefulness of careership theory for understanding
career decision-making among Technical and Vocational Education
and Training (TVET) engineering students**

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DECLARATION

I, **Lesley Thuso Mamogopodi**, candidate number **1257684**, hereby declare that this research report is my own original work. It is hereof submitted as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education by Coursework and Research Report with the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This report has not previously been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other University. Where I have used the work of other authors, I have properly acknowledged them and I have not copied any author or scholar's work with the intention of passing it as my own.

Signed: 

On 15th Day of March 2023

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Firstly, I would like to give glory and honour to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in whom I live, move and have my being. Thank you for being there for me from the very beginning and sustaining me throughout the journey until this very end. Lord, I have been stretched in this process and even contemplated giving up but your mercies said no. To you be all the glory and honour, now and forever more.

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ABSTRACT

Most of the South African research on career guidance and career decision-making is focussed in the schooling sector and towards university pathways. There is little research with regards to career decision-making in the TVET sector except for the recent research of Maluleke (2022a) who investigated student views regarding what influences their career decisions. This current research study aimed at investigating the usefulness of careership theory for understanding career decisions among TVET engineering students at a selected TVET college in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Since the theory informing the study was conceptualised and used to understand the UK TVET context, this study sought to test its affordances for understanding career decision-making in the South African TVET context. The study firstly determined the factors that affect career decision-making and secondly investigated the usefulness of careership theory in understanding those factors. Drawing on data from semi-structured interviews, the study firstly examined the factors that influenced career decisions among first and final year engineering students. Secondly, since the study was aimed at testing careership theory in the South African TVET context, the theory was used as a conceptual framework for analysing the data. The three aspects of the careership model of career decision-making that derive from careership theory were used to interrogate the data to firstly uncover the factors at play in the career decision-making process and secondly, to investigate whether those factors can be explained in light of careership theory. Significant others were not only found to influence career decision-making but they proved to wield power of influence over respondents. Career decision making among TVET engineering students showed to be characterised by turning points. Careership theory proved to be an ideal theory in explaining career decision making in a South African TVET context. The young people proved to have a sense of urgency in their career decision-making and most of them did not receive career guidance prior to enrolling at the TVET college.

Keywords: career decision-making; TVET engineering sector; careership theory

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

This chapter provides the background and context of the study and presents the issue that this study seeks to investigate. This chapter further presents an argument that foregrounds the problem, the significance of the study, the research questions, and outlines the structure of the chapters.

South African apartheid history was characterised by high levels of inequality with the majority of the population relegated to the bottom level of income and wealth distribution in the country (Leibbrandt et al., 2009). Career counselling in South African schools was for many years compromised by apartheid ideology, a lack of teacher education and training in school guidance and counselling, under-resourced schools, and the low-status-accorded career counselling (Maree, 2013). In the post-apartheid era, learners from more affluent families attend well-resourced schools that have addressed this lack of career guidance by soliciting the services of private psychologists to assess large groups of learners (Lavhelani et al., 2020). However, most learners from low socio-economic backgrounds who attend poorly resourced schools have virtually no access to modern, up-to-date psychometric and other forms of assessment, especially assessment aimed at career counselling (Maree, 2013).

Owing to the disparities that characterise the South African society between the haves and the have nots, disadvantaged communities, especially in townships and rural areas lack the resources that provide good quality career guidance (Visagie et al., 2021). The first post-apartheid Minister of Education, Sibusiso Bengu, declared that “the resources of the state must be deployed according to the principle of equity, so that they are used to provide essentially the same quality of learning opportunities for all citizens” (Viljoen, 1998, p. 7). By implication, resources need to be extended to disadvantaged communities, including in the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for career counselling.

The TVET continues to play an important role in the field of education. Oviawe et al., (2017) argue that TVET provides individuals with skills, knowledge, and attitudes for effective employment in specific occupation. On the other side, Arshad (2018) argues that TVET has the potential to play a vital role in human resource development of the country by creating skilled persons, enhancing industrial productivity and improving a quality of life. Furthermore, Atchoerena and Delluc (2002) argue that the TVET sector equips young people with practical skills and the understanding of employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations to earn a sustainable livelihood in today's knowledge economy. The South African White Paper for post-school education and training published in 2013 indicate that the access to TVET has been expanded to redress the vast inequalities that are a legacy of the past regime (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). Consequently, engineering programs continue to attract students and professionals who aspire to pursue or professionalise in various engineering disciplines (Stander et al., 2022). However, Lent et al., (2002) argues that making informed career decisions can be challenging when there are a number of options available to choose.

Understanding the way career decisions are made and establishing how to explain the decision-making process is important for the TVET sector for the sector to support students optimally. Career decision making plays an important role on the transition from school to work (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). The careership theory helps in understanding complexities of career decision-making among TVET students (Law, 1999). This theory will be used as a lens through which to investigate the career decision-making processes of TVET engineering students, considering both personal and contextual aspects. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2013), the South African government aimed to increase enrolments in the post-school landscape through the TVET sector. Thus, I determined that it would be instructive to determine the dynamics at play as students set out to make career decisions towards enrolling in the TVET sector. As a TVET Mathematics Lecturer myself, I confined the study to my students and additionally sought to determine whether the careership theory which proved to be a suitable explanatory tool for career decision-making in the United Kingdom (UK) TVET context would prove.

1.2 Problem statement and rationale of the study

This study seeks to investigate the usefulness of careership theory in understanding career decision-making among Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) engineering students. The enrolment of students in engineering programmes continue to increase in the South African TVET sector. However, not much is known on how South African TVET students make career decisions in the engineering field as traditional career theories often focus more on university education (see Gama, 2015; Maluleke, 2022; Sefora, 2016; Singh, 2016) and may not adequately capture the unique needs and experiences of TVET students. Generally, South African research concerning career choice issues is relatively sparse (Maree, 2016), which could be due to the low levels of literacy and a lack of career information (Guest et al., 2015). Most of the career research is directed towards university pathways (Ramsarup, 2017). Career change has become commonplace as the world of work has moved away from stability and permanency to fluidity. McMahon et al., (2018) argue that career changers choose university education as a pathway to a new career.

The relationship of career guidance to Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an under-explored area (Watts, 2009). According to Watts (2009), there is a tendency to think that career guidance is largely irrelevant to VET, which is based on the supposition that career decisions have already been made. However, he (2009), argues that this supposition is flawed, in a number of important aspects, and that career guidance is relevant to some of the key policy issues relating to the development of VET. Since most of the research is focused towards the schooling and the university systems in South Africa, the research that does exist within the TVET sphere of the post school sector is mostly geared towards the curriculum rather than being focused on students (Papier & McGrath, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to explore an alternative theoretical framework such as the careership theory to better understand career decision-making among TVET engineering students. Kulcsar et al., (2020) argue that career choice making is difficult due to the many pressures affecting individuals. By investigating the usefulness of careership theory, this study aims to fill the existing research gap and contribute to the field of TVET education.

1.3 Research scope

This research aims to understand how selected TVET engineering students make career decisions. This will be achieved by investigating whether the careership model is useful in explaining how career decisions are made in the South African TVET context. To do this, it will make use of Hodkinson and Sparke's (1997) model of careership as an analytical framework to examine the data collected. While Maluleke (2022) used careership theory to explain career decisions of TVET students together with the work of other theorists to boost its explanatory power, this study uses careership theory to achieve the following:

- as a lens for analysing the data to identify and understand factors affecting career decision-making; and
- to evaluate the usefulness of this theory in a South African TVET context given that Hodkinson and Sparkes developed this theory with TVET students in a United Kingdom context.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

What is the usefulness of careership theory for understanding career decision-making among TVET engineering students?

1.4.2 Sub-research questions

- i) What are factors influencing career decision-making among selected TVET engineering students in South Africa?
- ii) How is the usefulness of Hodkinson and Sparke's careership theory in understanding factors influencing career decision-making among selected TVET engineering students in South Africa?

1.5 Structure of Chapters

This research report is divided into five chapters:

The first chapter provides the background and context of the study. This includes the issue investigated, the rationale and the research questions.

The second chapter is the literature review where I engage with the literature that is relevant to this study. In this chapter, I present what other scholars argue about factors that affect career decision-making. Furthermore, I also discuss the three predominant career decision-making theories that help in understanding career decision making. I then discuss careership theory as the theoretical framework for this study.

The third chapter presents the methodology used for this study. I present the site studied, data collection methods used, the type of data collected, how the data was analysed, how issues of data validity and reliability were maintained, and the ethical consideration.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section engages with bodies of literature that are relevant and significant in answering research questions. The first focusses on factors that affect career decision-making within international and South African contexts. In both contexts employability is a focus as is the way this plays out in how career decisions are made. Other factors besides employability that students grapple with in their career decision-making are outlined together with the role played by social, cultural, and economic capital in career decision-making. The second body of literature focuses on describing and discussing three predominant career decision-making theories and their strengths and limitations. The third body of literature addresses how career decisions are made and the role of careership as a theoretical framework that guides and structures the current research.

2.1 Career decision-making and guidance in South Africa

Lack of career preparation and guidance have been major causes of frustrations towards learners when making career decisions in South Africa (Chinyamurindi, 2016; Chinyamurindi et al., 2021; Levinsohn et al., 2014; Maree, 2013). This leaves South African young people being vulnerable (Levinsohn et al., 2014), and enrolling at the college to increase their chances of finding employment (Papier, 2009). According to Maluleke (2022b), many students relate college education to acquiring abilities that give them a competitive edge in the job market. This finding is like that of Branson et al., (2015) who argue that those who have post-secondary education have an advantage in the labor market. With South Africa having one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, the White Paper for post-school education and training in South Africa (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) also envisions that enrollments at TVET and other post-school institutions will address the effects of unemployment in the country.

In a study on factors influencing student's career choice and aspirations in South Africa, Shumba and Naong (2012) found that family, the learner's capacity to identify his or her preferred professional path, and teachers all have a substantial impact on students' career choices and goals. Ajayi et al., (2022) argue that social factors such as the influence of siblings, peers, teachers' influence and career information services play a role amongst Grade 12 learners in South African townships. To support the claim by Ajayi et al., (2022), this is not a new thing in South Africa, as it has been discovered that peers influence each other on career decisions in the 90's (Arkhurst & Mkhize, 1999). Mudhovosi and Chireshe (2012) also discovered that youth continue to influence each other in deciding the type of career to pursue. In his study on the views of TVET students on what influences their career decisions, Maluleke (2022b) found that various factors like student socio-economic status, gender, present circumstances, future aspirations and social, cultural and schooling backgrounds all played a critical role.

Family background has a huge bearing on access and success in higher education in the South African context since the majority of students in danger of not succeeding come from backgrounds with little to no higher education experience (McMillan, 2014). Since they are devoid of social, cultural, and economic capital to influence their circumstances, their chances of success are lower than those whose backgrounds are rooted in education. In a study conducted to explore the occupational choices of marginalised students at a South African higher education institution, Galvaan (2015), discovered that students choose their professions based on trends in their local communities. It is on account of family backgrounds characterised by poverty that young people find it challenging to even enrol in post-school education institutions in South Africa. In a study based on TVET students, Powell and McGrath (2018) found that it is difficult for these young people to enrol at TVET colleges since they face a lot of challenges.

2.2 Factors influencing career decision-making

Lack of resources has been a constraining factor in making a career decision within the South African schooling system (Sedibe, 2011). Chinyamurindi et al., (2021) argues that this lack of resources includes a lack of trained personnel to assist learners through career guidance and has been going on for a long time. There is likely to always be interest in career decision-making especially amongst young people because in addition to having a long-lasting effect on an individual, career decision making may also have a significant impact on a country's economic development, especially at a workplace (Abe & Chikoko, 2020; Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Furthermore, effective career decision-making minimises the career dissatisfaction which renders people ineffective and unproductive in their chosen occupations. Career decision-making is a complex process that differs from person to person and involves cognitive, emotional, behavioural, relational and contextual factors (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997b; Lent et al., 2002; Saka & Gati, 2007; Sampson et al., 1999).

Though employment prospects are amongst the factors students consider in career decision-making, Ajayi et al., (2022) argue that there are other factors at play like gender, family relations factors and societal influence factors. Chinyamurindi et al., (2021) discovered that female learners are highly influenced by parents, teachers, academic experiences, and self-efficacy when making a career decision than their male counterparts. This aligns with what was discovered by Azubuike (2011) who argues that teacher`s qualification influence career decision amongst women. Abe and Chikoko (2020) argues that an individual`s interest, gender, socio-economic status, the qualification of teachers/instructors and guidance counsellors to be the five most influential factors in career decision-making. According to Bandura et al., (2001), some of the factors include students` level of education, personal talents and the environment in which students live.

Other factors influencing career decision making includes the environment. Khasawneh (2011) argues that an environment is an important factor that influences career decision making. This environment can include: the workplace (Huerta et al., 2022); the family environment (Küçükkaragöz & Karakayoun, 2020; Myburgh, 2005), and the school environment (Sorakin Balli et al., 2020). Within a South African context, there is an argument concerning the influence of factors within the education system on learners and the communities they come from (Galvaan, 2015; Graven & Robertson, 2020; Maphosa et al., 2022). Obwoye et al., (2016) discovered that social, financial, infrastructure, job related and marketing factors influence the career choice of trainees. Moniarou-Papaconstantinou and Tsatsaroni (2012) found that cultural and social capital influence student career decision-making. Pursuing a career on TVET programmes is seen as an option by students who did not make it to the University (Andrews, 2019; Lindsay, 2022).

According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), 'capital' in the form of economic, social, cultural or symbolic also play a crucial role in career decision making. These authors argue that students who have educated parents have more cultural and social capital compared to others and their parents in turn, assist them with their career decision-making. Due to the lack of capital (economic, social or cultural), students from poor backgrounds are often unable to realise their career aspirations (Atkins, 2019). It is on that premise that Willis (2017) argued that people's careers are not chosen by coincidence but rather result from their family socioeconomic level. A similar finding was reported 31 years later (Greenbank & Hepworth, 2008).

2.3 Theories of Career Decision-making

McNeill (1990) mentioned that, within the career guidance community there are three competing theories of career decision-making which are dominant namely, trait theory, development model theory and social learning theory, and below I discuss each theory and justify why the careership theory will be used as a theoretical framework for this study.

2.3.1 Trait Theory

The trait theory of career decision making is a psychological perspective that sees the purpose of careers guidance and career decision-making as matching person to placement, by identifying traits of personality, skill and interest that are needed in certain jobs, and seeing to what extent individual young people possess those qualities (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). The basic tenets of the theory state that young people should not approach careers arbitrarily based on luck and ease of accessibility to careers but should pursue guidance from experts who will assist them in establishing a match between themselves and suitable careers (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Trait theory assumes that individuals have stable and enduring trait that guide their preferences, behaviour and overall career paths. Parsons divided Trait Factor Theory into three phases namely the recognition of oneself, collecting knowledge about careers and the business sector and lastly the combination of the first two phases (Sharf, 2006). In their critique of trait theory, Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) argue that since it solely involves matching the individual with potential careers, it fails to cater for the complexity that characterises various careers. This critique is similar to that of Hodkinson and Sparke's (1997) who argue that trait theory is at best oversimplified.

Trait theory considers the goal of career decision-making to involve matching a person's personality, skills and interests to the right employment by recognizing these qualities amongst young people for various positions that needs to be filled (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). The policy of the South African Career Development Services was developed to achieve the labour market goals which of matching supply with demand in addressing the tripartite challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality in the country (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). This policy focus suggests that South African career development policy subscribes to the rationale of the trait theory that speaks to the notion of matching individual skills to the labour market. Both the South African media and policy circles recognise skill shortage as the root of unemployment in the country (Allais & Nathan, 2014). The key idea seems to be that skill provision is required to match the needs of the labour market, thus addressing unemployment which would subsequently lead to economic growth.

2.3.2 Developmental Model Theory

The developmental model of career decision explains how individuals progress through various stages when making career-related choices and decisions. This model typically consists of several stages, each representing different aspects of career development and decision-making. These stages are based on the Idea that career development is a lifelong process and that individuals go through different phases as they navigate their career paths. The developmental model of career decision-making which was developed by Ginsberg et al., (1951) and Super (1980) maintain that there are developmental stages to career decision-making and young people can only make good decisions once they have sufficiently matured in terms of both their abilities and personal development. There are two components that characterise developmental model theory: firstly, the life stages and their impact on human development and secondly, the interaction of personality with those life stages (Super, 1980). Furthermore, the life stages are each characterised by a set of vocational developmental tasks and an individual is regarded as having acquired vocational maturity when they have learned to master these tasks over time. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) are opposed to this theory as an external expert has to decide when maturity has been achieved.

Super et al., (1996) conceptualised career development stages as consisting of the growth stage (ages 4-13), exploration stage (ages 14-24), establishment stage (ages 25-44), maintenance stage (ages 45-65) and the disengagement stage (over 65 years).

Donald Super's developmental stages in career decision-making are as follows:

1. **Growth Stage (4-13 years):** This stage occurs in childhood, and during this period, individuals start to form perceptions of themselves, their abilities, and their interests. They are influenced by their experiences and the people around them, such as parents, teachers, and role models.
2. **Exploration Stage (14-24 years):** This stage usually occurs during adolescence and early adulthood. Individuals begin to explore various career options and gather information about different occupations, industries, and educational pathways. They may also experiment with different jobs or academic pursuits to gain hands-on experience and better understand their interests and strengths.
3. **Establishment Stage (25-44 years):** In this stage, which usually takes place during early to mid-adulthood, individuals make specific choices and commitments to a particular career path or occupational field. They enter the workforce and focus on building their skills and expertise in their chosen field.
4. **Maintenance Stage (45-65 years):** This stage involves individuals maintaining and advancing in their chosen career. They may seek opportunities for career growth, such as promotions, further education, or professional development, to enhance their job satisfaction and success.
5. **Disengagement Stage (Over 65 years):** In the later stages of one's career, individuals may start planning for retirement or gradual disengagement from the workforce. They may explore other interests and activities outside of their primary career, preparing for a life beyond full-time employment.

According to Stead and Watson (1998), Super's developmental model is not applicable in the South African context owing to the staggering unemployment rate which renders the world of work unstable and unpredictable. This is especially true with regards to black South Africans whose career prospects were disenfranchised under the apartheid regime and who are still struggling to find jobs in the post-apartheid dispensation (Super et al., 1996). Another critique of the developmental model is that by treating each person as a unique entity and minimising the influence of social and contextual elements as part of the decision-making process, the developmental model restricts its focus to psychological factors (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) further critique both the trait and developmental model theories as being solely psychological in their focus and ignoring the sociological aspects that in their view also play a role in the career decision-making process.

2.3.3 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory is a psychological theory that was developed by Canadian American psychologist Albert Bandura in the mid-20th century. It posits that people learn through observing others and imitating their behaviours. Social learning theory argues that as life progresses and experiences are gathered, social and cultural elements interact with one another to influence decision-making and become intertwined with a person's identity (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). According to Stead and Watson (2006), the development of career theories was done in twentieth century America and as such, cannot be expected to apply in the same way in other cultural contexts. Gothard et al., (2001) further argue that the three predominant career theories must be viewed in the perspective of the era in which they were created.

This theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions and the role of the environment in shaping individual behaviour. Albert Bandura's key principles of Social Learning Theory includes the following:

1. **Observational Learning:** The central concept of the theory is that individuals can learn new behaviours simply by observing others. This learning occurs through modelling the actions, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. The individuals who are observed and imitated are referred to as "models."
2. **Reinforcement and Punishment:** In addition to observation, the theory suggests that reinforcement and punishment play a role in learning. When individuals observe someone else being rewarded for a particular behaviour, they are more likely to imitate that behaviour. Conversely, if they see someone being punished for a certain action, they are less likely to repeat that behaviour.
3. **Vicarious Reinforcement:** In social learning, individuals can experience vicarious reinforcement, which means that they can learn from the consequences experienced by others. If they see someone else being rewarded for a behaviour, they may feel motivated to engage in that behaviour to receive similar rewards.
4. **Cognitive Processes:** Social Learning Theory places a significant emphasis on cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and motivation. For learning to occur, individuals must pay attention to the modelled behaviour, remember it, and have the motivation to reproduce it.
5. **Reciprocal Determinism:** Bandura also introduced the concept of reciprocal determinism, which suggests that individuals' behaviours, personal factors (e.g., beliefs, attitudes), and environmental influences all interact and influence each other in a bidirectional manner.

There is a growing school of thought that argues that the three predominant career decision-making theories should take into consideration differences amongst ethnic groups, a finding that is resonant in South Africa (Naicker, 1994; G. Stead, 2006; G. B. Stead & Watson, 1998, 2006). Some career decision-making theories have failed to incorporate contextual factors that are characteristic of developing societies such as culture, acculturation, institutionalised racism, prejudice, education and economic conditions (Brown, 2014; Carter & Cook, 1992). Similarly, Smith (1983), questioned the efficacy of the three dominant career decision making theories arguing that they disregard the psycho-social realities amongst minority groups. Though the inadequacy of the three dominant theories of career decision-making has been established in regard to South Africa, this research project seeks to uncover the extent to which this inadequacy is evident as an explanation for career decision-making among a sample of engineering students at a South African TVET college.

2.3.4 Careership theory

Careership is a theory that was developed about the ways in which young people make career decisions (Hodkinson, 1998; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). According to Hodkinson (1998), there are two main theoretical perspectives on career decision-making comprising of a psychological, individualistic one and a sociological one determined by opportunity structures in the labour market. The work done by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) was not aimed at advocating or disproving either of the psychological or sociological theories but was focussed on trying to understand how British young people made career decisions by integrating elements of each one. The authors argue that there are consistent differences between the career paths of young people from different backgrounds in many societies (Arkhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Chinyamurindi et al., 2021; Maluleke, 2022), and that both individual and socio-cultural factors need to be taken into account. Their focus and direction provided the impetus for the current study that sought to investigate how TVET engineering students make career decisions in the South African context.

Careership was chosen as an appropriate theoretical lens for this current study because it does not privilege either of the two strands of career decision-making but rather integrates the two. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), careership theory was developed in an attempt to address what was missing in literature by fusing social and cultural factors with personal choices and merging individual preferences with opportunity structures. There are three integrated dimensions to the careership model. These dimensions consist of *i.* Pragmatically rational decision-making, confined to the habitus of the individual making the decision, *ii.* Interactions with others within the field, related to the unequal resources that different players possess, *iii.* The unpredictable turning points and routines from where the decisions are located (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997, p. 29).

2.4 Pragmatically rational decision making

As they examined their data, Hodkinson & Sparkes (1997) found that young people in their study made pragmatically, rational decisions. Decision making was pragmatic in that it was sensible and realistically based on practical rather than theoretical considerations. Furthermore, as opposed to the British policy rhetoric which emphasised individual freedom to choose, the young people were found to make decisions in a rational manner in accordance with reason and logic (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021; Lent et al., 2002; Singh, 2016). Consequently, societal factors that young people could not ignore influenced how they made career decisions. The majority of young people chose to work in a field or avoided it based on personal experience or suggestions from friends, family, or neighbours who were knowledgeable about it (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). This finding was significant because it indicated that young people are not free agents who can make career decisions without the influence of their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, the young people were pragmatic as they made sense of the information that was presented to them by relating it to their family background, culture, and life histories.

According to Allais (2012), in much of the South African literature on transitions, the transition outcomes are understood largely in the context of individual education choices that young people make. She further argues that while educational choices, values and perceptions around education are important, a broad analysis of the social and economic structures that frame and constrain transitions must be taken as the point of departure for research on the links between education and employment. The South African national policy for integrated career development services was drafted in line with the ideals which state that young people should choose to learn in a manner linked to their interests, capabilities and aspirations (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). This suggests that the South African policy rhetoric mirrors that of European policy makers in focussing on the individual, with limited attention paid to socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts.

The young people who were sampled in Hodkinson and Sparke's study made decisions that were strongly influenced by their personal dispositions, which in turn were influenced by their life histories and located in the social, economic and cultural context in which they, their families and friends lived (Hodkinson, 1998; G. Stead, 2006). By utilising the information, advice and opportunities that were deemed pertinent at that time, young people were found to make pragmatic decisions informed by these dispositions. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) used Bourdieu's concept of habitus to make sense of the career decisions young people took and the personal dispositions that informed them. Habitus is a key concept in Bourdieu's theorisation of choice and it posits that the manner in which individuals think is fashioned according to the structure of their social surroundings and their experiences within these (Bourdieu et al., 1977).

The concept of habitus as theorised by Bourdieu has been criticised as structurally deterministic, presenting young people as having no choice in making career decisions (Bourdieu & Jenkins, 1992). According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), to counteract the determinism of the concept of habitus Brown conceptualised frame of reference, a concept that addresses individual identity and class-derived cultural values. However, as both habitus and frame of reference describe the interaction between culture and identity, Okano (1995) agrees with Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) that Brown's frame of reference is a derivative of as opposed to being an alternative to habitus. In understanding their experiences, there are conceptual structures (schemata) that young people accumulate from their childhood which influence the manner in which they make sense of the world and ultimately how they make career decisions (Driver et al., 1994; Howard, 1987; Rumelhart, 2017). In this research study, I also investigate how the experiences of TVET engineering students shape their view of the world and ultimately how these experiences led to them choosing their respective fields of study. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997), the accumulation of conceptual structures is what makes up a habitus which they argue to be subject to change as young people develop through their experiences. Though they cannot be altered completely, schemata are modified in light of the acquisition of new information and experiences (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that people make decisions within horizons of action which they describe as the confines within which actions are taken and decisions made. They further state that horizons for action are influenced by habitus and by opportunity structures in the labour market. Giddens (1984) refers to horizons for action as a dialectic of constraint as they have the ability to constrain one's worldview and thus the choices people are able to explore. Furthermore, Hodkinson and Sparkes argue that young women will fail to pursue careers in the engineering field despite them being available for them if they do not perceive engineering as a viable career option for themselves (Arkhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

2.4.1 Power relations in the Training Field

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) found it useful to make use of Bourdieu's concept of field for examining how young people make career decisions. The concept of field is at times characterised as a game that has various players such as young people, employers, parents, training providers and career officers. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), unlike a normal team game where each player aims towards a common goal, the various stakeholders within the career decision-making field have distinct goals. Various players within the field possess resources which they wield over others which lead to power imbalances as each player attempts to exert force over the other players (Bourdieu et al., 1977). It was interesting to use field as one of the lenses for examining the data. As a career decision-making concept, field helps to uncover the most influential people at play who are instrumental in influencing young people in their quest to make decisions regarding their careers. This implies that the power to influence the rules of the game as a player's capital that can present itself as economic, social, cultural or symbolic.

The power of each player presents itself in various forms. For example, some stakeholders wield more power than others : employers have the power to hire and fire, parents have contacts they can use to influence students towards specific careers and career officials have more understanding of the system than the young people (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Super et al., 1996). Though young people have some power in relation to their career decision-making, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that such power can only be understood in relation to the other stakeholders within the field and does not exist in vacuum. The on-going decisions within the field are central to how decisions are made and also inform the habitus within which such decisions find expression. Furthermore, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that choices can only be made and taken advantage of because they become available within the field as when a parent organises with their employer to afford their child an internship. It becomes clear then that opportunities cannot be seized unless they present themselves within the playing field and are negotiated through the power relations amongst the stakeholders within the field of play.

2.4.2 Transformations, Turning Points and Routines

Two opposing concepts are often used to describe career progression. The first one is career trajectory which according to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) is largely dependent on the background characteristics of the young people studied such as social class, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and level of academic achievement. Career trajectory refers to patterns indicating the direction of one's career development (Banks et al., 1992) and implies that the career decisions made and the pathways chosen are to some extent predictable. This concept is a mathematical metaphor that postulates that if we know the starting point, the velocity, and the angle then we can predict the end point. The notion of knowing where the object will end is outlined according to the metaphor of the ladder as well as that of an egg (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). The rungs of the ladder make a continuous single whole from the beginning to the end, the decisions taken at the beginning are the lower rungs of the ladder and as life progresses, and the very pinnacle of the ladder is clear and predictable. The second metaphor is that of the egg, irrespective of how one chooses to prepare it, it remains an egg at the end of the day (Hodkinson, 1998; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). This notion seems to suggest that, though people can develop in a variety of ways, once their social class can be established, it can be easy to predict the opportunities and trajectories their careers are to follow.

Tait (1993) warns against such determinist approaches and argues that researchers that hold such views are in danger of creating the very social realities that they are called upon to analyse. There is extensive literature that shows that social class and other factors play an integral role in the changes undergone by large populations (Banks et al., 1992; Furlong, 1992; Kerckhoff, 1993; Roberts, 1993). However, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that to explain the behaviour of a single individual using models that are based on the explanation of patterns in huge populations is misleading. Though he acknowledges the ladder and egg metaphors, Strauss (1962) argues that the two metaphors are inappropriate in articulating the career development of individuals and he characterises individual career development as a series of turning points.

Turning points within one's career projection journey occur when one has to weigh one's options at some point in one's career. Turning points are recognised as junctures in a young person's life where they start re-assessing and re-evaluating their career decisions for some reason or the other (Strauss, 1962).

Different authors make mention of these turning points in various ways. Denzin (1989) refers to them as epiphanies, Alheit (1994) calls them biographical discontinuity whilst Antikainen et al., (2012) regard them as life-changing learning events. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) one's identity is significantly transformed at a turning point. Careership can be seen as an unstructured composition of experiences infused with turning points where decisions are pragmatically rational amongst actors within the field. In their study, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) managed to divide turning points into three categories namely structural, self-initiated and forced turning points. Structural turning points are determined by the institutions that operate externally to the young person who must make a career decision. These are structures that the young person cannot ignore and has to take into consideration in their decision-making process. Self-initiated turning points as the name suggests occurring when a person decides to bring about a change in response to encounters in their personal lives and interaction within the field. Forced turning points refer to transformations effected by external events and actions of others.

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) further argue that career decision-making turning-points do not exist in and of themselves but are intertwined with periods of routine that follow and precede them. They consider these routines as playing a critical role in career transformation and classify them into five categories as confirmatory, contradictory, socialising, dislocating and evolutionary routines. At a confirmatory turning-point, the career decision taken beforehand is confirmed so initial hopes and dreams that defined one's identity are still in place and not altered (Super et al., 1996). This is in contrast to contradictory routines where the opposite is true. The original career decision falls short and one's identity and habitus transform drastically (J. Maree, 2013). Some routines are socialising as they confirm an identity that was not desired at first (Hodkinson, 1998). Dislocating routines on the other hand refer to assuming an identity that one does not prefer or desire and lastly, evolutionary routines refer to gradual changes that lead to constant career explorations in one's career.

2.5 Summary of the literature

The literature review has outlined South African and international studies that have considered factors that affect career decision-making. The second body of literature described three predominant career decision-making theories and their shortcomings in explaining career decision-making which, in the view of Hodkinson and Sparkes necessitated a sociological perspective which they term careership theory. The three aspects of the careership model related to this theory were also outlined in order to understand why the theory and the model were considered of interest for testing in the South African TVET context.

Now that I have discussed the literature that is relevant to this study, below I discuss the methodology for this study. The methodology of this study is informed by the literature that is relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this Chapter, I describe the research site where I conducted the research, the research respondents and explain why I chose qualitative research, its applicability to my study and finally why I chose research interviews as my data collection research method. The chapter begins with the two research questions.

3.1 Research design

This is qualitative research. According to Weisner (2013), qualitative research methods enable researchers to understand cultural contexts, everyday routines and practices, narratives, experiences, intentions, stories, triumphs, secrets, trouble and pain. It was important to incline the current research to such an orientation as the research was aimed at unearthing the dynamics of career decision-making amongst TVET engineering students. Furthermore, qualitative research is suitable especially for the early stages in a research endeavour since key factors pertinent to a particular area of study may not yet be recognised (Cresswell, 2009). In contrast to quantitative research, which sets a restricted research question at the beginning and fixes it, qualitative research starts with one or more relatively wide research questions that may be amended iteratively as research is conducted to narrow the research aim or purpose (Denny & Weckesser, 2022).

3.2 Research site

The chosen site of research was Sedibeng TVET College which is a public college under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) situated in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The college was formed in April 2002 because of the merger between Lekoa (now Sebokeng), Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark Technical Colleges. The college established a satellite campus in Heidelberg in 2007 which has now grown in its offerings of both business studies as well as engineering studies. Sedibeng TVET College is among the eight colleges in Gauteng Province. The college is situated in the South of Johannesburg in the Sedibeng District municipality, with Sedibeng being a Sotho name for 'a well'.

The Sedibeng TVET College was selected because it offers ministerially funded and approved programmes namely Nated Report 191 Business and Engineering Studies and National Certificate Vocational (NC (V)) Business and Engineering Studies. Furthermore, the college offers occupational programmes which are accredited by various Sector for Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). For the purpose of this research, I focussed on the Heidelberg Campus, and I interviewed first and final year engineering students in the mechanical and electrical engineering fields offered there.

Sedibeng TVET College has two engineering fields of study namely ERD (Engineering & Related Design) and EIC (Electrical Infrastructure & Construction). The National Certificate (Engineering & Related Design) is a programme at each of Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the NQF. This programme is designed to provide both the theory and practice of Engineering & Related Design. The practical component of this study programme is offered in a real workplace or in a simulated workplace environment. It provides students with an opportunity to experience work experience which is a critical aspect of their qualification.

The NC(V) Electrical Infrastructure Construction course includes content on heavy and light current. Heavy current covers the distribution of electricity, domestic wiring, civil and industrial industries. Light current covers fields such as digital electronics, industrial electronics, communication electronics, sound engineering and instrumentation. Students who successfully complete the NQF Level 4 qualification may seek employment opportunities in this field. Students who wish to further their academic studies may advance to the N4-N6 Electrical Engineering National Diploma courses.

3.3 Data collection method

According to Britten (1995), the three common forms of interviews in research include structured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews. This study used interviews as the data collection method, administered by a semi-structured questionnaire. This type of interview questions was selected as it allows for pre-set, and open-ended questions with follow-up inquiries that arise from the conversation (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). The open-ended questions specify the region to be investigated and the interviewer and respondent have the autonomy to diverge to examine a topic in greater depth (Britten, 1995). Furthermore, in contrast to the questionnaires often used in quantitative research, interviews are typically more flexible and non-standardised and focus more on the participant's perspectives and experiences. In the interviews conducted, careful attention was paid to the structure and the way questions were asked in order to avoid leading questions. In addition to being open-ended, impartial, considerate, and explicit to the respondent, ideal qualitative interview questions should be based on behavior and experience, on opinion and value, on feeling, on knowledge, sensory experience as well as demographic and background details (Britten, 1995). All these considerations were taken into account when structuring the research interview questions for this study (see Appendix 4). However, Denny and Weckesser (2022) argue that leading questions should be avoided. According to Britten (1995), finding the interviewee's own framework of meanings is the goal of a qualitative research interview, and the research challenge is to avoid imposing the researcher's structures and assumptions as much as possible.

3.4 Respondent details

I interviewed 15 first year students and 15 final year students from both the ERD and EIC engineering fields of study. These participants were selected through purposive sampling, where students enrolled for engineering were purposefully selected. In Chapters four and five, these respondents are referred to by alphabetical letters to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. The following table indicates how anonymity was maintained when discussing the findings from the respondents.

Respondents list

RESPONDENT NUMBER	IDENTIFICATION
01	BM1
02	LH
03	JM
04	PK
05	MK
06	LM1
07	BM2
08	SM
09	NN
10	TM
11	RT
12	XY
13	SY
14	NG
15	LM2
16	LM3
17	SM2
18	NM1
19	SZ
20	SN
21	NS
22	NZ
23	NM2
24	KM
25	FM
26	TM
27	MM
28	LM4
29	LM5
30	TR

Source: Authors table (2023)

3.5 Data analysis

The main aim of this study was to establish whether engineering students at Sedibeng TVET College made pragmatically, rational decisions in choosing their fields of study. The three dimensions of the careership model provided the framework for data analysis. From the literature, I drew a coding scheme for this strand of careership and analysed the data as follows:

- When a student chooses a field of study on account of their own work experience or on account of an advice from a friend, relative or neighbor who knows the field of study well, they are rational (PRDM 1).
- If they make career choices based on what is familiar and known, they are being pragmatic (PRDM 2).
- If the career decision-making is context related and could not be separated from family background, culture, and life histories of students then they are being pragmatic in their decision-making (PRDM 3).
- If decisions are opportunistic and happen by chance, then the young people are being pragmatically rational. (PRDM 4).
- When career decision-making involves accepting one option as opposed to choosing between many then the career decision-making is pragmatically rational (PRDM 5).
- When the young people are acting within their horizons for action, then they are being pragmatically rational (PRDM 6).

In the table below, I indicate a summary of the six aspects of pragmatically rational decision-making on how data was coded for analysis.

PRDM-1	Code of the theme	Research Question on the theme 'speaks to'	Key concepts	Examples of quotes/excerpts or extracts from the data	Number of mentions	Key word/s in the quote/extract
Influence from close associates signals pragmatically rational decision-making	Influence from close associates	1	Influence from a close associate	I was informed by the students that I found here at the college that EIC (Electrical Infrastructure and Construction) is the right choice if I have done maths and science.	24	The students I found here at the college
PRDM-2	Code of the theme	Research Question on the theme 'speaks to'	Key concepts	Examples of quotes/excerpts or extracts from the data	Number of mentions	Key word/s in the quote/extract
Career decisions made based on what is in the familiar and the known signals pragmatically rational decision-making.	Using the familiar and known terrain in decision-making	1	The familiar and the known	"I think it is because when you come to a TVET college, afterwards they find a job for you"	10	Afterwards they find the job for you

PRDM-3	Code of the theme	Research Question on the theme 'speaks to'	Key concepts	Examples of quotes/excerpts or extracts from the data	Number of mentions	Key word/s in the quote/extract
career decision-making is context related and could not be separated from family background	The context within the respondent narrative	1	Context related	I have been in different plants; I have worked in the industry and now I just need a certificate".	30 NB: Every respondent has a narrative which is the basis of their context	And now I need a certificate
PRDM-4	Code of the theme	Research Question on the theme 'speaks to'	Key concepts	Examples of quotes/excerpts or extracts from the data	Number of mentions	Key word/s in the quote/extract
If decisions are opportunistic and happen by chance, then the young people are being pragmatically rational	Career decisions happened by chance	1	Decisions by chance	Because there was no any other course that I liked. I wanted to do civil engineering, but it was not here	13	"But it was not here"

PRDM-5	Code of the theme	Research Question the theme 'speaks to'	Key concepts	Examples of quotes/excerpts or extracts from the data	Number of mentions	Key word/s in the quote/extract
When career decision-making involves accepting one option as opposed to choosing between many then the career decision-making is pragmatically rational	One option as opposed to having various options	1	A single available option	I did not really have options	10	I did not really have options
PRDM-6	Code of the theme	Research Question the theme 'speaks to'	Key concepts	Examples of quotes/excerpts or extracts from the data	Number of mentions	Key word/s in the quote/extract
When the young people are acting within their horizons for action, then they are being pragmatically rational	Career decision-making within horizons for action	1	Horizons for action	"At home everyone did Engineering, we do not have teachers, we do not have lecturers, we do not have doctors"	4	At home everyone did Engineering

The above-mentioned guidelines enabled me to analyze whether my data confirmed or disputed that within their horizons for action, young people make pragmatically rational decisions.

The second aspect of the careership model is power relations within the field of career decision-making. Three questions were used as a guide to analyse these power relations:

- Who is the most influential player in each transcript analysed?
- Were the decisions made independently or on account of interactions within the field?
- Was the decision planned or did it happen by chance?

The first question helped establish the most influential or powerful stakeholder per transcript analysed. This was important because it helped to find where power relations were located. The second question helped to establish if respondents interacted with other stakeholders within the field of career decision-making or acted independently. The last question helped to establish whether career decisions were premeditated or happened by chance.

The last strand of the careership model that was used in the analysis was that of turning-points, transformations and routines. The guideline I used was also threefold and helped me to establish whether the decision-making process:

- was characterised by the concept of turning points, career trajectories or something else.
- The nature of the turning point; and
- The nature of the routine that followed a particular turning point.

3.6 Data validity and reliability

Data validity and reliability was maintained by ensuring accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings from all the respondents to ensure that everything written in this paper is a true reflection of what was alluded to during interviews. Participants statements were not changed to coin statements to answer the research questions; and everything written was exactly what they said.

3.7 Research ethics

In terms of ethical consideration, issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and consent were maintained for data collection at the selected TVET college amongst all participants. An application for ethics clearance was sent to the University of the Witwatersrand and an ethics certificate was obtained. In the ethics application, all the documents to be used in collecting data were reviewed by the committee to see if any harm would result from collecting data. The documents that accompanied the ethics application included consent forms, invitation letters and interview schedules. Before starting with the interviews, all the participants signed the consent and participation form, agreeing to be interviewed. I also explained to all the participants what the study was all about, reviewed the terms and conditions, and assured them that issues of anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained when writing the research report. Participants were also assured that if, during the interview, they no longer felt comfortable with what was being asked, they could withdraw.

Participants were also asked for permission to be recorded, and all agreed to this. I used my mobile phone to record the interviews and the recordings have been kept safe. Each day after the interview, I transcribed all the interviews for the day. All the transcripts are stored in the cloud with an encrypted password that is known only to me, the researcher. I assured all the participants that I could always share transcripts with them to assure them that no fabrications or alterations were made based on what was discussed. All the participants names were not used when interpreting data to ensure issues of confidentiality and anonymity, instead pseudonyms were used to represent what was alluded to by the participants.

This section presented the research methodology used in collecting the data for this study. The data was collected and through face-face interviews and analysed using the lens of careership theory. Below I present the findings of the data collected in themes and sub-themes.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this Chapter, the research questions of this study are revisited, and the findings are presented in relation to the questions. The main question of the study is to understand the usefulness of careership theory for understanding career decision-making among TVET engineering students. This main research question is addressed by two sub-questions. The first question of the study is to understand factors influencing career decision-making among TVET engineering students and the second question seeks to determine whether, and if so how, Hodkinson and Sparke's (1997), careership theory could be useful in understanding these factors. As a central concept to this study, careership theory formed the theoretical framework and as a result, was the lens used to analyse the data. This was done to test if the theory will be applicable to explain career decisions in a South African TVET college in the same manner that it did in the UK TVET context. The coding scheme described in the previous Chapter was used to investigate whether the data confirmed or disputed that within their horizons for action, the young people in this study made pragmatically rational decisions.

4.1 Pragmatically, rational decision-making

The first aim was to establish whether engineering students at Sedibeng TVET college made pragmatically rational decisions in choosing their fields of study. The findings for this section are presented according to the coding scheme for pragmatically, rational decision-making which was divided into six aspects.

4.1.1 Is there an influence from close associates? (PRDM-1)

Participants were asked if they are influenced by their close associates in relation to career decision making. The following are some of the responses from the respondents who participated in this study. 20 of the respondents were influenced by close family members and friends in their decision-making processes. When asked why she chose her current field of study, BM responded and said:

“I was informed by the students that I found here at the college” (Respondent 1, BM).

Respondents indicated that their family influenced them to choose mechanical engineering at a TVET college and when asked why that was the case, they stated that:

“My brother was studying mechatronics in Vaal University of Technology, so this influenced me in choosing the engineering field” (Respondent 4, PK).

“He is a Boilermaker so seeing him do his stuff got me interested” (Respondent 12, XY).

“My sister studied Electrical here and recommended that I come and study electrical engineering here as well” (Respondent 3, JM).

“Everyone is an Engineer in the family so I thought maybe I should follow their footsteps maybe I will succeed in life” (Respondent 18, NM1).

On the other side, TM's responses indicated that religion can be a factor influencing career decision. TM mentioned that:

"My Pastor and the other brother in the Church influenced my career choice"
(Respondent 10, TM).

Some respondents indicated that their relatives also played an important role in their career decisions. One of the respondents, LM3 indicated that:

"My relatives found the school for me then they told my father that I should not take a gap year, there is another school in Heidelberg at Sedibeng where I can study electrical engineering" (Respondent 16, LM3).

Environmental factors such as the society or the community was highlighted as some of the factors influencing their career decision making in choosing electrical engineering. One respondent, SM stated that:

"Someone who is an electrical engineer working at Eskom in my street influenced me to choose electrical engineering" (Respondent 8, SM)

The same applied to KM who was also inspired by his neighbour. His response was:

"A gentleman who stayed at my backstreet who is an electrical engineer influenced me to choose electrical engineering" (Respondent 24, KM).

Social factors also appeared to be influencing how students make career choices in relation to studying electrical engineering. One respondent, NN indicated that he was influenced by a gentleman who used to include him in his electrical piece jobs. The respondent stated:

"There is a guy who used to work with me in his electrical piece jobs, and that influenced and inspired me to choose electrical engineering as a career to pursue" (Respondent 9, NN).

SZ on the other hand was influenced by his girlfriend who is studying the same field at the same college. SZ stated:

"My Girlfriend influenced me to study engineering" (Respondent 19, SZ).

However, not all respondents indicated that were influenced by their close associates in their career decision-making. For example, when TR was asked who influenced him in choosing electrical engineering, he stated:

“No one influenced me in studying electrical engineering. I just did my research” (Respondent 30, TR).

SM shared the same views with TR in that they conducted their own research and decided to pursue a career in electrical engineering. SM stated:

“No one influenced me to study electrical engineering, it was my own decision from my research” (Respondent 8, SM).

On the other side, some respondents indicated that close associates such as family members did not influence their career decision making. One respondent, LM stated:

“No family member influenced my decision making in choosing electrical engineering” (Respondent 28, LM3).

Similarly, LM5 shared the same views that no family member influenced her in choosing electrical engineering. LM5 mentioned that:

“No family member influenced why I decided to study electrical engineering” (Respondent 29, LM5).

The responses on whether there is an influence from close associates in making a career decision about electrical engineering indicates that social, environmental, and religious factors have an influence when students decide what to choose. Such factors include family members, friends, neighbors, peers, and close associates as alluded to by the respondents.

4.1.2 Are young people acting between their horizons for action (PRDM-6)

The responses by respondents such as NN, LM1, and LM5's responses indicate another element that brings us to another aspect within the strand of pragmatically rational decision making which is horizons for action. Respondents indicated that even though the people they knew and are close to did not actively influence them to make their career decisions, they are within their horizons for action. The respondent, NM1 indicated that they failed to pursue a career in medicine and found themselves studying engineering. The respondent stated that:

"Everyone studied engineering at home. We do not have teachers, lecturers, or doctors" (Respondent 18, NM1).

Pursuing a career as a mechanical engineer, was also within LM1's horizons for action. The respondent indicated that:

"I was working for a company that manufactures vehicles for militaries and stuff for a good 5-6 years" (Respondent 6, LM1).

LM1 further indicated that she was exposed to job functions in which she was trying to obtain a qualification. Though she started out crafting a career in human resources management, LH decided to pursue a career in engineering since the professions of her father and uncle were within her horizons for action:

"My biological father is a mechanical engineer, and my uncle is an electrical engineer" (Respondent 2, LH).

Though SY wished for a career in nursing, she ended up choosing engineering because that is what her brother was doing and was within her horizons for action. When asked what she wanted to be while she was growing up, she said:

"I wanted to be a nurse. I never wanted to be within the engineering field" (Respondent 13, SY).

4.1.3 Are decisions based on the familiar and the known? (PRDM-2)

The respondents quoted above also acted in the familiar and the known because they interacted with significant others such as immediate and extended family members, friends and neighbors who ultimately influenced their career decision-making process. They acted in accordance with what is well-known by their families, friends and communities as motivation for their career decision-making. When asked what motivated her to come and study at the college, one participant, BM1 stated that:

“I think it is because TVET colleges place students for workplace experience where there are chances to be employed” (Respondent 1, BM1).

The notion that TVET colleges place their students for workplace experience, and chances for finding jobs after workplace experience placement are high, BM1 acted in the familiar and the known which is a function of PRDM. Again, MK indicated that she was influenced to choose the same TVET college career that was chosen by her brothers beforehand. Not only is this a function of PRDM-1 but it also shows that she acted in the familiar and the known. She was conversant with ERD because that was a career that her brothers pursued.

Other respondents indicated that they believe that when one obtains an engineering qualification, the chances for an individual to be employed are high. One participant, NS mentioned that:

“The engineering field has unlimited job opportunities, and by so chances for one to get a job are high” (Respondent 21, NS).

Such view is a commonly opinion which goes to show that NS also acted in the familiar and the known.

When respondents were asked why they decided to study in the college studied, one respondent, NZ stated that:

“I heard that people who have studied at this college earn a lot of money” (Respondent 22, NZ).

The above-mentioned responses make it clear that the respondents made their career decisions by taking advantage of the information that was in the public domain. As a result, that is a clear indication that they acted out on what was part of the familiar and the known.

4.1.4 Are decisions opportunistic and happening by chance? (PRMD-4)

Another element of pragmatically rational decision-making involves career decision-making by happenstance rather than planning. Respondents were asked if it was their ideas to study at the college. One respondent, FM stated:

“No, it was not my plan to come and study here” (Respondent 25, FM).

BM shared the same sentiments and stated:

“It was not in part of my plan to come to this college” (Respondent 7, BM).

LM4 indicated that her matric results points were not sufficient to allow her to follow her dream as a medical doctor. LM4 further indicated a TVET engineering qualification was her second choice. She did not envision herself studying further but was encouraged in the workplace to come and improve her education. For LM5, being at Sedibeng TVET college was a second option since he could not find space at his preferred TVET college of choice. LM5 stated that:

“I wanted to go to Spruit college, but I did not find space to pursue my career” (Respondent 29, LM5).

On the other hand, SY did not have the means to go and study her chosen field of study at her preferred institution of higher learning, and as a result she settled for what she could find at Sedibeng TVET college. SY stated that:

“I did not have financial support to pursue what I wanted to study, so I ended up studying engineering here” (Respondent 13, SY).

Most respondents could not pursue their first preferred careers because of low marks in grade 12, especially in mathematics and science. NM1 could not pursue her dream of becoming a doctor because her life history was that of failing matric mathematics and science which are critical to the field of study that she was interested in. NM1 stated:

“After failing my matric, I supplemented my matric results twice and I failed that is when I decided to pursue a different thing” (Respondent 18, NM1).

BM1, also came to the college because she was not able to upgrade her matric. She stated that:

“I wanted to go to Tsoenyane to upgrade my matric since I failed matric” (Respondent 1, BM1).

NZ shared the same views and stated that:

“My initial plan was to go to university. That did not happen because I did not pass my matric” (Respondent 22, NZ).

NM2 also wanted to go to university but was affected by her poor matric results. NM2 stated:

“I had an option of going to the University of Free State but then when the results came out, I was not qualifying and that is why I enrolled here” (Respondent 23, NM2).

TR also alluded to that being at the TVET college was not his initial choice. The respondent stated that:

“I had an option of studying mechanical engineering at Vaal University of Technology but my matric points failed me” (Respondent 30, TR).

Twenty-one out of a total of thirty interviewed respondents did not plan to come and study at the college and it was interesting to discover that some of those who claimed to have planned to come to study at the college, were not studying their first preferred choices. For an example, SM stated that:

“When I came to the College, I wanted to pursue Office Administration and then there was no space. Space was available on the ERD (Engineering & Related Design) side, so I decided to pursue it” (Respondent 8, SM).

LM2 wanted to study teaching hence she upgraded her matric to improve her marks. When she failed in upgrading her marks, going to a TVET college became an option. She stated that:

“I went back to upgrade my marks but then they still could not be upgraded so I ended up coming here” (Respondent 15, LM2).

4.1.5 Is decision-making involving accepting one option or many? (PRDM-5)

One of the aspects of PRDM is that career decision-making is characterised by accepting one option as opposed to having many options to choose from. Respondents highlighted several career options when asked on which other career options they had before deciding to study engineering at Sedibeng TVET college. The following are the responses from some respondents.

“I did not have any option other than engineering” (Respondent 16, LM3).

“I did not have other options to choose from” (Respondent 18, NM1).

“Engineering was the only option available for me to study” (Respondent 27, MM)

“I wanted to be a pilot but ended up studying engineering because of lack of funds I ended going to the college” (Respondent 4, PK).

“I wanted to go to the university, but I did not have funding to study there so my last option was to go to study at Vaal” (Respondent 26, TM).

Though PK and TM referred to furthering their studies at university as options, these appeared to be wishes as opposed to realistic options because they did not have the means that would enable them to realise their dreams. SY wanted to be a nurse but did not have the means to pursue nursing due to poor socio-economic conditions at home. She then decided to relocate from rural KwaZulu-Natal to Gauteng to stay with her aunt. Again, SN also exhibited a strong sense of character in the sense that he is willing to turn things around in terms of his difficult background. When he was asked what he took into consideration when deciding to come and study at the college, he responded by saying:

“It is because of my background, I wanted to better my home” (Respondent 20, SN).

The same motivation of “bettering the home” drives NS as well. Her motivation to succeed in her electrical engineering field of study is that:

“I would say studying electrical engineering will enable me to change the situation at home” (Respondent 21, NS).

4.1.6 Are decisions context-related? (PRMD-3)

When career decision-making is context related and cannot be separated from family background, culture, and life histories of students then they are being pragmatic in their decision-making. To support this, LM1 mentioned the following when asked what made him suitable for mechanical engineering:

“I’ve been in different plants; I’ve worked in the industry and now I just need a certificate” (Respondent 6, LM1).

This response is a clear indication that students took advantage of the opportunity of coming to the college by chance rather than making it a well thought out decision. In addition, they did not have a lot of options to choose from in their career decision making.

4.1.6.1 Evidence of Pragmatically Rational Decision-Making

24 out of 30 respondents who participated in this study confirmed in their responses that they were influenced by close associates like parents, siblings, extended family members and peers in their career decision-making processes. The responses also confirm that the career decision-making of ten respondents was based on what was familiar and known while 13 stated that they chose their careers by chance. The decision-making process was not premeditated but came by happenstance which means they took advantage of an opportunity of studying at the college as the opportunity presented itself to them. 10 respondents indicated that they did not have a lot of options and that enrolling at the college was the only option they had at that time. Four responses from the data also showed that students acted within their horizons for action in making their career decisions.

4.2 The effect of power relations within the field of career decision-making

As explained in the previous Chapter on the coding scheme for this section, three questions were used as a guide to determine the power relations at play in respondent career decision-making processes. The question on the most influential stakeholder per transcript analysed helped to find the stakeholder that wielded more power of influence in the process of career decision-making. The stakeholder that wielded more power in this section will be presented and described by phrases like the most influential or most resourceful. There can never be power of influence unless the respondents interacted with other stakeholders within the field of career decision-making. Considering that, the second aspect of the coding system looked for evidence in the data and from respondent responses that they interacted with other stakeholders in their career decision-making process. The last aspect of the coding scheme questions looked to establish from the data whether respondents planned their career decisions or if whether it happened by happenstance. The presentation of all these three aspects in this section will be presented as a unit owing to the nature of responses received from respondents.

LH was the most resourceful player in her career decision-making. Though she studied Human Resources, she came to the TVET college to study mechanical engineering which is the field of study that she always wanted. She stated that:

“I studied Human Resources in Nkangala FET College, and I worked the following year. Oh, I got married then I worked” (Respondent 2, LH).

She further stated that:

“My biological father is an electrical engineer, and my uncle is a mechanical Engineer” (Respondent 2, LH).

She must have interacted with her father and uncle to leave her Human Resources career which she studied for to pursue an engineering career.

LM1 was the most resourceful player in the field. He seemed to oversee his destiny and was making decisions to realise his dream of becoming an engineer. Like LH, who studied human resources management beforehand, LM1 studied accounting and they both did not find satisfaction in those vocations and so decided to come to the TVET college in order to pursue careers in engineering. With regards to his choice of mechanical engineering at a TVET college, LM1 stated that:

“It was the only entry point I could find” (Respondent 6, LM1).

To him, being at the college is a steppingstone towards realising his dream of being an engineer. He interacted with his cousin as well as his industrial experience in his career decision-making process.

JM also appeared to be the most resourceful player in her field of career decision-making. She knew there were no opportunities in Nthoroane, her rural Mpumalanga home and moved to neighboring Heidelberg to pursue a career in engineering. This is her response which indicated that she was the most influential stakeholder in her field of career decision-making:

“Because there are no job opportunities. There is only one high school and one primary school” (Respondent 3, JM).

In the same vein, MK interacted with her brothers and mother in her career decision-making, and it shows that her family members were the most influential stakeholders in her career decision-making. This is how she responded when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up as a child:

“I wanted to be a media personnel but because my mother had a dream that I become an Engineer, and I decided to follow that dream and make it my own” (Respondent 5, MK).

As already explained above, in the case of LM3, it is clear that her relatives and parents were the most influential players in terms of her career decision-making. She wanted to take a gap year, but they were the ones who were instrumental in finding her space at the college. Such is not just influence from significant others indicative of PRDM-1, but it also shows the power the parents had in her career decision-making which led her to enrolling at the college. SM is the most resourceful player in his case because after not obtaining sufficient matric marks to go to university, he decided to enroll at a TVET college. SM stated:

“Aah Sir, ama marks wam bawa manqane (my marks were not fit enough for me to qualify at the University)” (Respondent 8, SM).

PK was also the most resourceful player in his career decision-making process, and he interacted with his brother who also studied at the same college. When he was asked if there were specific people that shaped his choice of career he stated:

“My big brother influenced to choose engineering” (Respondent 4, PK).

KM was the most influential player in his case as he went for employment after matric however, after realising that he is losing his way through drinking, he decided to come to school and further his studies. KM stated:

“Many things were happening, me and my friends were starting to drink a lot every weekend. We would go to the taverns and drink alcohol, so I stopped drinking and decided to focus in building my future” (Respondent 24, KM).

LM4 on the other hand, interacted with her highly qualified colleagues who held PhDs at a bookstore that later encouraged her to come to school and further her studies. She stated:

“Like I told you that I was working so the people I worked with had PHDs and stuff so I was encouraged to upgrade my life” (Respondent 28, LM4).

Several respondents who participated in the study showed that they were the most resourceful players in the field of their career decision-making process. This showed that they took charge of their own career decision-making. Parents, friends, and peers also came through the data as having power of influence in the career decision-making process of respondents.

4.3 Transformations, turning points and routines

The career decision-making process for most of the respondents was characterised by turning points. Hodkinson and Sparkes divided these into three categories namely the structural, self-initiated and forced turning points. The turning point in the case of TR was not achieving sufficient matric mathematics and science marks to pursue a career in medicine. He stated that:

“My grade 12 results were not fit enough for me to study medicine” (Respondent 30, TR).

This structural turning point affected NM1, NM2, BM, NZ, MM, SM, LM3 and SZ. TM and JM had similar structural turning points of not having enough funds to go to the university and further their studies there. When TM was asked if he had any other options than coming to the college, he indicated that:

“My option was to go to study at Vaal (referring to the Vaal University of Technology), but then because of lack of money I ended up coming to the TVET college” (Respondent 10, TM).

Similarly, when JM was asked what her original plan was before coming to the college, she stated that:

“I wanted to study Millwright at TUT (Tshwane University of Technology)” (Respondent 3, JM).

The lack of money was an impediment that brought about a structural turning point for both respondents because as a result, they both ended up coming to the college. LM4's turning point was that of working with highly educated people that inspired her to take stock and come to further her studies. Her decision to come and further her studies after being inspired to better her life is an indication of a self-initiated turning point.

LH and LM experienced a similar turning point of career dissatisfaction. They both had industry exposure which inspired them to come to the college and further their studies. When asked what he was doing before he came to the college, LM stated that:

"I was working for a company that produce vehicles for militaries for 5-6 years. Before then, I was in an accounting firm where I did not see myself fit, hence I switched" (Respondent 6, LM).

On the other side, LH stated that:

"I studied HR in Nkangala FET and I worked the following year" (Respondent 2, LH).

Respondents experienced various forms of turning-points that were identified as well as the routines that followed them. BM1's turning point was structural in nature as she had to decide whether to upgrade her matric or go to launch her career at a TVET college, which she did. The routine or event that came after her turning point was contradictory in nature as she had to follow a career in electrical engineering that was totally different from the initial dream of being a medical doctor. JM's turning point was self-initiated as she was instrumental in enacting the transformation. She could not go to TUT due to low matric results, so she came to a TVET college which was within her horizons to action. NS's turning point was forced. She could not apply to the university after finishing matric due to an unfortunate case of identity fraud. She stated that:

"I did have other options. I did apply to varsity but then they said my ID number already exists" (Respondent 21, NS).

Though LM3's career decision-making process was characterised by a similar turning-point to BM1 of failing matric which was also structural in nature, the routine that followed her turning point was confirmatory because even before failing matric, she had always wanted to study engineering. The other confirmatory routines discovered from the data were those of SM2 and LM5. When LM5 stated:

"I wanted to be an electrician" (Respondent 29, LM5).

SM2 responded in the similar manner to the same question. Considering that, their routines were confirmatory in nature because though they had not planned to come and study at the college, they find themselves studying what they have always envisioned for their lives.

4.4 The state of career guidance in South Africa

Some participants provided responses that provided insights into the state of career guidance in South Africa. A number of respondents did not receive career guidance before they enrolled at the college. 28 from a total of 30 respondents confirmed that they did not receive career guidance before enrolling at the college.

MK and NM2 are the only two respondents who received career guidance before enrolling at the college. When asked if she received career guidance before she came to enrol at the college, MK mentioned that:

"I attended several career expos during my matric grade and I was exposed to civil engineering ERD, where I did my own research to find out more about these two courses" (Respondent 5, MK)

Talent was presented as a career option to pursue by some respondents whilst others did not consider talent as a viable option. BM1 and SM would still want to pursue talent related careers. BM1 stated that:

"Growing up I have always wanted to pursue a career in singing" (Respondent 1, BM1).

It was interesting to discover that at some point, she still holds a dream of becoming a professional singer. On the other side in relation to pursuing a career, SM stated that:

“I love cooking and I express more of my feelings there knowing that people will be eating my food fulfills me” (Respondent 8, SM).

SM further stated that she still wants to pursue a career in cooking and become a Chef and craft a career in mechanical engineering. Other respondents did not consider talent inspired careers as worth following. When PK was asked a similar question, he answered by saying he was always a good comic whilst growing up, however does not perceive it as a career to build. PK stated:

“I did not really think of comedian as a career” (Respondent 4, PK).

NM has always liked singing just like BM1 but when asked why she did not pursue a career in singing she responded by saying:

“Singing is not a path that I would pursue as a career” (Respondent 1, BM1).

Though some of the respondents wanted to craft careers through their talents, some of the respondents had to abandon their talents due to several challenges. SZ mentioned that:

“I wanted to build a career by playing soccer, but opportunities are scarce in building a career” (Respondent 19, SZ).

LM1 shared the same sentiments as SZ. When asked what he believed he was good at whilst growing up, he stated that:

“I was one of the best rugby players, but I could not build and pursue a career along that path because of politics in our team” (Respondent 19, SZ).

In this Chapter, the findings of this study were presented based on an analysis of the data collected through face-to-face interviews. These findings are important for understanding how TVET engineering students make career decisions and the factors they grapple with in their career decision-making process. Based on the findings it is clear that the career decision-making process amongst engineering students at the studied TVET college can be best described by using the careership model.

Now that I have discussed the research findings of this study, in the next chapter I discuss the findings and relate it to the literature presented in this study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This study sought to investigate the way engineering students make career decisions at a selected South African TVET college. To achieve this, I used Hodkinson and Sparke's careership theory as a lens to analyse data. Hodkinson and Sparkes conducted a study in Europe in 1997 and I wanted to use the theory in the South African TVET sector where I work as a lecturer. There is a lot of focus on the TVET sector as it plays critical player in the South African post school landscape and since government plans to increase enrollments in the sector, I determined that it would be valuable to discover the dynamics at play as students set out to make career decisions towards enrolling in the TVET sector. To answer the afore-mentioned research questions, I made use of the three aspects that characterises the careership theory: pragmatically rational decision-making, power relations within the decision-making field and transformations, turning points and routines that characterise the decision-making process, and below I discuss them.

5.1 Pragmatically, rational decision-making

With regards to pragmatically rational decision-making, which is the first strand of the careership model, the following are the findings that stemmed from my study:

Family members were found to influence the way engineering TVET students made career decisions. This finding aligns with the findings by Chinyamurindi (2021) and Myburgh (2005) who discovered that family members influence career decision making. Furthermore, the study revealed that friends and peers have an influence on the career decision-making process of the respondents. This finding aligns with some of the literature by Arkhurst and Mkhize (1999), Mudhovosi and Chireshe (2012) who argue that as peers or friends interact, there is a tendency of influencing each other on which careers to choose. Based on the findings of this study and other bodies of literature on family members and friends or peers, it is apparent that family members and peers continue to influence career decision making on the engineering students studied.

However, there were also a few students who believed that their career decision-making was their own doing and that they were not influenced by another person in choosing their engineering fields of study at a selected TVET college. This finding aligns with the findings of Abe and Chikoko (2020), who highlighted that students' decision to pursue a career in Science, Technology and Mathematics, which is a related component of engineering, was based on their own career interest. It was interesting to find out that though they profess not to have been influenced by anyone in their career decision-making process, they did know someone significant in their lives who was making a living from the career they chose. Thus, the influence might not have been direct but played its role in an indirect manner. This finding foregrounded another component of pragmatically, rational decision-making discussed by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) which is horizons for action. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) horizons for action refers to the context in which decisions and actions are made. While their significant others might not have verbalised their influence on their choice of fields of study, these people were within their horizons or rather sphere of influence.

The data also revealed that some sampled engineering students at a selected TVET College made their career decisions by chance, as opposed to planning them which is also a function of pragmatically rational decision-making. This finding contradicted with a study conducted to explore the occupational choices of marginalised students at a South African higher education institution by Galvaan (2015), who discovered that students choose their professions based on trends in their local communities. In outlining the three predominant decision-making theories, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that they all present the decision-making process as an individual process and promote a model of deliberate decision-making as a workable, ideal that should be pursued. It is clear from the data that choosing their engineering fields of study was not their original plan for most students and only came as a second option. Another finding is that failing the Grade 12 public examination (termed 'matric' in South Africa) is one of the reasons that led the students to the TVET college.

Failure to get the required marks in matric, especially with regards to mathematics and science subjects, impeded students from pursuing their dream careers and as a result, they ended up opting for TVET related careers. This is in line with the findings by Andrews (2019) which revealed that some students could not get into university because they did not have a bachelor's pass, so they had an option to get into a TVET College. Archer (2010, p. 6) contends that "when a project is constrained or enabled during its execution, agents can act strategically to try and discover ways around it or to define a second-best outcome". These respondents looked at alternative routes to their dream. This process coincided with Bandura's (2001), who argued that core functions of agency include intentionality, forethought and self-reactiveness. The respondents portrayed intentionality by applying to the university and revealed forethought because they applied for a specific course and self-reactiveness by making alternative plans.

Most respondents did not have alternative options to choosing engineering as a field of study at the college. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), accepting one alternative rather than selecting from a variety of options is a common function of pragmatically rational decision-making process. One of the findings that came out of the study is that the original dreams of respondents were not realised due to poor socio-economic conditions. Motivated by their experiences of lower socio-economic backgrounds, respondents wanted to be successful in their chosen fields of study to 'fix' their backgrounds. Some of the respondents drew the inspiration from their work experiences to come to the college and further their studies. This aligns with the findings by Huerta et al., (2022) who discovered that institutional networks at the workplace influence career decision making. This suggests that workplace can be an institutional support in influencing career decision making.

5.2 Power relations within the field of career decision-making

It was also reported that respondents come across the most influential stakeholders in their career decision-making. Some of these influential stakeholders included pastors, guardians, and career exhibition guiders influenced career decision making among. Maphosa (2022) discovered that career exhibition plays an important role in influencing career decision making among Science, Technology, and Mathematics. Based on the findings of this study, and by Maphosa (2022), this suggests that career exhibitions are essential in influencing students career decision making. In light of the power relations that are at play amongst various stakeholders within the career decision-making field, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that young people yield power in terms of their own resourcefulness to make decisions necessary to crafting their own futures. After some of them failed matric, respondents in this study took stock, regrouped and decided to study in the TVET sector. Considering engineering qualification offerings which became attractive to prospective students, the TVET college also showed to be the most resourceful stakeholder in the study. Educational institutions like the TVET college are more familiar with the processes than young people are, and they have connections and access to networks that many young people do not (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

Analysis of the data also revealed parents as influential stakeholders within the field of student career decision-making. Lastly, the data also showed the power that came from peers and friends in influencing the career choices of the respondents. This phenomenon was embedded in specific situations and in the context of decision making. A study conducted by Abe and Chikoko (2020) also discovered similar results and indicated that students made their best career decisions when around their parents.

5.3 Transformations, Turning-points and Routines

Career decision-making was characterised by turning points as opposed to career trajectories. Most respondents underwent structural turning points. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), structural turning points are on account of external institutions and young people normally undergo such turning points at the end of compulsory schooling. Since most of the respondents in this study came from the compulsory schooling system, structural turning points came through in most interview responses. These are the structural turning points that align with those of Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997). Some students came to the college because they had finished matric or failed to complete it. Only a few decided to leave formal employment to come and further their studies. Some of those who left employment to come to study at the college, underwent self-initiated turning points as they came to a point where they wanted to improve their lives. This aligns with the self-initial turning points that Barker-Ruchti et al., (2014) argues that it emerges from critical reflections on self, ideals, norms, practices, and relationships, instead of being stimulated by uncontrolled or unexpected conditions. Other respondents indicated that were found to be forced to turning points whereby they found themselves in circumstances that they could not stand anymore. For an example, two respondents in this study, LM1 and LH came to the college to further their studies because they experienced career dissatisfaction in the vocations that they were involved in. This aligns with what Lindsay (2022) discovered that TVET is also regarded as an alternative to pursue by students when not satisfied in some vocations that they are involved in. This suggests that TVET education is a possible trajectory to pursue other career options when one is not satisfied with what they are studying.

5.4 Conclusion

This study was undertaken to explore how engineering students make career decisions at a TVET college in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The research adopted a qualitative methodology. The literature reviewed on career decision-making led to the use of a careership model as the theoretical framework for the study. The three dimensions of the careership model provided the framework for data analysis. The careership framework provided clarity on the dynamics at play in student career decision-making processes. It was interesting to discover from the data that the careership model is a useful model for explaining how TVET engineering students make career decisions in the South African context. As a theoretical lens, careership enabled this study to uncover the influences at play as students set out to make career decisions. Parents, other family members and peers were the most potent influences. It was also interesting to see that environmental factors played a critical role as students acted within their horizons for action by making decisions that were within their “familiar and known” terrain.

It also became clear from the analysis that student career decision-making processes were context-related and could not be separated from student backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. Only a small fraction of respondents premeditated their enrollments at the college and the majority came to the college by chance which is one of the elements of a careership model of career decision-making. Lastly, most respondents only had one as opposed to a variety of options, in choosing their fields of study which is associated with pragmatically rational decision-making. Besides being one of the major influences in career decision-making processes, parents, and peers wielded power to influence and shape student career choices. The data also showed that students themselves also possess power to craft their own career paths. Their drive, tenacity, and hunger to make something of themselves came through strongly in the data. They did not become despondent when faced with challenges but responded with a sense of agency towards bettering their lives. It was interesting to note that the college also wields power in student career decision-making as it is attractive to students through its offerings that students can make use of to better their lives.

Lastly, student career decision-making processes were shown to be characterized by turning points as opposed to the notion of a career trajectory. This means that their career journeys could not be predicted as life experiences pushed them to re-imagine and re-orient their career decisions. Structural turning points were the dominant sub-category of turning points but self-initiated and forced turning points also surfaced from some of the respondents. It was also interesting to discover the routines that followed various respondent turning points. Though Hodkinson and Sparkes unearthed three routines namely confirmatory, contradictory and socializing routines this study was only able to uncover confirmatory and contradictory routines.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Since careership theory was conceptualized and used in the UK TVET context, the focus of the current study was to test the theory in the South African TVET context. Further studies could 'test' other theories or use the same theory with increased sample sizes within and beyond the TVET sector since the current study only sampled thirty engineering TVET students. The research tool used for this current study was qualitative interviews. Future research could make use of mixed methods which would assist in catering for larger sample sizes.

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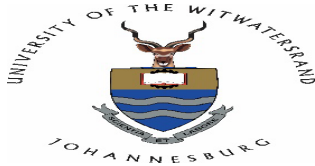
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ANNEXTURES

Annexture 1: Letter Requesting Permission from the College

LETTER EXPLAINING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



University of the Witwatersrand

School of Education

Tel: 0117173221

Email: cathrine.monyane@wits.ac.za

To: The College Principal

Subject: Permission to conduct research at the College

My name is Thuso Mamogopodi, I am a studying for a Master of Education specializing in Education and Work in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing research on- *Capacitating TVET Career Guidance Services through the National Careers Advisory Portal (NCAP)*. This study is aimed to investigate how career guidance services can be improved in the TVET sector using the National Careers Advisory Portal. I will appreciate to have the students of your college participating in this research study.

Please let me know if you require any further information and I am looking forward towards hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Thuso Mamogopodi

Cell: 084 710 7766

1257684.students@wits.ac.za

Annexure 2: Participant information sheet

Title: Investigating the usefulness of careership Theory in understanding career decision-making among TVET engineering students

It would be greatly appreciated if you could please acknowledge receipt of the information sheet that informs your participation in the research study.

You will be acknowledging that:

- Involvement is completely voluntary and the college may choose not to participate or to withdraw their consent at any given time without any negative consequences
- You have read and understand the information sheet and acknowledge its contents
- Your inputs will be confidential
- The identity will be confidential
- Your consent will be obtained before data collection begins.
- The data collection process will not interfere with the day to day running of the department and the College at large
- It is envisaged that the research findings will be used for academic purposes including books, journals and or conference proceedings and to inform policy debate.

I, _____ (Research Participant) acknowledge the information stated above and grant permission for Thuso Mamogodi to interview me for the purposes of the Research Study.

Please provide details should you wish to receive an electronic summary of the research findings.

E-mail address: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annexure 3: Participant consent form

Study Title: Investigating the usefulness of careership Theory in understanding career decision-making among TVET engineering students.

I, _____ (*participant's full name*)

Please tick either the yes or no block below to show that you understand what it will mean to consent and participate:

- I have read and I understand the information sheet.
 - Yes
 - No
- My participation is completely voluntary and I understand that I may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any punishment or negative consequences.
 - Yes
 - No
- I will also not be advantaged, disadvantaged or paid for participating.
 - Yes
 - No
- I do not have to answer any questions I do not feel comfortable answering.
 - Yes
 - No
- I will not be required to write my name on the interview questions guide.
 - Yes
 - No

By signing below, I give consent to participate in the research project and avail myself for an interview session.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annexure 4: Participant interview questions

Under Pragmatically Rational Decision-Making

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. In which Province where you born?
4. Male/Female
5. Nationality
6. Home Language
7. Please describe the family that you come from?
8. Please describe the place that you grew up in?
9. Please describe the schooling system you grew up in?
10. As a child, what did you want to be when you grow up?
11. What were you doing before you came to study here?
12. What options did you have before you decided to come and study here?
13. What made you choose the field you're currently studying?
14. Are there specific people you would say shaped your decision to choose this specific career?
15. Are the any other people you know or are close to who have chosen the career that you've chosen?
16. Could you take me through the experiences that led you towards choosing your current field of study?
17. What was your highest qualification before you came to study here?
18. What have you always believed whilst growing up that you're good at?
19. Do you think you've chosen your career based on what you shared above or you have deviated from that ideal?
20. In there was any form of deviation, what in your opinion motivated such a shift?
21. Which manner of labour opportunities do you think you will apply for after completing your field of study?

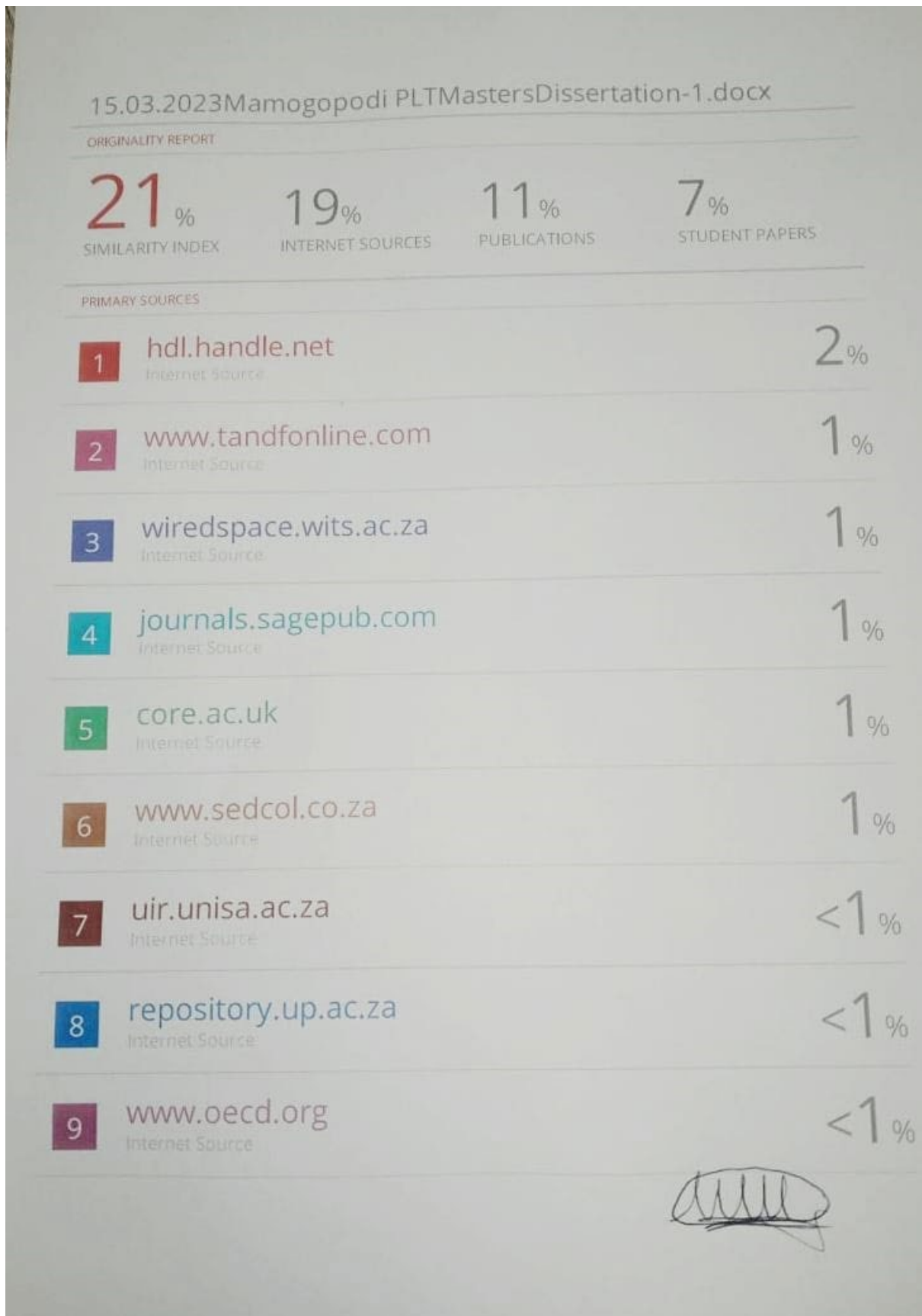
Under Field

1. What did you take into consideration when deciding to come and study here?
2. Was it your original plan to come and study here at the College?
3. Who advised you in your decision to come and study here?
4. What motivated you to come and study here?
5. What would you say made you suitable for the field of study you chose as a career?
6. Did you receive any career guidance in choosing your specific career?

Under Transformations, Turning Points and Routines

1. What career did you want to follow whilst growing up?
2. Did your choice of career change as times went by?
3. What in your opinion led to such a change?
4. Did what you want to become as you grow up change at some point in your life and what brought about that change?
5. Why did you decide to come and study here?

Annexure 5: Plagiarism Report



Annexure 6: Ethics Clearance Certificate

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2019ECEQ9M

PROJECT TITLE _____Capacitating TVET Career Guidance Services through NCAP
(National Careers Advisory Portal)

INVESTIGATOR _____Thuso Mamogopodi

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DATE CONSIDERED _____ 18 June 2019

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE _____Approved unconditionally

EXPIRY DATE _____Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 24 June 2019

CHAIRPERSON



(Dr. Paul Goldschagg)

cc: Supervisor: Dr. Presha Ramsurap and Dr. Gloria Erima

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

Annexure 7: College Permission Letter to Undertake Research

www.sedcol.co.za
E-mail: info@sedcol.co.za

Principal/ CEO

CENTRAL OFFICE:
Tel: (016) 422-6645/3
Fax: (016) 422-6646
37 VOORTREKKER ST
VEREENIGING
PRIVATE BAG X020
VEREENIGING 1930

SEBOKENG:
Tel: (016) 988-1276/1287
Fax: (016) 988-1288
4 SAMUEL ST
SEBOKENG
PRIVATE BAG X085
VEREENIGING 1930

VAN DER BIJLPARK:
Tel: (016) 933-5644/15
Fax: (016) 931-9406
6 FRIKKIE MEYER
BLVD
PRIVATE BAG X05
VANDERBIJLPARK 1900

VEREENIGING:
Tel: (016) 421-1150/51
Fax: (016) 422 - 0746
33 VOORTREKKER ST
VEREENIGING PRIVATE
BAG X035

Date: 13 November 2019

Re: Approval to conduct research at Sedibeng TVET College.

The above matter refers.

Kindly note that the Executive Management of the College has carefully perused your application to conduct research at Sedibeng TVET College.

Your application has been granted and your research will take place at Vereeniging, Sebokeng and Heidelberg Campus respectively.

You are therefore required to submit a detailed schedule on how the research will be taking place in order for the Executive Management to be able to inform the Campus Management. Regarding the time and personnel needed for you to complete your research.

It is required that upon completion of your research the following should be submitted to the Executive Management of the College for records purposes:

1. Detailed summary of the questionnaires received.
2. Recommendations according to the outcome of your research.

VEREENIGING 1930
To: Mr TL
Mamogopodi
From: Dr MG
Mothapo

I hope that you will find the above in order.

Regards



Dr MG Mothapo
Principal/ CEO

Dr MG Mo apo