

Access, barriers to participation and success among adult students at a Technical, Vocational,
Education and Training (TVET) College in the Western Cape, South Africa:
Keeping the dream alive

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ABSTRACT

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training outlines access, participation and barriers as critical issues in post-school education (DHET, 2013). The main aim of this research paper was to investigate the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success among adult students registered for the National Accredited Technical Diploma (NATED) specialisation in Early Childhood Development (ECD) at a TVET College in the Western Cape. Although I concentrated on the interplay between the adult students' experiences related to access, participation and barriers, my primary interest relates to how and why adult students succeed despite the barriers that they encounter.

To gain first-hand insight into what the adult students were experiencing, I adopted a qualitative approach. Using an interview guide as my instrument, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 exit level adult students using a non-probability purposive sampling strategy.

My conceptual framework was premised on the sociological perspectives of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003) about agency and structure, the social psychological perspectives of Bandura (2006) and Hitlin and Elder (2006) focussing on the effects success had on adult students' feelings of self-efficacy and life goals, and Rubenson and Desjardins's (2009) categorisation of barriers that adult learners might experience with regard to participation.

The findings of this paper revealed that many of these adult students did not choose the TVET College as their first choice of post-school education. Most of them wanted a teaching career but found that they were unable to access the university after matric because their results did not comply with the admission requirements of the university.

Despite adversity, these students displayed agentic capacities that enabled them to overcome structural and individual barriers, achieve success, and pursue their dream of attending a post-school institution.

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To God be all the glory, who were with me all the way on this journey through sickness and troubled times both at home and at work. Thank you for your omnipotence without which I would never have been able to succeed.

Priscilla Andrews

DECLARATION

I, Priscilla Margaret Andrews, hereby declare that this research paper, Access, barriers to participation and success among adult students at a Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) College in the Western Cape: Keeping the dream alive, is my own work. I have not submitted it to any other university for any other degree.

I am submitting this research paper in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Adult Education and Global Change at the University of the Western Cape. All the sources that I have used and/or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged in a complete list of references.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ECD	Early Childhood Development
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
HSSREC	Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee
NATED	National Accredited Technical Diploma
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
TVET	Technical, Vocational, Education and Training
UWC	University of the Western Cape



SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

In this section I outline the important components of the research study such as background and context; rationale; research problem; research aims; and research questions.

Background and context

I sketch a brief background to contextualise the importance of this research to the Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) sector specifically the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Department, in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the post-school education sector in general.

The DHET in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training outlines access, participation and barriers to participation as a critical issue (DHET, 2013). The DHET states that it is especially geared to “rid our country of the injustices of its colonial and apartheid past” (p. 4) and positions the TVET College as one of the vehicles to address some of these injustices. A few of the key points of the policy that are pertinent to social justice promote:

a single, coordinated post-school education and training system ... expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provision ... a stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace ... that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens and employers ... as well as broader societal and developmental objectives (DHET, 2013, p. 4).

These sentiments are reiterated by many notable South African scholars (Badat & Sayed, 2014, Groener, 2013; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014; Papier, 2010; Powell, 2012). They also see access to participation in, and barriers to education as one of the most critical issues facing the South African post-school sector at present.

My research study focusses on access, barriers to participation and success among adult students studying Early Childhood Development (ECD) at a TVET college in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Although I concentrated on the interplay between the adult students’ experience

related to access, participation and barriers, my primary interest relates to how and why students succeed despite the barriers that they encounter. I utilised the qualitative approach and conducted interviews with the participants using an interview guide as my instrument. Giddens (1984) and Archer's (2003) sociological theories and Rubenson and Desjardins's (2009) Bounded Agency Model provided the foundation of my conceptual framework that framed my study and the analyses of data. In addition, I included Bandura's (2006) social psychological theory and Hitlin and Elder's (2006) life course theory to interpret how the success of the adult students elevated their sense of self-efficacy and gave them the impetus to set new goals for their lives.

Rationale

Although the White Paper emphasises access, participation and barriers to post-school education, the DHET (2016) statistics for the educare sector in the Western Cape for 2014, show that “1 944 students were enrolled and 1310 passed” (DHET, 2016, p. 42). This indicated an approximate failure rate of 33%. This is concerning because the high failure rate is a critical issue. However, more importantly in this research study is the success of students who finished their studies despite the barriers that they experienced. If all adult students are exposed to a particular education environment, why do some succeed and others not? Why do some students overcome barriers and others not? In an emerging new post-school context, new structural arrangements evolve, creating an enabling environment and barriers to participation. This research study investigates how adult students overcome barriers to achieve success as the findings could be instructive to creating an enabling environment.

Research problem

Ellis and Levy (2008) cite Hicks and Turner, Kerlinger and Lee, Jacobs, Leedy and Ormrod and other researchers on the importance of the research problem. These scholars claim that “a viable research problem is the central and most highly important part of any quality research” (Ellis & Levy, 2008, p. 19). I agree with Ellis and Levy (2008) that “it appears that there is a clear consensus in literature that identification of a problem is a cornerstone for any quality research” (p. 19).

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training indicates how government's policies promote the expansion of post-school education that includes adult students. However, post-school

education institutions, such as TVET colleges often overlook the particular circumstances that create barriers for adult students. Inadequate funding often creates such barriers. Limited funding and resources create tensions and contradictions between government's aim to expand access and adult students' achievement of success.

Research aims

To investigate the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success.

To generate new theoretical perspectives about the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success.

Research questions

Main research question:

What are the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success among students at a TVET college?

Sub questions:

1. What structural and dispositional barriers do students experience with regard to their participation?
2. How does the relationship between structural and dispositional barriers affect students' participation?
3. How did these students address and/or overcome their structural and dispositional barriers and manage to participate successfully?

Limitations

One of the limitations of my research is that it focussed on 20 participants at one TVET college in the Western Cape. The findings of this research study are therefore specific to the participants at this specific college, and cannot be generalised.



Overview of research paper

In section two, I construct the conceptual framework that conceptualises and frames this study. In section three, I outline the design and methodology that guided my study. This includes the research approach, the research site, the research instrument and the methods of data collection and data analysis. In section four, I present an analysis and interpretation of the data. In section five, I present a summary, findings and recommendations that emerge from this study.



SECTION 2 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK /LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this section, I construct my conceptual framework by reviewing the discussions and debates about relevant theoretical concepts and perspectives related to agency, structure and barriers to participation that appear in the academic literature.

I start by reviewing some debates that theorise access to post-school education through concepts of agency and structure in South African and international contexts of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education (HE).

Agency, structure and access to adult education

Human agency and the duality of agency versus structure are theoretical concepts that analyse access, participation and barriers related to adult learners.

Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) incorporated concepts of structure and agency in their Bounded Agency Model “putting forward alternative theoretical models on participation” (p. 189) stating that “it is high time to take a renewed interest in reflecting on how participation and barriers can be understood” (p. 189). In their article, Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) focus on barriers that adult learners experience with regard to participation. They emphasise why some of them find these barriers enabling while others find it constraining and they also supply reasons why some groups might participate more than other groups.

Agency, structure and access to higher education in South Africa

Scholars such as Czerniewicz, Williams and Brown (2009), Leibowitz and Bozalek (2014), Luckett and Luckett (2009), Powell (2012, 2013), Powell and McGrath (2014) and Pym and Kapp (2013) have studied structure and agency in respect of students in the South African post-school

context. I will focus on what some of these scholars' research have illuminated in the higher education and TVET sectors of post-school education.

Leibowitz and Bozalek (2014) analyse ways that South African policies widened access for previously marginalised students twenty years after democracy. Their findings were quite provocative in the sense that they acceded that there were enablements that were put in place to enhance access and participation for marginalised students, but that this “inadequate transformation” (p. 105) is hampered by the privileged who want to maintain the status quo to protect what they had in the past and “the new and somewhat predatory elite to maintain these privileges in the future” (p. 105). This coincides with what Bozalek calls “privileged irresponsibility, i.e. a lack of consciousness about one's own privilege and thus a lack of concern or motivation to make amends for this regarding those who did not receive such benefits” (as cited in Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014, p. 105). Leibowitz and Bozalek (2014) applied Archer's concepts of social structure, culture and agency to highlight how structure and culture can “impede or accelerate attempts to enhance social justice in education” (p. 106).

Boughey (2012) likewise, employed Archer's concepts of social structure, culture and agency to examine students' access to higher education. Her conclusion coincided with that of the Summit Declaration that came out of the Summit on Higher Education Transformation that was held in April 2010 indicating that “it was the universities that needed to transform rather than the students that needed to be fixed” (p. 24). She emphasised that most of the work needed to go into changing “academic culture which have worked to resist change over years” (p. 24).

In their article “Harnessing agency: towards a learning model for undergraduate students”, Pym and Kapp (2013) focussed on interventions in an academic development programme in a predominantly white university that assisted students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds to bridge the gap that their past had on their academic career and “to harness students' agency [to overcome their academic shortfall] as well as foster a sense of belonging to a learning community” (p. 2) without them feeling further marginalised or targeted as the only students needing intervention.

Czerniewicz et al. (2009) refer to Archer's concept of reflexivity to show how higher education students apply their agency to access technology, especially their cell phones, in "an inventive capacity to circumvent the constraints imposed by structures" (p. 75), to utilise the Internet for academic purposes in higher education.

Luckett and Luckett (2009) employed Archer's theory of internal conversation and reflexivity to explain how higher education students release their agentic powers to bring about change in their internal conversations and in their objective world.

Agency, structure and access to TVET in South Africa

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training outlines access, participation and barriers to participation as critical issues in South Africa (DHET, 2013). Although much of the debate is about addressing past imbalances, increasing productivity, a closer relationship with the workplace and employability, a few notable scholars' research suggested that students who access the TVET sector have higher aspirations than merely focussing on the economic sphere.

Powell (2013) focussed on the role that TVET played in "training for employability" (p. 1) enhancing " 'the ability to dream' or in the language of the capabilities approach, the capability to aspire" (p. 1). Powell (2013) scrutinised the formation of the TVET colleges and ended with divergent possibilities for the establishment of a future TVET sector.

Powell and McGrath (2014) endorsed the lack of literature regarding the TVET students when they declared that "very little is known about why students enrol at these colleges and even less from the perspective of learners. It assumed that learner voices are not important as it is 'obvious' what learners want – jobs now" (Powell & McGrath, 2014, p. 214). They highlighted the multitude of reasons students chose to access and succeed at TVET colleges despite all the structural limitations the past regime imposed on them. They illuminated some of the shortcomings of the current system of "productivism, a view that reduces life to the economic sphere" (p. 213) focussing instead on how the TVET College helps "students expand their future life possibilities" (p. 213). These scholars' exploration of theoretical perspectives on TVET students form the

foundation of my research, and adhering to their suggestions, I have attempted to examine these concepts in an innovative manner.

Given the focus of my research topic, I found the sociological perspectives of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003) particularly pertinent to clarify the concepts agency and structure relating to access and the participation of TVET students. Cross (1981) proved to be valuable as a starting point to categorise barriers. Rubenson and Desjardins's (2009) Bounded Agency Model illustrated how agents such as TVET students exerted their agency to achieve success. The social psychological perspective (Bandura, 2006) and the life course theory (Hitlin and Elder, 2006) provided an essential framework within which to analyse the effects success had on the TVET students' feelings of self-efficacy and subsequent life goals.

The theoretical explorations of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003), Czerniewicz et al. (2009), Leibowitz and Bozalek (2014), Lockett and Lockett (2009), Powell (2012, 2013), Powell and McGrath (2014) and Pym and Kapp (2013) revealed the possibilities of South African post-school students moving away from being disempowered by their circumstances through accessing their agentic powers to overcome their challenges. Informed by these debates in the literature, I now present a conceptualisation of relevant concepts and theoretical perspectives.

Agents

My conception of agents, as discussed in the literature, is that they are human beings who were born into a specific social context, but are not determined by their milieu. These agents possess the capacity to make interventions in their own life course steering it along a trajectory other than what would have been possible given the circumstances that they were born into. They also have the capability to make alternative and inventive plans when they are faced with adversity.

Giddens (1984) perceived an agent as a person who acts in a decisive manner and is able to explain the reasons why he/she acts in that way. To him, "To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon these reasons" (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). According to Sewell (1992) "To be an agent means to be

capable of exerting some degree of control over social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree” (p. 20). Archer (2003) describes agents as human beings who are distinct from the structure they have created; beings who have the capacity to determine their own destiny. She concedes that “humans have degrees of freedom in determining their own courses of action” (p. 6-7). According to Archer (2003):

Agents possess properties and powers distinct from those pertaining to social forms. Among them feature all those predicates, such as thinking, deliberating, believing, intending, loving and so forth, which are applicable to people, but never to social structures or cultural systems (p. 2).

Bandura (2006) reiterates the purposive nature of agents as described by Giddens (1984). According to him “To be an agent is to influence intentionally one’s functioning in life circumstances” (Bandura, 2006, p. 164).

Agency

Sewell (1992) contends that agency is the capacity “for desiring, for forming intentions, and for acting creatively” (p. 20). He claims that agency is as important to human beings as breathing. Furthermore, he emphasises that all human beings are born with this capacity but that the manner in which it is applied, depends on their cultural and historical contexts. Hitlin and Elder (2006) cite Shanahan and Mortimer when they describe agency as “the ability to exert influence on one’s life” (p. 38). Moreover, they suggest that agency is “an individual capacity for meaningful and sustained action, both within situations and across the life course” (p. 38).

I acknowledge as important both the sociological theories of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003) and the social psychological theories of Bandura (2006) and Hitlin and Elder (2006) because all of them are concerned with “individual action within social structures” (Hitlin & Elder, 2007, p. 171). I agree with these theorists that agency seems to be a basic human attribute and that all human beings do not necessarily possess it in equal quantities. I further concede that the concept of agency is multi-dimensional and I will illuminate some of the dimensions that are pertinent to my research study.

Agency, intentions and intentionality

Several theorists argue that when a human being decides to follow a specific pursuit, it is done with intentionality or with a specific intention or aim in mind. In his portrayal of intentions and intentionality, Giddens (1984) grants that “It has frequently been supposed that human agency can only be defined in terms of intentions” (p. 8). He, however, points out that “Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place” (p. 9). By intentional act he refers to “an act which its perpetrator knows, or believes, will have a particular quality or outcome and where such knowledge is utilised by the scholar of the act to achieve this quality or outcome” (pp. 10-11). He describes agency as an agent possessing the capability to intervene in an event and if it was not for this intervention, the change in the event would not have occurred. From the preceding account, I deduce that Giddens (1984) does not believe that intentions are enough, he believes that agency includes both intentions and the capability of doing whatever it is that one is pursuing.

Bandura (2001) portrays the connection between agency, intentions and intentionality as:

Agency refers to acts done intentionally ... an intention is a representation of a future course of action to be performed ... it is, therefore, meaningful to speak of intentions grounded in self-motivators affecting the likelihood of actions at a future point in time (p. 6).

Describing intentionality, he says that “people form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realising them” (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). Archer (2003) emphasises the belief that “only people possess the intentionality to define and design courses of action in order to achieve their own goals” (p. 6).

I concur with these theorists that people have the ability to make a choice, intentionally decide on one choice rather than the other and follow through on their choice because they hope that it will lead to a positive outcome. They might think about the consequences in a limited fashion, but it is an intentional decision based on a hopeful future, nonetheless.

Agency, actions and intervention

According to Giddens (1979, 1984) the terms agency and action are interchangeable. Giddens (1979) states that action or agency “does not refer to a series of discrete acts combined together, but to a *continuous flow of conduct*” (p. 55). He additionally perceives it as “a stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world” (p. 55). Human beings thus either plan or intentionally cause interventions in their world. Giddens (1979) adds that agency implies an intervention of agents in a world that is open to change and he stresses the choice that agents have in their interventions by stating that “it is a necessary feature of action that, at any point, the agents ‘could have acted otherwise’: either positively in terms of attempted intervention ... or negatively in terms of forbearance” (p. 56), implying that human beings can either choose to intervene or not. He accentuates that “Agency refers to doing” (Giddens, 1984, p. 10) and that “An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the power to make a difference, that is, to exercise some sort of power” (Giddens, 1984, p. 14).

Agency, capability and capacity

Most theorists substitute the concepts capacity and capability for agency. To Giddens (1984) “Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place” (p. 9). Sewell (1992) contends that “a capacity for agency is as much a given for humans as the capacity for respiration” (p. 20). In my understanding, this is significant of the high regard that Sewell (1992) placed on the concept of agency. Sewell (1992) adds that “a capacity for agency ... is inherent in all humans” (p. 20).

Hitlin and Elder (2006) described agency as the capacity that agents have to bring about change in their lives on a daily basis over the course of their lives. According to them, this capacity can occur “both within situations and across the life course” (p. 38). They also declared that individuals have the ability to determine their own destiny “through their choices and actions they take within their constraints of history and social circumstances” (p. 38). To Hitlin and Elder (2006) “Agency refers to the sense of having the capacity for meaningful and successful action” (p. 40).

I found Hitlin and Elder's (2006) description of agency as "a multifaceted phenomenon" (p. 59) which included self-efficacy, planfulness and optimism, particularly applicable to my research study. In the next discussion, I will expound on Hitlin and Elder (2006) and others' concepts.

Agency and self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy is, in my opinion, one of the most powerful dimensions of agency. This is the agent's belief that he/she has the power to make changes to his/her circumstances. Bandura (1989) argues that:

Development of resilient self-efficacy requires some experience in mastering difficulties through perseverant effort. If people experience only easy successes, they come to expect quick results and their sense of efficacy is easily undermined by failure. Some setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge with a stronger sense of efficacy (p. 1179).

Hitlin and Elder (2006) cite theorists who very aptly describe self-efficacy. They draw on Gecas who "views self-efficacy as the most important mechanism of self-agency" (p. 40). They also refer to Bandura who defines self-efficacy as "the perception of oneself as a causal agent in one's environment, as having control over one's circumstances" (p. 40-41). Furthermore, they cite Mirowsky and Ross who view "Self-efficacy as being theoretically linked with the idea of 'personal control' " and Pearlin who perceives self-efficacy as "the degree to which people feel they can control the forces that affect their lives" (p. 41). Finally, Hitlin and Elder (2006) describe self-efficacy as "elements of belief in the results of one's actions, perseverance, as well as a sense of physical well-being and resilience" (p. 46).

As can be inferred from the above discussions, the concept of self-efficacy or the belief in one's own ability as a causal agent, is fundamental in agents' lives to propel them toward bringing about

change in their lives. I believe that as this feeling of self-efficacy sprouts and flourishes, it propels the agent towards their visualised goal.

Agency and planfulness /planful competence

Hitlin and Elder (2006) refer to Clausen who “developed the concept of planful competence, an individual characteristic that guides action across the life course” (p. 41). They also mention Shanahan et al. who supported this statement by declaring that agency, if “viewed as planful competence, is an individual level construct that dictates a person’s facility with making (and sticking to) advantageous long-range plans” (Hitlin & Elder, 2006, p. 42).

Exerting agency is necessary for gaining access to a post-school education institution. However, once the decision has been made to follow a certain course of action, planfulness becomes a necessity for achieving success.

I derive from their insights that for students to ensure that they are successful in their studies, they need to rearrange priorities and allocate sufficient time for it. This is even more applicable when looking at adult students with families and other commitments. The extent to which they take planfulness into consideration when they embark on studies, will play a decisive role in the positive outcome of it.

Agency and optimism

For Hitlin and Elder (2006) “The more optimistic a person is, the more they feel they will have efficacious and positive influences on their lives and in their choices” (p. 43). This train of thought is continued by Hitlin and Johnson (2015) who confirmed that “Those with more optimistic expectations are healthier and more economically privileged than those who see bleaker futures” (p. 1463). Although Hitlin and Johnson (2015) suggested that this view should be more intensively researched in the future, they did state that “for these hopefuls, their optimistic expectations function to improve their life course outcomes” (p. 1463-1464). It would thus seem as if self-efficacy, planfulness as well as optimism are considered by various theorists as essential components to ensure success in an agent’s life.

Agency and properties of agency

Unlike the sociological perspectives of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003), Albert Bandura (2006) approached his study of agency from a social psychological perspective. Bandura (2006) proclaimed that agency has four core properties: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness. Describing intentionality, he says that “People form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them” (p. 164). To Bandura (2006) “forethought includes more than future-directed plans. People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their actions” (p. 164). He describes self-reactiveness as people possessing the “ability to construct appropriate courses of actions, but also the ability to motivate and regulate their execution” (p. 165). Asserting that self-reactiveness links “thought to action” (p. 165), he explains it as follows:

People are not only agents of action. They are self-examiners of their own functioning. Through functional self-awareness, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary. The metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions is the most distinctly human core property of agency (p. 165).

For Bandura (2006), people “are not simply onlookers of their behavior” (p. 164). They have the properties and the ability to contribute to their lives in a meaningful way.

Agency and resilience

I believe that persevering and succeeding on a path that one has chosen irrespective of the barriers that might be experienced, can be very empowering. Bandura (1989) points out that “It takes a resilient sense of efficacy to override the numerous dissuading impediments to significant accomplishments” (p. 1177). He acknowledges that the “Development of resilient self-efficacy requires some experience in mastering difficulties through perseverant effort” (p. 1179). Hitlin and Elder (2006) reiterate this notion of resilience when they state that self-efficacy “involves elements of belief in the results of one’s actions, perseverance, as well as a sense of physical well-being and resilience” (p. 46).

Hitlin and Elder (2006) “also hypothesize that social support positively influences one’s sense of agency” (p. 43). They argue that “positive development occurs within supportive social networks ... one might feel more optimistic about one’s life chances if they feel as if they are not encountering problems alone” (p. 43). Makoelle and Malindi (2015) agree that resilience is enhanced if it is strengthened by supportive social networks. Although Makoelle and Malindi (2015) focus on inclusive education, their findings on resilience are also very relevant for the students at TVET colleges, especially where they indicated that “resilience is a process that involves an individual’s own assets or strengths as well as those found in his or her physical social and ecology” (p. 1). They cite a few scholars who corroborated the idea of social support enhancing resilience. They underline Masten’s ecological perspective where “resilience denotes the individual’s capacity to achieve positive outcomes despite the experience of adversity, to continue to function effectively in adverse circumstances, or to recover after significant trauma” (Makoelle & Malindi, 2015, p. 3). They refer to Ungar and articulate that “resilience as a bi-directional phenomenon that relies on what is found within the individual and in his or her social and physical ecologies” (Makoelle & Malindi, 2015, p. 3). They also cite Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana who define resilience as “maintaining a balance between the stressors and developmental risks to which learners are exposed on the one hand, and the protective factors that might be operating for them on the other” (Makoelle & Malindi, 2015, p. 3).

My analysis of these scholars’ perspectives is that once agency has been exerted and a specific course of action has been decided upon, resilience needs to be exercised to complete that course of action. It is true that the agent must muster internal courage and tenacity to remain steadfast on the chosen academic journey. However, a supportive social network facilitates enormously in building up and maintaining a reservoir of resilience.

Agency and alternative and inventive course of action

Archer (2003) maintains that agents have the ability to assess whether a prospective project is attainable or not and based on this assessment, a decision will be made to either pursue it or not. Only once a project is pursued, can it be influenced by enablers or constraints. Archer (2003) argues that when a project is subjected to constraints:

agents can act strategically to try to discover ways around it or to define a second-best outcome ... equally strategically, they can deliberate about how to get the most out of propitious circumstances, which may mean adopting a more ambitious goal, so that a good outcome is turned into a better one (p. 6).

Archer (2003) describes this choice that an agent has to make for alternative and inventive plans when they are faced with adversity, as “humans have degrees of freedom in determining their own courses of action” (p. 6-7).

Sewell (1992) maintained that “knowledge of cultural schemas ... implies the ability to act creatively” (p. 20). My understanding is that agents’ knowledge of the rules and resources that are available in their environment, influences the extent and kind of creativity that can be exerted. I agree with this notion of agency being fluid and dynamic. It needs to be able to transform from the one context to the next. In order to overcome barriers successfully, agents need to have inventive capacities to solve problems because each problem might need a unique solution.

Agent, agency and structural transformation

Sewell (1992) refers to agency as “profoundly social or collective” (p. 21) in nature. He claims that “agency entails an ability to coordinate one’s actions with others and against others, to form collective projects, to persuade, coerce, and to monitor the simultaneous effect of one’s own and others’ activities” (p. 21). This resonates with Hitlin and Elder’s (2006) statement that as human beings “We actively shape our environments, even as environments shape us” (p. 39). This reciprocal influence between structure and agency is essential to ensure that structure remains relevant and beneficial to human beings.

Agency and future decisions

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe the “projective dimension of human agency” (p. 984) as the ability to imagine a future that is better or different. Such an agent is able to think of solutions in a creative manner without being encumbered by the constraints of time or temporal barriers. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agents are able to “give shape and direction to future possibilities” (p. 984). They can:

reconfigure received schemas by generating alternative possible responses to the problematic situations they confront in their lives ... [and go] into the future and construct changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present (p. 984).

They thus have the ability to extricate themselves from their environment and project themselves into a future of possibility.

Bandura (2001) advocates that setting goals guides a person and keeps one focused on the future. He describes it as “turning visualized futurities into reality requires proximal or present-directed intentions that guide and keep one moving ahead” (p. 6). He emphasises that “through cognitive representation, visualized futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behavior” (p. 164). He argues that establishing goals for the future, keeps a person resolute and virtually drawn into a future of possibility.

Agency and structure

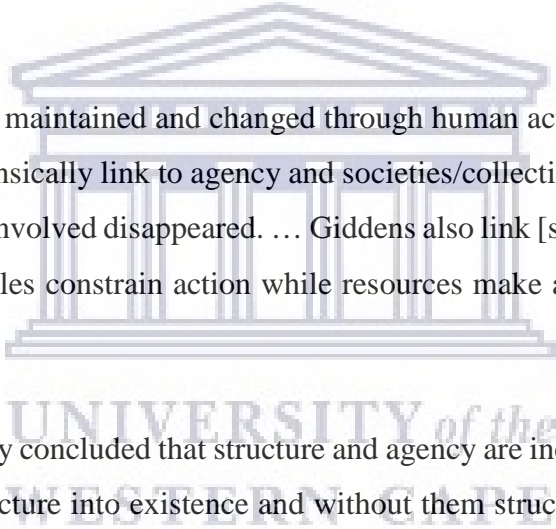
Agency refers to human beings, also known as agents, as having the capacity to use their agentic power to effect change in their social relationships or in their circumstances. This ability that agents possess to make changes in their lives is known as agency. My understanding is that agency is dynamic. It transforms from one context to the next.

Structure refers to the social systems human beings erect to frame and give order to their world. Human beings also manage these social systems and Giddens (1984) argues that this causes agency and structure to be inextricably intertwined. Giddens’s (1984) structuration theory perceives agency and structure as complementary forces where structure influences agency and agency, in turn, is capable of changing structure. Archer (2003) maintains that the availability or lack of structure can either be a barrier to or expedite agency. Kipo (2013) also describes the relationship between structure and agency as “complementary forces where structure influences agency and agency is capable of changing structures” (p. 21). The concepts of agency and structure are useful

to analyse barriers that the TVET students experienced as well as the manner in which they overcame those barriers.

Structure

Giddens (1984) defined structure as consisting of “rules and resources” (p. 19). Resources are the more tangible or concrete part of structure. Rules are described by Giddens (1984) and Sewell (1992) as the more ‘virtual’ component of structure. The latter can only be seen in practice, in the way humans have interpreted, accommodated and are executing the rules. According to Sewell (1992), even the most ardent theorists were experiencing a problem in suitably defining this phenomenon of structure. Kipo (2013), supported Giddens view that:



Structures are made, maintained and changed through human actions (agency). To him structure is intrinsically link to agency and societies/collectivities would cease to exist if all agents involved disappeared. ... Giddens also link [s] structure to rules and resources ... Rules constrain action while resources make action possible (p. 20).

Giddens (1984) consequently concluded that structure and agency are inextricably intertwined. To him, human beings call structure into existence and without them structure cannot exist. He also stated that “structure is not be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25).

Structure as resources

Sewell interprets Giddens’s (1984) meaning of resources as “anything that can serve as a source of power in social interactions” (Sewell, 1992, p. 9). He continues his discussion of resources as follows:

Resources are of two types, human and non-human. Non-human resources are objects, animate or inanimate, naturally occurring or manufactured, that can be used to enhance or maintain power; human resources are physical strength, dexterity,

knowledge, and emotional commitments that can be used to enhance or maintain power, including knowledge of the means of gaining, retaining, controlling, and propagating either human or non-human resources (Sewell, 1992, p. 9).

He further declares that all members of society have access to resources, but not necessarily equally, and that access to these resources tends to empower agents (Sewell, 1992).

Drawing on Sewell's perspectives, I infer that resources provide agents access to, among other things, colleges, universities and ultimately employment which in turn give them access to the fulfilment of their basic needs such as food, shelter and to more advanced needs such as a sense of achievement and beyond. Human beings established these resources, but they also manage these resources, and they have the capacity to change the resources should the need arise.

Structure as rules/schemas

Giddens (1984) does not necessarily regard rules as covert, they are more intrinsic in nature and observable in the way in which individuals act in given situations. He defined rules as “generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices” (Giddens, 1984, p. 21).

Human beings of a certain era internalise the rules of society, act in accordance with it, and exemplify the rules of that era (Giddens, 1984). Sewell (1992) agreed with Giddens' statement that rules were “generalizable” and augmented it by adding that, “They can be generalized – that is, transposed or extended - to new situations when the need arises” (p. 8). Sewell (1992) considered Giddens's (1984) definition of rules to be very ambiguous, and he consequently renamed it “schemas” and declared that these schemas tell you how to behave in a “broad and undetermined range of situations” (Sewell, 1992, p. 8). According to Giddens (1984) and Sewell (1992), rules were virtual, intangible or implied. Sewell (1992) describes the virtuality of rules as not being able to “be reduced to their existence” (p. 8). It is more in the enactment that the rules are implied, and it is intrinsic in human beings and not necessarily written down anywhere.

In contrast to Giddens (1984), Archer's (2003) concept of structure refers to structural and cultural systems as being neither constraining nor enabling in itself. They have the emerging properties of becoming constraints or enablers depending on three factors. Firstly, it depends on the projects agents choose. If agents don't choose a project, the structural and cultural systems can be neither enabling nor constraining. Secondly, for it to be either enabling or constraining, there has to be either "congruence or incongruence" (Archer, 2003, p. 8) between the systems and the agents' projects, meaning that structure can either enhance or hamper the projects. "Thirdly, agents have to respond to these influences" (Archer, 2003, p. 8). The response of the agent will determine whether they see it as an enabling or constraining effect. So in itself, structural and cultural systems have emerging properties of either being constraints or enablers but this needs to be activated by the specific projects that the agents choose.

In considering the arguments of the above scholars, I conclude that structure is indeed made up of tangible resources, but that it also encompasses the more virtual or abstract rules which are visible in human behavior and the way in which humans enact these rules. I agree with Giddens (1984) that structure has been established by agents. I believe that structure gives order to human beings' world. It was created for their expediency, but in turn, it also exerts limitations and boundaries on human agency. In my data analysis, I will expose how these resources act as either enablers or constraints to agents.

Bounded agency

Bounded agency refers to agency that can be bounded by structural and individual barriers. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) refer to Salling-Olsen's description of bounded agency as "although individuals have a degree of agency with regard to their learning behaviors, they are also bound by structures and contexts and by the features of the self that constrain choices" (p. 192).

So, although people can effect change in their circumstances, this capacity may be affected or bounded by difficulties or perceived difficulties, known as structural conditions, that they are experiencing. These structural conditions determine the access to resources that human beings may or may not have. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) point out that "Structural conditions play a

substantial role in forming the circumstances faced by individuals and limit the feasible alternatives to choose from, and can therefore ‘bound’ individual agency” (p. 196). Structural conditions, consequently, determine the availability of resources which will either enable or restrain agents from overcoming any barriers that they might encounter. Agents have been known to adopt innovative and creative ways to circumvent deterring structural conditions.

Barriers to access and participation

Adult students in TVET colleges experience various kinds of barriers. Concepts of agency are useful to describe and explain ways in which these students overcome barriers and achieve success. In this part of section two, I will give an exposition of barriers as conceptualised by different scholars.

Barriers can be considered difficulties or obstacles that hinder a person’s access or participation to educational activities. Although barriers are categorised differently by scholars, many refer to Cross (1981) as their primary source. It is for this reason that I will first present Cross’s (1981) description of barriers and then illustrate how other scholars’ definitions differ and/or coincide with her description.

Cross (1981) classified barriers “under three headings: situational, institutional and dispositional barriers” (p. 98). She described situational barriers as those “arising from one’s situation in life” (p. 98). She defines institutional barriers as “all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities” (p. 98) and dispositional barriers as barriers that relate to “attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner” (p. 98). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) classify barriers to learning “into four categories: situational, institutional, informational and psychosocial” (p. 136). Their categories of situation and institutional barriers are very similar to those of Cross (1981). The psychosocial barriers to which these scholars allude are very similar, but much wider in meaning than the dispositional barriers as described by Cross (1981). It includes social barriers that might also impact on the learner’s attitude and disposition towards further studies. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) include an additional category, informational barriers, which refers to the fact that some disadvantaged “adults are ignorant of available educational opportunities and do not even know how to obtain

information concerning such opportunities” (p. 138). In their study, MacKeracher et al. (2006) include situational and institutional barriers. They include dispositional barriers, but refer to them as attitudinal barriers. They also identify academic barriers as a category. These barriers refers to “skills essential to successful learning” (p. 5). Drawing on Cross (1981), Baharudin, Murad, and Mat (2013) refer to “the types of challenges that have been widely reported in literature” (p. 774) in respect of situational, institutional, dispositional and academic barriers facing postgraduate students. Although there are many similarities among scholars, Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) classify their barriers differently. According to them, barriers have two major categories, namely structural and individual barriers. Institutional and situational barriers are identified as structural barriers, while dispositional barriers are considered as individual barriers (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

As can be seen from the above exposition, barriers to access and participation have piqued the interest of and been researched by many scholars, and although they differ in how they categorise barriers, they all agree that these impede the access and participation of adult learners to learning institutions. For the purpose of my study, I will be using Rubenson and Desjardins’ (2009) categorisation of barriers as expounded above as a key component of my conceptual framework.

Structural barriers

Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) illustrate the relationship between structural and individual barriers quite lucidly in their bounded agency model. They subdivide barriers into two broad categories – structural and individual. Structural barriers can then be subdivided into institutional and situational barriers. Institutional barriers refer to the institution of adult learning whereas situational barriers refer to family and job-related barriers.

Institutional barriers

Most of the scholars such as Cross (1981), Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), MacKeracher et al. (2006) and others agree that institutional barriers refer to “practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities” (Cross, 1981, p. 98).

Cross (1981) categorises institutional barriers into “five areas: scheduling problems; problems with location or transportation; lack of courses that are interesting, practical, or relevant; procedural problems and time requirements; and lack of information about programs and procedures” (p. 104). Other institutional barriers Cross (1981) includes are “inconvenient schedules or locations, full-time fees for part-time study, inappropriate courses of study” (p. 98).

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982, p. 137) assert that institutions have “policies and practices that impose inconvenience, confusion and frustration on adult learners”. Similar to other scholars, MacKeracher et al. (2006) acknowledge that “Institutional barriers consist of limitations inherent in the method institutions design, deliver and administer learning activities. These methods are frequently biased against or ignorant of the needs of adult learners” (p. 2).

Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) comment that adult learners describe institutional barriers as follows, “I do not having the necessary qualifications to take up the studies or training course I would like to; there are no courses that suits my needs; there are no courses available nearby; I could not get to them; I would not want to go back to something that is like school” (p. 204).

Taking cognisance of the theoretical perspectives, it is clear that institutional barriers are imposed by adult learning institutions either advertently or inadvertently, and make access and participation difficult for adult learners seeking to become knowledgeable and/or to pursue further studies in adult education.

Informational barriers

In the category informational barriers, Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) refer to students’ “level of awareness” and “lack of information” (p. 138) of available educational opportunities, as informational barriers. To them, this is a major deterrent that affects the amount of “disadvantaged adults” (p. 138) that access and participate in adult education.

Situational barriers

Cross (1981) describes situational barriers as “those arising from one’s situation in life at a given time” (p. 98). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) and Baharudin et al. (2013) concur with Cross (1981). Scholars who summarise situational barriers most concisely are MacKeracher et al. (2006):

Situational barriers consist of broad circumstantial conditions that hamper the ability of adult learners to gain access to and pursue learning opportunities ... [it includes] multiple conflicting responsibilities for home, family, children and work; financial problems; lack of adequate and affordable childcare services; job commitments; transportation problems; having a mobility, sensory or learning disability and lack of support from others (p. 2).

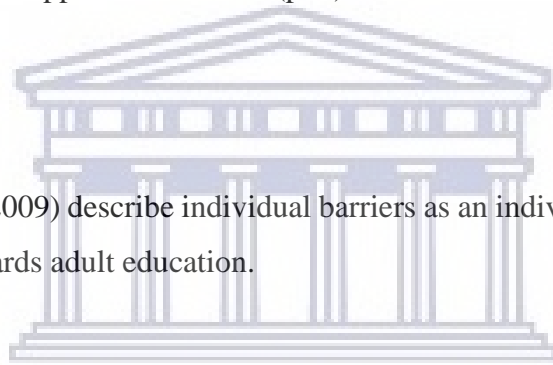
Individual barriers

Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) describe individual barriers as an individual’s feelings, emotions or internal experiences towards adult education.

Dispositional barriers

Dispositional barriers are internal factors that people experience which include a limited feeling of self-efficacy, a lack of self-confidence and feelings of low self-esteem. These barriers can have a great influence on agentic action. Cross (1981, p. 98-99) describes dispositional barriers as barriers that relate to “attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner” (p. 98). She includes learner’s feeling that they were “too old to begin ... low grades in the past ... not confident of my ability ... not enough energy and stamina ... don’t enjoy studying ... tired of school, tired of classrooms ... don’t know what to learn ... hesitate to seem too ambitious” as dispositional barriers that demotivated students to enrol for further studies. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) reiterate Cross’s (1981) perceptions and state that “negative attitudes and dispositions toward adult education is by far the most deterring factor” (p. 192) that hinder adults from accessing adult education.

Psychosocial barriers



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According to Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), psychosocial barriers have two aspects. The one aspect is similar to dispositional barriers in that it refers to “negative evaluations of the usefulness, appropriateness, and pleasurability of engaging in adult education” (p. 139) whereas the other aspect states that “adult education may be seen as having little intrinsic value and little usefulness as a means of achieving personal goals” (p. 139). This could act as a deterrent to individuals to pursue further studies.

Academic barriers

MacKeracher et al. (2006) add academic barriers to dispositional barriers which they define as:

the skills that are essential to successful learning. The academic skills most frequently discussed in the literature include: literacy, numeracy and computer-related skills; ability to access and understand information; critical and reflective thinking skills; and skills in writing essays, examinations and tests. (p. 2).

Overcoming barriers to participation

The Bounded Agency Model offers an explication of structures and contexts as barriers that frame/influence the person’s ability to exercise his/her agency. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) refer to “the interaction between structural and individual barriers to participation” (p. 187) as either hampering or expediting agency to effect change in that person’s life. Human beings have to exert agency to overcome these structural and individual barriers.

Summary

In this section, I constructed a conceptual framework by reviewing the theoretical concepts and perspectives pertinent to my research study. The concepts that are relevant to my research study are agency, structure and barriers to participation. I outlined conceptualisations of agency and structure in terms of the sociological theorists Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003) and the social psychological theorists Bandura (2006) and Hitlin and Elder (2006). Cross (1981) is my primary source to explain how barriers constrain agency and how agents have to exert their agency to

achieve success. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) categorisation of barriers as expounded above is a key component of my conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework provides the conceptual tools to frame my research study, analyse the data, generate findings, and extrapolate new theoretical insights and perspectives



SECTION 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this section, I describe my research design which consists of my research questions, the research site, the research approach, the method of data gathering and the research instrument. It also clarifies the methodology which includes the application of my research instrument, the selection of participants, the data capturing process and the processing and analysing of data. I conclude section three with my ethics statement.

Research questions

Main research question:

What are the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success among students at a TVET college?

Sub questions:

1. What structural and dispositional barriers do students experience with regard to their participation?
2. How does the relationship between structural and dispositional barriers affect students' participation?
3. How did these students address and/or overcome their structural and dispositional barriers and manage to participate successfully?

Research site

Because of my passion for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and because I was situated in the Western Cape, in South Africa, it was expedient to choose students from a college that offered ECD courses in this region. I will refer to this college as my research site.

When I started with my Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change (MALGC) programme in 2016, the research site only had a National Accredited Technical Diploma (NATED) course (N4–

N6) which resided under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and an ECD Learnership Programme (Level 5) which was under the auspices of the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA). The staff of the NATED course was also involved in a part-time NATED course which was hosted at a different campus. Since then, the part-time course had moved to the research site and a distance learning ECD NATED course was also established at the research site to cater for the needs of students who wanted to study ECD via distance learning. My research was focussed on the full-time NATED students at the research site.

Research approach

I adopted a qualitative research approach in my study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) refer to this type of approach as an “emic” perspective, meaning “to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves” (p. 270). They cite Bogdan and Taylor, referring to this type of approach as the phenomenologist view stating that “the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person’s point of view” (p. 271). It is also referred to as the “insider perspective” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 271). My intention with adopting this approach was to gain first-hand insight into what the participants were experiencing.

Bryman (2012) also alludes to the use of either an inductive or deductive strategy. To him in “an inductive stance, theory is the outcome of research” (p. 26). This approach is usually associated with the qualitative approach. The deductive stance denotes that the researcher “deduces a hypothesis (or hypotheses) that must be subjected to empirical scrutiny” (Bryman, 2012, p. 24). This stance is normally synonymous with the quantitative approach. Although I used a qualitative approach, I used a deductive method using the theoretical lenses of the phenomena of structure, agency, and barriers to analyse and interpret my data.

Neumann (1997) portrays the qualitative research design and approach as “data are in the form of words from documents, observations, transcripts” (p. 329). To him, a qualitative researcher may “gather a large amount of information on one or a few cases, go into great depth, and get more details on the cases being examined” (p. 331). The researcher then immerses him/herself in the data of the few cases and this intimate familiarity allows him/her to see “patterns in the lives,

actions and words of people in the context of the complete case as a whole” (p. 331). Neumann (1997) elaborates his explication by emphasising that “readers of qualitative research usually place more trust in the researcher’s integrity and interpretations” (p. 333). He advises that it is imperative that researchers have checks, such as recordings and transcripts in place, to verify any statements. He further asserts that qualitative researchers need to “ensure that their research accurately reflects the evidence” (p. 333) because the most important way the researcher gains the trust of the reader is to make sure that the way in which he/she presents the evidence provides the readers with “a sense of immediacy, direct contact, and intimate knowledge” (Neumann, 1997, p. 333) of the subjects.

I am in agreement with many of Neuman’s (1997) postulations as set out above. I reiterate his notion that qualitative researchers use words rather than statistics to describe their research and their findings. I fully contend with him that the researcher must be trustworthy in the sense that the findings must be based on evidence and that this can be presented in a creative manner that provides the reader with a tangible and intimate knowledge of the participants.

Method of data-gathering

Semi-structured interview

My participants were adults and I preferred utilising the semi-structured interview method with them. I found this type of interview quite appealing because it had a set interview guide that I used with all interviewees yet it allowed me to ask questions of clarification as the interview progressed. This method also enabled me to expand on a question should it not be understood, for example, by a second language participant. I also translated my interview guide into Afrikaans because the majority of the students that I interviewed, were Afrikaans speaking (See Addendum A). The interview guide acted as a prompt and it ensured that I asked all the participants all the relevant questions relating to the research questions. I also used the semi-structured interview as my method of data collection because I trusted that the participants would be mature enough to answer the questions in a comprehensive manner. By using the interview method, unlike using the observation method, I could ask my participants additional questions to find out why they were acting in a specific way. I could ask them to think back and relay how events occurred. This method was also flexible in the sense that the questions did not have to follow the same pattern, and other questions,

which were not on the interview guide, could be asked for clarification because I was interested in “the interviewee’s point of view” and in “rich, detailed answers” (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). This is usually not done in quantitative interviews because it would “compromise the standardization of the interview process” (Bryman, 2012, p. 470).

Opdenakker (2006) describes the advantages and disadvantages of the semi-structured interview very eloquently. Some of the advantages that he postulates, which reiterates what I have mentioned above, is that the guide is fairly flexible; the interviewer can add additional questions for clarification which can lead to a fairly in-depth interview. He continues by articulating that because “there is no significant time delay between question and answer ... the answer of the interviewee is more spontaneous” (p. 3). The face-to-face interview also allows the interviewer “to create a good interview ambience” (Opdenakker, 2006, p. 4) and it provides him/her with the added evidence of body language, facial expressions and tone of voice which adds a different dimension to the information provided. An added advantage is that this interview can be recorded for future reference. However, Opdenakker (2006) also warns that such interviews could be time consuming and costly, depending on how widespread the interviews are. The interviewer might lead the interviewee too much or could allow the interviewee to go off on a tangent because of inexperience in the technique of interviewing or not wanting to appear rude to interrupt the interviewee.

I agree with Opdenakker (2006) when he speaks about the ‘double attention’ with which the interviewer must listen to the interviewee. Opdenakker (2006) cites Wengraf about this double attention, which means:

that you must be both listening to the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need (p. 3).

My experience with the interviews affirmed my original beliefs. I initially thought that the face-to-face interview would be a fairly straightforward and an appealing technique, but the

interviewing process showed me that it is undeniably an acquired skill. Fortunately, my technique improved as I moved from the one interview to the next.

Research instrument

Interview Guide

I used an interview guide as my research instrument. Fylan (2005) advocates that semi-structured interviews are “simply conversations in which you know what you want to find out – and so have a set of questions to ask and a good idea of what topics will be covered – but the conversation is free to vary” (p. 65). She refers to the interview guide as an interview schedule and sees it as “simply a list of questions that you will address during the interview” (p. 68). Fylan (2005) gives the following guidelines regarding the interview schedule: “Keep it brief ... Differentiate the processes you are interested in ... Ensure that question order is logical ... Develop a series of prompts ... [and] know the schedule” (pp. 68-69). She cautions, however, that although she refers to it as simply “a conversation with the participant” (p. 69), the researcher should be thoroughly prepared, the interview guide should be well thought through and geared towards answering the research questions and the researcher should preferably first do a trial run with the questions with people that he/she is familiar with.

Bryman (2012) describes the interview guide as a “list of questions ... often referred to as an interview guide” (p. 471). Like Fylan (2005), Bryman (2012) also suggested some basic elements in the preparation of the interview guide. He suggested that the interviewer should “create a certain amount of order on the topic areas” (p. 473), to ensure that it flows logically, that the question should be formulated “to answer your research questions” (p. 473), and that the language used should be “comprehensible and logical to the people that you interview” (p. 473). Furthermore, Bryman (2012) suggested that background information should be included which will assist in “contextualizing people’s answers” (p. 473). The types of questions to include in an interview guide are also very important. Bryman (2012) cites Charmaz about the types of questions that should be included in an interview guide. Three types of questions are mentioned – “initial open-ended questions” (p. 479) which lead in a topic, “intermediate questions” (p. 479) which draw feelings into the interview and “ending questions” (p. 479) which look at a topic in retrospect.

I used these examples to a large extent in planning my interview guide. The initial questions were developed to put the participant at ease and to introduce the topic in a non-threatening way. With the intermediate questions, I could get a sense of what the real issues were that were frustrating them and which posed the main problems. The ending questions were developed to look at their whole course in retrospection and to look at what their future plans were. I used this guide as a prompt/script to keep me focussed during interviews. All the questions were asked of all the interviewees, as far as possible, but I also asked additional questions for clarification. The way I developed the interview guide kept the interview focussed on the research questions, but it also assisted me in my coding and thematic strategies when it came to the data analysis and data interpretation stages.

Research participants and selection

Sample description

I selected 20 participants based on the following criteria: students who were registered for the N6 National Certificate in Educare and who were finished with their final semester of study. Because this is a female dominated career, I included the only male student in my sample. I also tried to select participants so that there was racial, religious, socio-economic and language representation.

Sampling strategies

I used non-probability purposive sampling to select my participants. Babbie (2013) described the non-probability part as “the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative” (p. 128). It differs from a probability sample in the sense that it is not random; the participants are chosen intentionally by the researcher according to whom would be representative of the group and be able to answer the research questions the best for the purpose of the research project.

In addition, the sample was purposive. Neuman (1997) described purposive sampling as “it uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind” (p. 206). As I have alluded to under the sample description, my sample was the N6 students who were busy exiting the course. To ensure that I had the best candidates for the research, I used the expertise of the lecturers to draw up a list of participants that suited the criteria that I had

established. However, to my naïve astonishment, I found that all the people on the list were not willing to participate in the research programme. This left me in a quandary that led me to using ‘snowball sampling’ as another strategy. Bryman (2012) clarifies the snowballing effect as “these sampled participants propose other participants who have had the experience or characteristics relevant to the research” (p. 424). When I experienced a problem accessing the candidates on my list, I asked the assistance of those candidates whom I had interviewed already, to recruit other suitable candidates. They proved to be of great help.

Data capturing

I conducted my interviews during the period 26 June 2018 to 09 July 2018. With the consent of my participants, most of my interviews took place at the libraries nearest to where they lived. I found the libraries very accommodating in supplying me with a suitable venue where I could do the interviews. Participants, whom I could not meet in libraries, were interviewed in restaurants although the latter proved to be noisy. Fortunately, they were in the minority.

I recorded the interviews using an electronic micro recording device. Bryman (2012) mentions quite a few advantages of using an electronic device for recording an interview. It leaves the interviewer free to maintain eye-contact and become an active listener and make notes only on the odd occasion. It is more reliable than the interviewer’s memory. The interviewer can re-examine the interviewee’s recorded answers for further analyses. A secondary analysis or opinion can be asked of a recording. Should the interviewer be accused of influencing interviews, the recordings can neutralise such contentions. Data can be re-used in other ways than were intended by the original researcher. I found that all these benefits really assisted me in ensuring that my data analysis and interpretation remained relevant and authentic. Two warnings of Bryman (2012) that I took to heart were that a “good microphone is highly desirable” to ensure good quality recordings and that the interviewer must be “thoroughly familiar with the operation of the equipment you using before beginning your interviews” (p. 473). I consequently invested in a good quality electronic micro recording device, and I had quite a few trial runs to perfect my skill with the recording device before I started using it with the participants.

I transcribed all my interviews verbatim as texts which became my data. I tore off the confidential information and gave each participant a pseudonym to conceal their identity and to ensure confidentiality.

Data processing and analysis

I used two strategies in the data processing and analysis phase of my research paper, the thematic data analysis strategy and the coding strategy. I believe that these two strategies complemented one another.

Both Bryman (2012) and Babbie (2013) provide similar useful guidelines about data analysis which they call coding. Babbie (2013) agrees with Bryman (2012) that the researcher should “code as soon as possible” (Babbie, 2013, p. 451). They appeal to the researcher to “read through your initial set of transcripts, field notes, documents, etc. ... perhaps at the end jot down a few general notes ... [and then] read through your data again” (Babbie, 2013, p. 452). Initially the researcher makes numerous codes and makes connections between the codes that can be reviewed at a later stage. Babbie (2013) considers this a “mechanism for thinking of about the meaning of your data and reducing the vast amount of data with which you are confronted” (p. 453). Bryman (2012) also adds that “any one item or slice of data can and often should be coded in more than one way” (p. 577). Furthermore, Bryman (2012) states that the researcher should

Keep coding in perspective. Do not equate coding with analysis ... It is a mechanism for thinking about the meaning of your data and reducing the vast amount of data that you are facing ... You must still interpret your findings which means attending to issues like the significance of your coded material for the lives of the people you are studying, forging interconnections between codes, and reflecting on the overall importance of your findings for the research questions and the research literature that have driven your data collection (p. 577).

Bryman et al. (2014) cite Braun and Clarke's six phase process of thematic analysis. This includes "familiarising oneself with the data ... generating initial codes ... searching for themes ... reviewing themes ... defining and naming themes ... [and] producing the report" (p. 351).

Although I expected the process of data processing and analysis to be a time-consuming and arduous practice, it proved to be even more so than what I expected. Coding proved to be a very good precursor to the thematic data analysis technique because it forced me to familiarise myself with all the data, and once that was done, I could start putting it into themes before I finally started writing the report.

These two methods of data analyses assisted me in finding themes with regard to structural and dispositional barriers in participants. In addition, it highlighted how the participants applied agency to transcend these barriers. It was truly educative to see how innovative the students were in the application of their agentic powers.

Research ethics statement

While considering my ethical statement, I took UWC's Policy on Research Ethics into consideration and the following phrase seems to epitomise what I tried to uphold in my research endeavours "it is a framework ... which protects the integrity of all stakeholders in the research enterprise" (UWC, 2014, p. 1). As far as possible, I tried to inform all the parties involved of what my topic and intentions were with my research. I did this by being open and honest with all of them. Furthermore, I tried to implement "some of the most important ethical agreements that prevail in social research" (p. 520) as stipulated by Babbie and Mouton (2001) into my entire research process. These included ensuring that the participants partook voluntarily, safeguarding that no harm was done to them, guaranteeing their anonymity and confidentiality by providing them with pseudonyms and being open and honest about my intentions with the research and the findings thereof. The following are some of the ethical interventions that I put into place to ensure that the research was done in an honourable manner and in accordance with the literature.

Consent from the university and institution/research site

Before I started with my research, I went through the process of submitting my ethical clearance to the Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) via my supervisor. Furthermore, I prepared a letter of application to the executive management at the institution which I selected as my research site, explicating what the research entailed and requesting their permission to conduct the research at their site (See Appendix B). I had a follow-up meeting with the campus manager where he could ask any further questions for clarification about my research and I assured him that I would inform him of the results once I concluded my research. I did not start with my interviews until I had written permission from both institutions.

Consent from the participants

I designed a letter to the participants introducing myself and explaining the nature of the research and their role and rights in the research. In this letter I also committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the names and details of the participants. (See Appendix C). After explaining the procedure and implications of the research, I asked the participants to sign a consent form as evidence that they have acceded to the research. (See Appendix D). I reminded them about the ethical considerations throughout the interview process.

No harm to participants

I conducted my research in such a manner as to ensure that no harm befell the participants. I treated my participants with the necessary sensitivity and respect, remembering that they were the ones that were doing me a favour and not vice versa. When the questions elicited any traumatic emotions or experiences, I pacified them and enquired whether I should arrange for counselling from student support services. Fortunately it wasn't necessary to arrange any such appointments. In fact, all the students, even the few who became tearful at times, said that they found it a nice experience to reflect on their eighteen months of study. They said that they had not realised that they had learned so much during that time.

Voluntary participation

All the participants participated on a voluntary basis. Some of the participants that I had on my initial list withdrew from the research project and I had to find alternative participants to take their place. The snowballing technique proved to be very effective in assisting me to find additional candidates. I made it very clear to the participants at the start of the interview that should they find that they did not want to answer a question or if they felt that they wanted to end the interview, they should feel free to do so without having to provide a reason or explanation. I explained the research to them and made them aware of their voluntary participation before they signed the consent form. I concur with Babbie (2013) that the interview required a significant amount of time and energy from the participants and disrupted their regular activities and that it required personal information from them that may be unknown to their friends and associates. I kept this in mind and arranged appointments with them beforehand and gave them my cellular phone number in case they wanted to reschedule or change their minds about the interview, which some of them did.

Anonymity and confidentiality

I gave each participant a pseudonym so as not to disclose their identity. As soon as I had all the information from the participant, I did what Babbie (2013) suggested, “it can be torn off once the respondent’s identification is no longer needed” (p. 38). This is available in my records, but should any other researcher request the records, I will first ensure that they are well aware of their ethical responsibility and the implications of breaching those ethics, before I make the records available. This is a further safety measure to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

Deception

I was very truthful with both the executive committee of my research site as well as with my participants regarding the topic of my research and neither the one party nor the other found it problematic. I wanted both parties to know that truthful results would assist them to take cognisance of the students’ barriers and assist in building better relationships. I concur with Babbie (2013) that the “researcher also has ethical obligations towards their colleagues in the scientific community” (p. 39). I will ensure that my colleagues are made aware of the outcome of my research. I will make any unexpected positive discoveries known and I will also be honest about any areas where they might be able to improve relationships with their students.

Data storage and maintenance

I stored all completed consent forms and electronic recordings in a safe and secure place for the prescribed five years as stipulated by the UWC Code of Conduct for Research.

Summary

In section 3, I differentiated between the research design and methodology that I used in my research paper. I expounded on both aspects fairly comprehensively. This process had one aim in mind and that was to answer my research questions in a thorough yet ethical manner.



SECTION 4 – DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this section I will illustrate how I used my conceptual framework to analyse my data. I followed Babbie (2013) and Bryman et al. (2014) process of data analysis by familiarising myself with the vast amount of data that I have accumulated, coding it, finding common themes yet all the while keeping the research questions in mind. I then interpreted the data through the lenses of my conceptual framework until I could finally produce this section which illustrates the link between the research question and my findings.

Biographical information of participants

I interviewed 20 Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) participants who were at the exit level (N6) of their 18-month National Certificate in Educare course. The sample I interviewed, formed part of a group of 264 students that registered for the National Certificate in Educare course at a TVET College in January 2017. 14 students cancelled within the first month, which left a total of 250 students in N4. At the beginning of the second semester, in July 2017, 170 of those students registered for N5. In June 2018, 129 students passed their final N6 external examinations. The throughput rate for this group was 51.6 %, which means that a little more than half of the students managed to successfully complete their studies. (Olckers, personal interview, October 1, 2018).

Of the twenty participants, thirteen participants were under the age of 25, four participants were between 25 and 30, one participant was over 30 years old and two participants were over 40 years old. Thirteen participants were Afrikaans speaking, four participants were English speaking and three had isiXhosa as their mother tongue. Fifteen of the participants were single and had no children, three were single and had children and two were married with children. There was one male and nineteen females. There was one Muslim participant student and nineteen Christian participants. The profiles of my participants are set out below. To ensure their confidentiality, I gave all of them pseudonyms.

Participants' profile

Bronwyn is a 38-year-old, female. She is single and lives with her family in Ravensmead. She is Afrikaans-speaking. She was encouraged by her mother and aunt to do teaching because they thought that she was good with children. She agreed with them. She received a bursary from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and was financially supported by her brother while studying. Her biggest fears were that she would not be able to cope with the content of the course and that she would not be able to fit in because she was slightly older than the other participants. Because she had worked before, the lack of finances bothered her a great deal. She intends to study further, but she first wants to work because she feels that her family has sacrificed a lot to put her through college.

Daniel is a 20-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking male. He is single and lives with his parents in Elsies River. He wanted to become a teacher but his matric results did not allow him to go to university. He was the only male who enrolled and this was a major obstacle in the beginning, but he felt that the females soon accepted him and made him feel quite at home. He did not qualify for the NSFAS travelling allowance because he lived closer than 10 km from the college, which made travelling a big issue for him. His parents supported him financially. He did very well and was accepted into a Grade R post at a private institution even before he was finished with his final exams. His intention is to study further at a university.

Jo-Ann is a 26-year-old, female, and single-parent of a five-year old girl. She is Afrikaans-speaking, and lives in Kuils River with her parents. She had a lot of support from her boyfriend, her mom and his mom. This included financial support. She also received a NSFAS bursary. She felt that her brain was just rotting sitting at home, and so she decided to do something with her life. As she had a passion for working with children, she enrolled for the educare course. Her lack of finance was her biggest worry. When I interviewed her, she had just been accepted into an educare post. She was very excited to receive her first pay cheque. Her intention is to study further.

Andrea is a 20-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives in Eerste River with her mother and sister. She has a love for children and wanted to go to university but did not qualify because of her results. Her biggest obstacle was her fear of failing. Because her parents were

divorced and her mom was working, she had to take over the responsibility of the household and care for her twelve-year-old sister in the afternoon. Both her parents supported her financially and she received a NSFAS bursary. Her aim is to become a foundation phase teacher.

Lesley-Ann is 22-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives in Fisantekraal with her mother. She studied social work before at UWC. Midway through her course, she changed her mind and decided to study teaching, but was not accepted at UWC for a teaching degree. She enrolled for the educare course, although she saw it as downgrading from the university level. One of her biggest challenges was that she lived in an area where there was only one train in the morning and one at night. She considers herself an introvert and found socialising a big problem. Her mother supported her financially. She sees herself as a principal on one of the farm educare centres in the future.

Rihana is 20-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives with her parents and brother in Atlantis. Her father's family has a few disabled children. This is where her passion to work with disabled children was kindled. She still wants to further her studies in this direction. Her biggest challenge while she was at college, was the bus strike because she comes from an area that is quite a distance from the college. Her father supported her financially and she received a NSFAS bursary.

Ronique is 21-year-old, English-speaking female. She is single and lives in Belhar with her mother and aunt. She felt that the course had empowered her to purge herself of friends and even a boyfriend who were holding her back in life. She received the NSFAS bursary, but she also worked part-time to support herself, and if it was necessary, her mother also aided her financially. She wants to study further in either education or social work.

Jadine is a 20-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She came from a small town in the Eastern Cape. She is single and lived with and was supported by her mother's brother, who resides in Wesbank and whom she calls Boeta. She received the NSFAS bursary and received a lot of support and encouragement from Boeta. She does not intend going back to the Eastern Cape because she

feels that there is not a lot of recreation or work opportunities for young people. She wants to do her B. Ed and become a Grade 3 teacher.

Bamanye is a 22-year-old, Xhosa-speaking female. She is single and she lived with her mother in Khayelitsha. She received the NSFAS bursary and her mother supported her financially during her studies. Her biggest problem was her shyness and her biggest fear was that she would not make friends. However, she felt she overcame her shyness to a large extent and she was very impressed with herself for making friends on the very first day. She sees herself as a foundation phase teacher in three to five years, and as a principal in ten to twenty years.

Phumza is a 29-year-old, single-parent with a two-year-old child. She is a Xhosa-speaking female who lives in Khayelitsha. Although she received the NSFAS bursary, she had to work weekends to support herself and her child, but she had a lot of support from her mother. She wants to become a foundation phase teacher because she wants to give her child a good education. It is her intention to study through UNISA to get her degree.

Amy is 20-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives in Mitchells Plain with her grandmother who was bedridden and had kidney problems and had to go in to hospital for dialysis on a weekly basis. In the afternoon, after college, she looked after her grandmother. She ran the household, cooked and cleaned until her aunt, who also lived with them, came home from work. Because of this, the whole family supported her financially. She also received the NSFAS bursary. She wants to become a foundation phase teacher.

Wilma is 27 years old. She is an English-speaking female, who lives in Elsies River. She is married with one child. Her biggest fear was failing because she had a bad experience at college before. She received the NSFAS bursary but also received a lot of moral and financial support from her priest, whom she calls her spiritual father, and his congregation. He was the one who encouraged her to study further. Although it was very tough on her family financially, she persevered. She intends furthering her studies through Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Tara is a 20-year-old, English-speaking female. She is single and lives with her mother and siblings in Elsies River. Because her parents were divorced and she was the eldest, she was responsible for looking after her four siblings. She did all the cooking and cleaning in the afternoon, after college. Managing this, with her studies, was her biggest challenge. She received the NSFAS bursary, but both her parents also assisted her financially. She said she would like to own her own house or apartment one day, have her own car, a steady job and study further to become something better.

Jade is a 21-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives with her parents in Eerste River. She received the NSFAS bursary and her family supported her. One of her biggest problems was that she had a learning problem at school. She managed to overcome it to a large degree but her learning was still slower than that of the average student, and she had to put a lot more effort into it. She felt very hurt because many people did not believe that she could make a success of her studies, even some of her family members. Another challenge was travelling to college because it was the first time that she used public transport. She, however, felt elated at having mastered the travelling and that she passed her N6 because she showed all those people who did not believe in her, that she could succeed. She is currently doing her 18 months practical at the primary school she attended as a learner. She intends studying further to teach in the foundation phase.

Ronelle is a 45-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and owns her own house in Kraaifontein. Her mother and brother live with her. When she became unemployed, she decided to enrol for the educare course. Her intention is to open her own educare centre. She has the premises, but she still needs the building, so she is first going to work for 3 years to accumulate finances. Her biggest challenge was travelling to college, and because she had worked for 17 years prior to being unemployed, she said the unknown scared her a lot. She received the NSFAS bursary and her mother supported her.

Jillian is a 44-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She lives in Kraaifontein. She is married with five children. Three are her own, and two are adopted. She was in retail for 21 years, but she always had a passion for children, which was aroused during her days as a Sunday school teacher. When she lost her job, she enrolled for the educare course. One of her biggest fears was her age, but that

did not stop her from enrolling. Jillian received the NSFAS bursary and her husband supported her financially. Her mother-in-law offered a lot of encouragement. The educare course ignited a passion for studying in her. She feels that she still wants to do her B. Ed and after that, she wants to study even further.

Miche is a 22-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives with her parents in Bellville South. She wanted to do teaching at university but her matric results did not allow her to do that. She enrolled for the educare course instead, because she had a passion for children. She received a NSFAS bursary and further financial support from her parents. When she was in N5, the possibility that NSFAS would not continue issuing her the bursary, caused her a lot of anxiety. This was a big challenge to her. She also considered the exams to be a challenge. She still wants to complete her B.Ed. At the time of the interview, she applied for an internship in China. She was accepted and is currently in China for 18 months. She will spend six months at a university where they will prepare her for teaching, and the last twelve months she will be assisting in a class.

Felicia is a 21-year-old, English-speaking female. She is single and lives with her parents in Elsies River. The main reason why she wanted to study was because she felt that one day when she was not around anymore, she wanted to be remembered as an educated person. She received financial aid from NSFAS and her father also supported her with the finances. Her biggest fear was that she would not understand the work and that she would not get along with her lecturers and peers. She wants to study further to be a teacher but she also wants to be a community worker. At the time of the interview, she was getting ready to go on a camp where they would teach life skills to street children.

Vuyolwethu is a 26-year-old, Xhosa-speaking, single-parent of a seven-year old child. She lives in Khayelitsha. She could not get into university with her matric results and decided to do educare because she hoped it would give her a good foundation for teaching. She received the NSFAS bursary and a lot of support from mother. Because she liked her independence, she also worked part-time. Her biggest fear was that she would not be able to cope with all the tasks. She still wants to become a foundation phase teacher and she intends to go to UNISA to get her qualification.

Aneesha is a 20-year-old, Afrikaans-speaking female. She is single and lives in Bishop Lavis with her mother and sister. After matric, she took a gap year. Because she failed one subject, she did this course to boost her matric results, and because she loved working with children. Because her mom worked, she was responsible for cleaning and cooking two to three nights per week. Her chores and her religion took a lot of her time and impacted on her studies. She received the NSFAS bursary and her mother assisted her financially. She wants to study to become a foundation phase teacher after this course.

Participants as agents

Giddens (1984) perceives an agent to be a person who acts in a decisive manner and is able to explain his/her behaviour. When the participants were asked why they wanted to study further, the majority of them stated that they perceived a qualification to be the distinction between being considered mediocre and a failure in life, and successful:

I decided to study because I want a better future for myself and I already saw, in general that people who finished school with good results, also just sit at home and just deteriorate. So I decided that I'm going to study and make the best of my life (Jadine, Interview, July 5, 2018).

I couldn't just go to work. I wanted to expand my knowledge base by studying further. I couldn't just go to work because nowadays you cannot just find a good job and earn more money when you have only Grade 12. Some jobs require more experience and more qualifications. Yes, it is, because if you want to work for the department, you have to have a qualification (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

I had my matric and I just wanted something higher than the matric certificate. Yes, because the people don't look for matric only. They looking for something higher than a matric (Miche, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Yes, it is very important because it doesn't matter if you have experience but you don't have the papers to prove it (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 28, 2018).

A lot of people don't just want matric anymore. They want some sort of qualification (Ronique, Interview, July 4, 2018).

This desire to achieve a qualification to improve their quality of life reveals participants as “purposive agents” as described by Giddens (1984):

Because I wanted to do something with my life. I didn't just want to stay at home or go into retail, I wanted to achieve something. Yes, because it's difficult to find a job just like that. But if you have a qualification, it will be easier to get into a job (Daniel, Interview, June 25, 2018).

Because I wanted to better myself. Actually, first of all I didn't like where I was working and then I decided since I like children so much, why not try something so that I will work with them. So, I went to this TVET College with the hope that it will be a gateway for me to go to foundation phase (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018).

It is very much necessary. Especially now, you need to have a qualification because you going to stand in line with people who has it and then you not going to stand a chance if you don't have a qualification. And also one day when I'm not around, I want to be known as an educated person, that's why I want to go and study (Felicia, Interview, July 11, 2018).

In order to realise their goal, participants applied to an institution of higher learning. Giddens (1984) described this as “Agency refers to doing (p. 10),

Agency and access to post-school education

In accordance with Archer's (2003) statement that “only humans have degrees of freedom in determining their own courses of action” (p. 6-7), the participants decided on a course of action. They wanted to better themselves and consequently applied to an institution of higher learning.

Access in this paper refers to applying and gaining entry to a post-school education institution. Education institutions and their access policies are part of the structure that Cross (1981), Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) and other scholars allude to as being either a constraint or an enabler. Archer (2003), however, speaks of structural and cultural systems as being neither constraining nor enabling in itself. They have the potential of becoming constraints or enablers depending on the projects agents choose. If agents don't choose a project, the structural and cultural systems can be neither enabling nor constraining. This choice that the participants made to apply at a post-school education institution is evidence of the agency they asserted, and once they chose this project of studying further, barriers had the potential to act upon their action. To me this part of Archer's theory clearly illustrates the relationship between agency and structure in respect of the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success.

Structural barriers experienced during access

Scholars have categorised barriers in different ways. For the purpose of this paper, I will use the categories as described by Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) because these are explanatory and relevant to this study. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) identify two broad categories, structural and individual barriers. Structural barriers can be subdivided into institutional and situational barriers, while individual barriers includes dispositional barriers (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

Institutional barriers experienced during access

Cross (1981), Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), MacKeracher et al. (2006) and Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) concur that institutional barriers refer to practices and procedures that "excludes or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities" (Cross, 1981, p. 98). The data illustrate that the main institutional barrier which participants experienced during the access phase was what Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) referred to as "do not have the necessary qualifications to take up the studies or the training course I would like to" (p. 204).

Agency and intentionality to access higher education

Intentionality was evident in the agency that participants portrayed when they attempted to gain access to higher education after completing high school. Participants did not have a bachelor's

pass to access the institution of their choice. Cross (1981) alludes to “don’t meet the requirements to begin program” (p. 99) as one of the institutional barriers that prevents access for adult learners. The following responses from the participants confirm that they did not meet the requirements:

I couldn’t get into university because I didn’t have a bachelor’s pass so I had another option - to get in at a TVET College (Andrea, Interview, June 28, 2018).

I didn’t achieve what the university required of me to study education therefore I went to a TVET College (Ronique, Interview, July 4, 2018).

I was not accepted at the university because of my results of Grade 12. So I wanted to do something to do with education in it. So I did research and I found that the TVET College had the educare and in educare you deal with the children and I always wanted to deal with children (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

I applied at university because I wanted to do the Foundation Phase but I couldn’t get into university but the TVET College accepted me to do the educare course. I had too few credits to get into university (Miche, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Archer (2003) 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” (p. 6). These participants looked at alternative routes to their dream. This process coincided with Bandura’s (2006) core functions of agency especially the first three: intentionality, forethought and self-reactiveness. The participants portrayed intentionality by applying to the university. They revealed forethought because they applied for a specific course and self-reactiveness by making alternative plans.

Agency, resilience and access to the TVET College as an alternative

Participants showed resilience when rejection by a higher education institution became a barrier to access. To Makoelle and Malindi (2015) “resilience denotes the individual’s capacity to achieve positive outcomes despite the experience of adversity” (p. 3). Giddens’ (1979) states that “at any

point, the agent ‘could have acted otherwise’: either positively in terms of attempted intervention ... or negatively in terms of forbearance” (p. 56). These participants could have acted differently by choosing not to participate in further education. Instead they chose to enrol at an alternative institution:

I first went to CPUT and was unsuccessful with my application. I think it was because of my matric results and then my mom’s sister said that I must try at this TVET College, and I did (Bronwyn, Interview, June 26, 2018).

I wanted to be a teacher but because my matric results didn’t allow me to go to university, I decided to do educare. I applied at College of Cape Town but I wasn’t accepted there and then I went with some of my girlfriends to this TVET College and I took my matric certificate and all the necessary documentation with me and the next day they phoned me (Daniel, Interview, June 25, 2018).

I chose this TVET College because UWC was full and my parents said that I have to go study (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

Makoelle and Malindi (2015) also stated that “resilience is a process that involves an individual’s own assets or strengths as well as those found in his or her physical social and ecology” (p. 1). Both perseverance and the support that the participants received from their environment, helped them to become more resilient towards the barriers that they experienced, as can be seen from the preceding statements.

The following participant found access to the TVET College a bit frustrating:

I waited and waited and that actually made me a bit demotivated. So after 6 months, one of the admin clerks, who died recently, motivated me to try again. She said she would take my papers in (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 26, 2018).

Although she found the process frustrating, she persevered until she was assisted, and in so doing, demonstrated tenacity. The following participants indicated that it was relatively easy to access the TVET College:

Yes, it was fairly easy. It didn't feel easy while I was going through the process but once I was accepted, it felt that everything just went smoothly. But I prayed a lot to get accepted (Bronwyn, Interview, June 26, 2018).

For me. It was easy. I waited a few months and then I received an answer (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

Yes, it was very easy. I didn't have to wait long for an answer, I think about a month or so (Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

The participant below demonstrated the perseverance and resilience that the participants had to endure to realise their dream. When asked what advice she would give prospective applicants to the TVET College, she replied:

I would say that if you don't get into university, don't give up, try the educare course and you can get into a diploma course afterwards ... you will get ups and downs but you must just persevere (Andrea, Interview, June 28, 2018).

What is clear from the above is that as soon as the participants decided to pursue post-school education, they encountered barriers. The primary barrier during the access phase was institutional in nature, which resort under structural barriers, and relates to policy which limited access to the institution of their choice. Once they experienced barriers, they were prompted to assert their agency. Evidence shows that intentionality and resilience were demonstrated in their agency while pursuing access to a higher education institution.

Agency and Participation

In this paper I refer to participation as the institutional experiences of the participants after they were accepted into the TVET College. During this time the participants experienced both structural and individual barriers.

Structural barriers experienced during participation

Earlier, I described structural barriers as comprising of institutional barriers and situational barriers concurring with Rubenson and Desjardins's (2009) description of structural barriers. The evidence shows that the participants experienced both institutional and situational barriers after they were accepted at the TVET College.

Overcoming institutional barriers

The data revealed that the most noteworthy institutional barriers that the participants experienced during the participation phase were related to transport and policies. MacKeracher et al. (2006) described institutional barriers as “[consisting] of limitations inherent in the methods institutions use to design, deliver and administer learning activities. These methods are frequently biased against or ignorant of the needs of adult learners” (p. 2). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) added that institutions can have “policies and practices that impose inconvenience, confusion or frustration on adult learners.” (p. 137). A barrier included in Cross's (1981) categorisation of institutional barriers related to transport. She indicated that “transportation is a significant problem to the elderly and the poor but rarely to the middle class or middle aged” (p. 104). The dimensions of agency that were essential to overcome transport-related barriers were planfulness, creativity and resilience.

Agency and planfulness: overcoming infrequent and unreliable public transport

Infrequent and unreliable public transport emerged as one of the most challenging structural barriers for the participants. This is supported by a view taken from NEWS24 in which the Minister of Transport, Blade Nzimande, stated that “public transport in the Western Cape is one of the worst in the country” (Petersen, 2018). The majority of participants who travelled by public transport found it infrequent, unreliable and unsafe as the following responses reveal:

Public transport wasn't easy. Sometimes the people strike or the train got stuck because people stole the cables. Then I got late to the college. That wasn't nice (Miche, Interview, July 11, 2018).

I used bus but most of all I took a train and sometimes, if there's no other way, then I had to take a taxi. Yoy! As much as the train is cheaper but then it's a struggle. It's a real struggle. The struggle is having to wake up thinking that you'll catch an early train but then the train doesn't arrive and then it's fully packed you can't get into the first one that arrives. You get into the third train, it's late, it's full and all that. And they rob you (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018).

It wasn't nice. Because our train doesn't run the whole day. It only runs once in the morning and once at night ... Because it was only one train, it was fairly full ... and we, who lived in Fisantekraal, had to stand most of the time because there were no seats available (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

[I travelled] with the bus. It was fine but it was exhausting ... Sometimes, I came late and that stressed me out a bit. And with the bus strike, I didn't know what to do to get hold of transport. It was hectic and I was worried because it [the bus strike] was almost three weeks. It was very long. I did my best to get to college because I didn't want to quit at the end because for 16 months I attended and it would have been a waste to leave it now (Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

Despite public transport being “the worst in the country” (Petersen, 2018), the participants made other arrangements to circumvent the problems they experienced:

Firstly, I use a taxi to the station and then I take a train. In the first two semesters. Then in this last semester, I used a bus. (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

Um, I only used one taxi. I got off at Elsies and I had to walk from there to college. I didn't have any problem with the taxi. When there was shooting in Delft, I had to

take the bus and the train. It was hectic but I had to go to school (Vuyolwethu, Interview, July 20, 2018).

The following participant was prudent in applying her sense of priority and planful competence by first seeing to her most urgent and continuous needs related to her daily travelling:

... and if we had to take a taxi, it was expensive to travel because you had to take about three taxis ... My mom gave me R100 per week and from that I could pay my train fare which was R60 and on a Friday I could come home with the taxi (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

These participants had to overcome the limitations of the transport system on a daily basis for eighteen months. Hitlin & Elder (2006) cited Shanahan et al. who viewed agency as “planful competence, is an individual level construct that dictates a person’s facility with making (and sticking to) advantageous long-range plans” (p. 42). Evidence suggests that planfulness enabled participants to overcome infrequent and unreliable public transport.

Agency and creativity: overcoming infrequent and unreliable public transport

Sewell (1992) maintained that all humans have the capacity to act creatively. He added that “knowledge of cultural schemas ... implies the ability to act creatively” (p. 20). The following participants’ responses by engaging the support of fellow students travel during the bus strike, can be interpreted as creative:

And with the bus strike, I didn’t know what to do to get hold of transport. I travelled with another student during the bus strike (Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

My fellow student suggested that she pick me up and then I would pay her from my NSFAS travelling allowance. So I didn’t like the train but the car was fine (Ronelle, Interview, July 11, 2018).

I used a bus but most of all I took a train and sometimes, if there's no other way, then I had to take a taxi ... The bus is not a problem. Yes, sometimes it's late and you have to wake up early because the bus is ten to 6 but then you get off at Goodwood, very far. I think its 20–30 minutes walking and then it is dangerous there in Voortrekker road. I think the taxi is so nice, but the fare. The taxi fare is expensive. The train is cheaper and the bus, ja, is also much better, cheaper (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018)

Agency and resilience: overcoming unsafe public transport services

Most of the participants described public transport as unsafe, but two participants' renditions in particular portrayed the vivid reality of the participants' experiences:

A friend of mine's neighbour died because she wanted to get off the train but she was pushed to the extent where she was in the air. Her feet didn't touch ground anymore. They pressed her so much that she fell and other people fell on top of her and they must have tramped on her. She got out at Brackenfell and she went to the day hospital and then they took her to Karl Bremer. The next day she came home but her one leg started swelling and then she went back and when she went in, they had to do an emergency operation on her. She never survived the operation. She is young, 31. She had been married for two years (Ronelle, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Um, at first I was scared because I wasn't used to travelling and then I took taxi and, ok, I had a bad experience once but I had to continue taking taxi. I was in the taxi and I told the driver that I must get off at Pick n Pay. But he drove past Pick n Pay, so he told me he was going to turn around but he drove past the stop and he said I was going with him and all this stuff and there was a girl also with them. I was so scared. Then we got to Libertas. And there was like a couple trying to get in, so I jumped out. And luckily I had more money on me so I took a taxi up, back to college. I continued taking a taxi but I was just a bit more careful and made sure there was a lot of people in the taxi (Felicia, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Both participants' demonstrated resilience as they confronted the possibility of being hurt or abducted. This coincided with Masten's perspective where "resilience denotes the individual's capacity to achieve positive outcomes despite the experience of adversity, to continue to function effectively in adverse circumstances, or to recover after significant trauma" (cited by Makoelle & Malindi, 2015, p. 3).

Agency and resilience: overcoming inadequate policy related to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) travelling allowance

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) mentioned in their literature that institutions can have "policies and practices that impose inconvenience, confusion and frustration on adult learners" (p. 137). The NSFAS travelling policy was one such policy that imposed inconvenience and frustration on the participants. Several participants received funding which covered their tuition fees and a travel allowance from NSFAS. However, the NSFAS policy that stated that "Students who reside within a radius of ten (10) kilometres from the college should not be considered for an award for travel allowance or accommodation allowance" (DHET, 2016, p. 13) also acted as a barrier to those participants who lived closer than 10 kilometres from the college. These participants who were not awarded the NSFAS travelling allowance had to find alternative ways of dealing with their travelling dilemma. The following responses attest to that:

I walked from the bridge in Elsies to save money (Aneesha, Interview, July 25, 2018).

My friend and I walked from Elsies River. Some days it was difficult because we didn't feel like walking and we had to walk back. Sometimes my father gave me a lift but most of the time we had to walk. (Daniel, Interview, June 25, 2018).

The fact that they had to walk on a daily basis for approximately six to ten kilometres is truly a case of perseverance in the face of adversity which Makoelle and Malindi (2015) very aptly refer to as resilience.

Agency and creativity: overcoming inadequate policy related to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) travelling allowance

Sewell (1992) maintained that “knowledge of cultural schemas ... implies the ability to act creatively” (p. 20). The data revealed is that the participants’ knowledge of the resources that were available in their environment, influenced the creativity that they could assert to solve their transport barriers. Some participants used their creativity and organised a taxi for the people from the same area as can be seen from the following participant’s response:

At first I walked to college. Then the second semester, I took the taxi. Um, I felt the taxi, it was a problem because I had to take two taxis. And so the taxi driver that always gets us in front of the college, made an arrangement with us that he will pick us up at the nearest point and drop us at college. So it was only one taxi and that helped us a lot. The taxi was over full because he tried to fit everybody in (Wilma, Interview, July 9, 2018).

By organising a taxi that can transport a group of students straight to the college, the participants minimised their travelling time as well as cut their travelling costs. This has become a popular strategy. At the beginning of each semester, the student council organises taxis that can transport students to and from different destinations.

Another participant made use of the knowledge of available transport in the immediate vicinity to address transport problems as the following response attests to:

Um, I only used one taxi. I get off at Elsie and I had to walk from there to college. I didn’t have any problem with the taxi. When there was shooting in Delft, I had to take the bus and the train. It was hectic but I had to go to school. (Vuyolwethu, Interview, July 20, 2018).

The participant’s knowledge of the available transport in the area allowed her to use alternative transport when she experienced a problem in her area. The action of the participant accorded with

Sewell's (1992) assertion of "knowledge of cultural schemas" (p. 20). The participant's knowledge of the available public transport in the area, allowed her to act creatively.

Although NFSAS amended their 10 km policy at the beginning of 2019 (DHET, 2018, p.19), inadequate public transport still presents barriers.

Agency and overcoming situational barriers

Cross (1981), MacKeracher et al. (2006) and Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) refer to situational barriers as problems that students might experience in their home circumstances. MacKeracher et al. (2006) especially stated that "multiple conflicting responsibilities for home, family, children and work; financial problems" (p. 2) can impact on students' studies. The data revealed that the main situational barriers that the participants experienced were financial constraints, limited resources and limited study time due to chores or family responsibilities. The participants displayed resilience and planfulness to overcome these situational barriers:

Agency and resilience: overcoming financial constraints and limited resources

All participants were full-time students and most of them had no source of income. MacKeracher et al. (2006) described financial constraints as a common barrier and the following responses corroborates the latter:

That was a very tough matter. We are three children, my mom was always a housewife and my dad had a taxi but that didn't work out so we lost our home and we had to move to Ravensmead. My dad was also learning to be a priest but he didn't earn a lot because he had a fairly small congregation. So, financially it was only my brother, myself and my younger sister. She worked at Builders before but she left Builders to pursue her passion for photography. She made money with it, for instance, with matric balls and weddings but it wasn't a permanent job. So it is mostly my brother that has an income. And last year my sister went to Germany so it was just my brother who had an income. I am in big debt with my brother because

he basically carried us through. My parents can't wait until I start working (Bronwyn, Interview, June 25, 2018).

It was tough, very tough because [my child's] the school fees had to be paid every month, but we persevered (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 26, 2018).

My father struggled a bit because of my studies and my brother's, because he goes to a private school. But in the end we had a lot of hope (Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

The responses below are indicative of the lack of resources that the participants experienced. These limited resources included a shortage of computers and printing facilities which MacKeracher et al. (2006) and Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) refer to as situational barriers. The participants' responses reveal the kind of assistance they received to overcome these barriers:

I managed because I can type fairly quickly but it was also a challenge printing because the queues were always long and sometimes the aunty at the Open Learning Centre (OLC) wasn't there ... if I needed to print something, my mom would do it at the library. She's an assistant at Durbanville library. Sometimes she helped and sometimes she forgot because she forgets easily and then it is a struggle again. But it is a help when she remembers (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

A lot. Financially and with my tasks. Especially if I had to do research and I couldn't get to a library. Then I did some of the things at the OLC but they helped me with pictures and they did it at work (Jadine, Interview, July 5, 2018).

Yes, when I had the assignments that I had to do with my hands, my mother will always help me. I'll tell her, uh, uh you can't sleep, I have to finish this. You must help me. We'll be doing cut and paste into the night. She was there for me. She will

take photos so that she could show her people at work (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

Yes. Financially and sometimes when my son doesn't want to sleep, then my mother would take him and sometimes they would say, no, you can go to the library. I had to study at night because I didn't have much time. So she would look after him when I go to library for at least 4 to 5 hours and then when I come back she would take him to sleep there (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018).

With my assignments, yes. She would stay up late with me. With like the creative assignments part, she would help me with the posters and stuff. She would put the contact over the poster, yes. That needs help. So, I did get support (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

They made it convenient for me to type out my tasks at home and to print it. My sister used to help me. I would write it out. She would type it and at night I would just go over it. There were times when I had to do my tasks and study (Aneesha, Interview, July 25, 2018).

The participants, with the help of their support network comprising mostly of family and friends, managed to overcome these situational barriers. The participants' experiences can be interpreted as "social support positively influences one's sense of agency" (Hitlin & Elder, 2006, p. 43). Hitlin and Elder (2006) further assert that "positive development occurs within supportive social networks ... one might feel more optimistic about one's life chances if they feel as if they are not encountering problems alone" (p. 43).

Agency and planful competence: overcoming limited study time due to chores and responsibilities

MacKeracher et al. (2006) refer to “multiple conflicting responsibilities for home, family, children and work” (p. 2) as situational barriers. As participants in this study were adult students, I found that those who had children, had to deal with this situational barrier:

Yes. Clean up, cook. I have a five-year old that I must take care of in the morning. I had my hands full. At night after, I have put her to bed, it was college time. Then I could focus on myself. My plate was really full. Most of the time, when I had to write exams, my boyfriend took her [our daughter] to her grandmother in Worcester and then he would come back to work. Ok, I missed her but I was more focussed on my schoolwork. It helped me a lot. He was very hands-on (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 28, 2018).

Yes. To take care of my son. I'm one of those people who like to study at night. I had to sacrifice my time at night to study (Vuyolwethu, Interview, July 20, 2018).

Yes, I do, I do have chores. I do have responsibilities at home. My parents are working. I guess the responsibility of having to look after my son has impacted me, because I knew I had to hold on in order for him to have a better and brighter future. I had to stay up late at night because when I do my homework or assignments, he wants to help me. Now I let him go to bed first, and also I must go in bed and pretend that I am sleeping and then wake up and do my chores that I have to do (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018).

Yes. I do. I have to come home and clean, give attention to my husband and child. Help her do her homework. Do the washing. When it came to study time then I would just leave everything. I wouldn't do a single thing. I would just focus my attention on my daughter and then I would focus on my work. And then luckily, my husband always helps with the food, so there's no problem with that (Wilma, Interview, July 9, 2018).

The following responses show that it was not only participants with children who confronted family responsibilities as barriers:

At home, yes. I clean everything, I look after my siblings. I'm the eldest, I have 4 siblings. Both parents work. I made food. My parents are very strict and they split up also (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

Yes. I have to look after my grandmother. I stay with my grandmother, not with my mother. So in the afternoon, I had to go and clean up and cook and see whether she was fine. She has kidney problems ... by 7 my aunt gets home and then I can focus on my college work. My aunt worked but she lives with us. I could also sit with my studies in the afternoon when she [my grandmother] took a nap. I had more time to sit up at night because sometimes during the day she would get visitors and then I had to make tea again. But I was used to the routine already (Amy, Interview, July 9, 2018).

A lot, because I'm the eldest and my parents work. My parents are also divorced and my mom works so when I get home, I must clean the house and cook because my mom sometimes get home at 6.30 and we couldn't wait until that time to start cooking. So I basically had to take over the household ... but my mom and I had a nice understanding. She always asked when I had to study and then she would get up earlier to help with the chores. I would sit up at night because that was the most peaceful time (Andrea, Interview, June 28, 2018).

Participants overcame these barriers by planning their schedule to accommodate their studies:

I studied during the day and when I got home, I did my chores and then when I still had time at night, I would fit in whatever else I could (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

I sat up late at night and weekends I had to sacrifice (Aneesha, Interview, July 25, 2018).

Time management. If you can manage your time well, then it won't be necessary to neglect anything. Time management, very important (Ronelle, Interview, July 11, 2018).

You need to do the most important first and that which is not so important, you can do later (Jillian, Interview, July 11, 2018).

It is evident that participants demonstrated planful competence as purported by Hitlin and Elder (2006) by prioritising their chores and responsibilities so that they could make a success of their studies.

Individual barriers

Individual barriers are internal factors or dispositional barriers (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009) that people experience and which can have a great influence on agentic action.

Overcoming dispositional barriers

For Cross (1981) dispositional barriers relate to “attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner” (p. 98). Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) agree to a large extent with Cross (1981) and describe dispositional barriers as human beings perceptions about “concerns about own ability to succeed” (p. 192). They also state that “negative attitudes and dispositions toward adult education are by far the most deterring factor” (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009, p. 192) that hinders adults from accessing adult education. My data revealed that most participants found the possibility of social rejection, an inability to manage the amount of tasks and fear of failure as critical dispositional barriers.

Agency and self-efficacy: Fear of social rejection

An unexpected dispositional barrier experienced by some participants was a fear that they would not fit into the TVET College. Their responses articulate their fears and how they overcame these:

Obviously, economic wise. The clothes. I thought that the people would be fashionably dressed. It stressed me out a lot because I thought I don't have, but when I got there I thought I stressed about nothing. I was wondering whether I would be the only one to take public transport and that everybody would drive with their cars. Things like that stressed me. I thought I'll just go with the flow and then I saw that it wasn't like that. I saw that we were all in the same boat (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 28, 2018).

My concept of college was sort of like downgrading seeing that I was at university. But I knew that it was something that I could achieve. In the beginning it felt a bit difficult. I was a bit unsure of myself. My biggest fear was making friends because I don't make friends easily. Bernadine [another student] became my friend and she helped me to make more friends (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

To be honest, I was a bit nervous, but when I started, I knew I could handle it. I wondered would I ever make friends at college. I didn't think that I would fail at it but there was a little bit of fear. I learned to adapt, to be friendly and to give my full cooperation (Jadine, Interview, July 5, 2018).

A little bit because I do not easily adapt with new people and I cannot make friends easily, so I had that fear. Well, I don't know. I only realized after 2 months or so, I had friends here [she laughs out loud]. I don't know how it really happened. I think it was that first day when we were busy applying, going around and around in the waiting list. I think it happened then (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

I would say, only foolish fears like would I make friends, how would I cope? Who do I go to school with in the train? How do I do things? But that was minor things. Since I am a talkative person, I made a friend just on the same day, the first day of

college and I was so confident and happy. I sat in front at the assembly, on my first day (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018).

Because I'm fairly quiet, I had to get used to everybody, but once I was used to them, it became easier. The first term I was shaky but the second semester I was kind of used to it already, so it wasn't a problem anymore (Aneesha, Interview, July 25, 2018).

Cross (1981) and Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) regard low self-esteem and self-efficacy as dispositional barriers that can deter school-leavers from applying to post-school education institutions. The preceding data revealed that although the participants had fairly low self-esteem and self-efficacy, because of their fear of social rejection and the unknown, they overcame these dispositional barriers.

Fear of failure and too many tasks

Similarly to Cross (1981), Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) describe dispositional barriers as human beings' "concerns about own ability to succeed" (p. 192). The most common dispositional barriers that the participants mentioned, was their fear of failure especially regarding their workload:

I thought that I wouldn't be able to cope, e.g. the tasks. I worried that I wouldn't be able to do it. I thought the odds were against me because I left school long ago compared to the other students but I just focussed on the goal and persevered (Bronwyn, Interview, June 26, 2018).

Because I was the only man, I had a lot of fears [he became quite tearful at this stage]. I didn't think that I would cope but I actually enjoyed it. Just to be myself. The class accepted me (Daniel, Interview, June 25, 2018).

I thought it was going to be very difficult. That I was going to fail the first semester or that I wasn't going to hand in my assignments on time. But I started on my

assignments long before it was supposed to go in (Ronique, Interview, July 4, 2018).

In the beginning my greatest fear was failing because I studied previously at False Bay College and it didn't end well. The thing that kept going through my head was that I wanted to end strong, I don't want to fail. I don't want to start something and then not finish it (Wilma, Interviewer, July 9, 2018).

Um, in the beginning, it was yes and no because when the work starts you start thinking, yoh it's such a lot of work, the tasks and lots of work. There was a time when I thought yoh, I'm not going to make it but when I did it, I thought, I can do it. The exams. I was wondering whether I will be able to answer the questions correctly. I just saw that I could do it. I think it was because after college, I read through my work again or you ask your friend how did they study a certain section (Miche, Interview, July 11, 2018).

The assignments were too much. It put a lot of pressure on us. (Daniel, Interview, June 25, 2018).

Yes, because it was too much work, ja. At least there was an opportunity to go to the OLC. So I had to go there, ja. Also the group work helped (Vuyolwethu, Interview, July 20, 2018).

Yes, sometimes. There were a few tasks that had to be in on the Friday and we would start exams on the Monday. We wouldn't get a chance to study properly because you are more focussed on the tasks (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

Overcoming dispositional barriers: agency and attributes

Agency and academic resilience

In the findings of their study, MacKeracher et al. (2006) reported the discovery of academic barriers. These barriers refer to “the skills that are essential to successful learning” (p. 2). Their workload and fear of failure prompted participants’ realisation that they had to develop attributes to overcome these barriers. They only came to realise this in hindsight when they were asked: ‘What advice would you give to students who show an interest in this course? The participants’ responses to this question best described the attributes that they had to develop in order to overcome academic barriers and make a success of their studies at the TVET College:

I would tell them about my experience and how I found it difficult but if you really want it, you will work hard for it (Ronique, Interview, July 4, 2018).

I will tell them to never give up, to go for what you want. There will be challenges but never give up (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

I’ll tell them to persevere no matter how hard it gets. Like when we started in N4, hey, we didn’t know what to expect. But in N5, I got used to it and then it became easy (Amy, Interview, July 9, 2018).

I would say, press on. There is going to be a time when you are going to wonder why am I doing this, but just press on (Wilma, Interview, July 9, 2018).

Hitlin and Elder (2006) relate the notion of resilience to self-efficacy which “involves elements of belief in the results of one’s actions, perseverance, as well as a sense of physical well-being and resilience” (p. 46).

Agency and academic self-efficacy

In a similar way, Bandura (1989) links resilience and self-efficacy, arguing that, “By sticking it out through tough times, they [the agents] emerge with a stronger sense of efficacy” (p. 1179). Resonating with the latter, participants described attributes of self-efficacy:

Stay positive. Give your full cooperation. Don't get negative. Just do it. Don't let your work fall behind because then you are going to struggle (Jadine, Interview, July 5, 2018).

You must stay positive and think positively and don't allow people to affect you negatively. Just be yourself and as you progress, so you will find it interesting. Like my one friend who started N4 now. She said that she didn't really get along with children but she is learning a lot about children's needs (Jade, Interview, July 10, 2018).

I would advise them to know what they want, to be positive and to be patient (Vuyolwethu, Interview, July 20, 2018).

Actually a girl already came to me about that. She applied here and she asked me 'do you think this course is worth doing?' I told her that I'm learning so much stuff. I told her 'this course teaches you so much about kids. You learn certain things that you will not learn anywhere else. So yes, I would advise anyone to do this course because this course actually does change your life in a way and you meet new people. The basic things like just to work hard. Don't think because it sounds easy, you don't have to work hard. Don't think because it is only 4 subjects, you don't have to work hard. Work hard at each subject and do your best every day and if your marks are good, then people will recognise that (Felicia, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Hitlin and Elder (2007) likewise stated that "Some people have self-concepts about the possible success of their efforts – which may be accurate or inaccurate – that allow them to endure setbacks or plan their lives with longer-term goals in mind" (p. 182). Once agents believed in themselves, whether that belief is true or false, it leads to self-empowerment. This sense of self-efficacy became quite apparent when the participants achieved success in their studies.

Agency and academic intentionality

Giddens (1984) refers to an intentional act as “an act which its perpetrator knows, or believes, will have a particular quality or outcome and where such knowledge is utilized by the author of the act to achieve this quality or outcome” (p. 10). Participants’ responses convey such academic intentionality:

Not to stay absent especially if you have to hand in an assignment because that is where you lose marks and you never know if you can make up those marks for your year mark (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 28, 2018).

Come to college. Don’t stay absent. Don’t bunk, don’t follow friends. Study, like study. Go through your work every day, even though it seems it’s like fine, just read over it once. Just do it, it helps at the end of the day. So your studying at the end of the semester, it will benefit you, actually, then you can just read over the work and you will remember that from then. If you read over something, it actually sticks in your brain and you remember it. So. It helps (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

Just go to college on a daily basis and give your cooperation and if anybody asks you anything, try your best to answer. Just be actively involved in what the lecturers ask of you and expect from you Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

I would tell her to believe in herself if she really has a passion for this type of work and not to do it half-heartedly but to really put all their effort into it. Once you start bunking, it is easier to stay absent again (Bronwyn, Interview, June 25, 2018).

Agency and academic planfulness

Citing Shanahan et al., Hitlin and Elder (2006) describe “planful competence, is an individual level construct that dictates a person’s facility with making [and sticking to] advantageous long-range

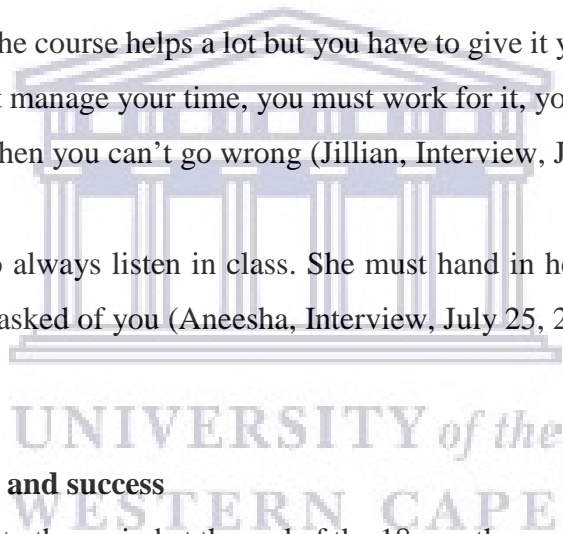
plans” (p. 42). Participants’ responses revealed that they acquired academic planfulness as an attribute:

Plan your time, personal life and prioritise your different tasks (Miche, Interview, July 11, 2018).

I will tell them to do their tasks and plan before the time so that you don’t lag behind, because once you lag behind, everything just accumulates and that makes it more difficult. Do your tasks and do it before the time or on time so that you don’t fall behind (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

I will tell them that the course helps a lot but you have to give it your all. You must work hard, you must manage your time, you must work for it, you must study hard to get good grades, then you can’t go wrong (Jillian, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Ok, I will tell her to always listen in class. She must hand in her assignments on time and do what is asked of you (Aneesha, Interview, July 25, 2018).



Agency, self-reflectiveness and success

Success, in this paper refers to the period at the end of the 18 month course when I interviewed the participants after they had completed their final examinations and were awaiting their results. While investigating the ways that participants overcame their barriers, I was prompted to probe their experiences of success as agents. Self-reflectiveness was evident in the ways that participants articulated the kinds of new dispositions that they developed in order to overcome dispositional barriers and achieve success.

Agency, self-reflectiveness and new dispositions

The participants’ responses that expressed their feelings about the completion of the course, is perhaps the most profound evidence of agency that enabled them to succeed. Their responses demonstrated the self-reflectiveness that Bandura (2006) alluded to when he stated that “they [the

participants] reflect on their personal efficacy ... and the meaning of their pursuits” (p. 165). Bandura (2006) considers “The metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions is the most distinct human core property of agency” (p. 165). The participants’ responses during this reflective exercise illustrated their changing dispositions with regards to self-confidence, pride in their achievements and their sense of personal growth because of the success that they had achieved.

Agency, self-confidence and success

Participants’ self-reflections portray the self-confidence that they gained over the duration of the course:

I gained a lot of self-confidence as time went by. I feel that I have achieved what I set out to do. I think the friendships that I made were a big bonus. When I received my N4 and N5 certificates, it helped to let me feel that I have achieved something. I know that I have something behind my name. Before I did the course, I felt that I could do this or that. Now, I also feel as if I have direction in my life (Bronwyn, Interview, June 25, 2018).

When I started with the N6, I did it [my practice teaching] at a primary school. The teacher was absent because her grandmother had died. So the first day, the Monday, when I started, I first prepared the classroom. When the school started the Wednesday, I was so nervous because I was alone with the new Grade R’s. I was so surprised at the end of the day that I could actually handle them. I had very little self-confidence before that. I feel stronger ... I think it was perseverance and the support of the lecturers and to love myself (Daniel, Interview, June 25, 2018).

Yes. I am feeling more confident now. I think it’s the people that were around me that inspired me. My peers, my lecturers, everyone, my family, the teachers in the daycare. For N4 and N5, I was at the daycare and in N6, I was at school. The school, the teacher there, yoh, they have, I don’t know how to explain it. She is strong. When she has to do this thing for a period, she makes sure she is done. And she is

studying part-time. She makes sure she is studying and get more than 50%. She aims for 80%. She started this year and had a little bit of challenges then she would tell us that she will get 80%. She will say I will make it. I was like wow. She will always tell me that if you are doing education, stick to education. Try to get Masters or Doctorate in education. Don't change to finance or something else (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

The participants' responses revealed their growth in self-confidence. It aligns with what Bandura (1989) claims that:

Some setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge with a stronger sense of efficacy (p.1179).

Agency, self-confidence, pride and success

At the end of the 18 months, the participants realised that, although it was not the initial course that they wanted to do, they still felt proud of their achievements. The ensuing remarks affirm that:

It [this course] made me very motivated to see life outside of myself. I was very preoccupied with myself. I didn't let people come too near me. I didn't like them to intrude into my personal space. Children were fine but I didn't like people to touch me or give me hug. But I learned to overcome that. I feel good about myself because I have achieved something. That I have completed something. That I'm halfway through it; because I still want to finish my diploma. I feel really good about myself. I feel that I can now say that I have an N4 to N6 certificate (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 28, 2018).

People always think that you are too old to go to school. No, I am so proud that I went to school with 22 year olds, 23 year olds. I'm 28, almost 29. But I'm very proud of myself. Because I have more knowledge of what I want to do and I understand. And I can explain it to somebody else that wants to do the course (Phumza, Interview, July 6, 2018).

I feel proud and happy about finishing the course and that I didn't leave halfway through. I'm proud that I completed my studies and that I could show my people what I can do and that I didn't still look behind me. I just looked forward. I don't feel any regret that I completed it because it taught me a lot about everything especially with the First Aid, as well. I have an in-depth knowledge now about children. They put me in a leadership role at church because I am in educare and if somebody did something wrong, I would tell them. They also want to make me some leader, I'm not sure of what, but also where children are involved (Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

When I didn't succeed at UWC, I felt stupid. I still feel stupid because I could have had my degree by now, but I also feel a feeling of accomplishment because at least I finished something, so I do feel a bit proud of myself. Perseverance, really perseverance. That was the biggest thing for me (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

The participants' responses revealed that they felt a sense of self-confidence and pride in their achievements which was a direct result of them completing the course.

Agency, self-confidence, personal growth and success

The participants felt that they had grown in maturity and in wisdom because of their experiences at the college. The responses below validates that:

I learned a lot about myself. I think I made quite a few positive changes in my life. I just got rid of a few people that was sponging on me and they weren't really there

to support me. I don't have time or place for them in my life. I hanged onto them at first, I thought it would get better but then I thought no. My friends and my boyfriend. I actually spoke to a lot people about that. I even spoke to my mommy and she told me I need to open my eyes. And then I thought if my mommy keeps telling me that, then maybe I must let go (Ronique, Interview, July 4, 2018).

Yes. I feel that I'm finished with college. I feel that I'm going to work now. It feels as if I'm a teacher and that makes me feel very good. Even at church, they let me stand in at Sunday school because they said that I am a teacher now. And that made me feel very good. I think that it is because of my self-confidence. And the support I received. And God's grace and mercy (Jadine, Interview, July 5, 2018).

Yes, I feel different. I feel like I've grown a lot. Like I can move on to more difficult things. I would say that the main thing to help me grow in confidence was being around so much people that you don't actually know but you learn to know them and you learn that their personalities are like different. And you're going to encounter that like everywhere, so you have to be like neutral and just speak with everyone. You are going to like find people who's going to judge you and you going to find people whose confidence levels are lower than yours but you just going to have to find a way to just be in the middle, to click with everyone (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

I was always a very positive person but it's just that I got myself into a situation where I felt a bit bad. But, I feel a lot better about myself now than when I started the course. I feel a lot more positive now that I have finished. I think that I am a much richer person, now. I have more friends, I have more knowledge (Ronelle, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Yes, I feel that I have learned a lot. The course gave me a new perspective in the education of the child. I reared five children but I never knew what I know now. Physically, emotionally. I just thought you raise the baby until they're big. There

wasn't any in-depth knowledge of the whole child approach. But now I have a better understanding and idea. I can apply it on my children, grandchildren. I feel that I want to study further and I will. Unfortunately, UNISA didn't have time for me for two semesters, but I want to, I want to study, I won't stop, so I will do my B.Ed. Sometimes you think that things stop when you are in a job but you are never too old to learn and I feel that it will help me to have a better job if I study further because with matric you can also not get anywhere. In the educare you can start your own business but that is not enough for me. I feel that I want to study further (Jillian, Interview, July 11, 2018).

This data can be interpreted through Hitlin and Elder's (2007) claims that life course agency is the impetus to fulfilling "distal goals" (p. 182). They acquiesce that "Some people have self-concepts about the possible success of their efforts – which may be accurate or inaccurate – that allow them to endure setbacks or plan their lives with longer-term goals in mind, such as postponing employment to attend college" (p.182).

Agency, future aspirations, and projectivity – Keeping the dream alive

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe the "projective dimension of human agency" (p. 984) as being capable of disengaging from a current situation and being able to imagine an improved or different future. Such an agent is able to think of solutions in a creative manner without being encumbered by the constraints of time or temporal barriers. They are also able to extricate themselves from their mostly impoverished environment and project themselves into a future of possibility. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe it as agents are able

to reconfigure received schemas by generating alternative possible responses to the problematic situations they confront in their lives ... [and to go] into the future and construct changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present (p. 984).

Bandura (2006) echoes this concept when he states "through cognitive representation, visualized futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behavior (p. 164). He

maintains that establishing goals for the future, keeps a person resolute and virtually drawn into a future of possibility. Many agents, as illustrated in these responses overcame barriers by being focussed on a vision of a better future:

I want to be a teacher but actually I'm thinking about being a principal of a small creche on one of the farms where all the farm children get together. This is actually what I want but if that doesn't pan out then definitely a teacher. (Lesley-Ann, Interview, June 29, 2018).

I see myself as a good educator that really take children further but I really hope that I will be able to help children in need. Especially disabled children. I learned a lot in the N5 psychology about learners with special needs. How to handle them and everything (Rihana, Interview, June 29, 2018).

My own business. I want to work for 3 years to build up finances. I have the foundation but I need the resources, I have the ground but I need the building. I want my own educare ... in three to five years I want my own educare (Ronelle, Interview, July 11, 2018).

Obviously at a primary school, foundation phase teacher ... I am so excited. As a teacher with a degree in Foundation phase. This course is like a tree with a lot of roots. It can take you into different directions. You must just choose which root you going to take hold of. Whether you will take the educare root or foundation phase or au pair or your own business. That is what the people don't know (Jo-Ann, Interview, June 28, 2018).

I want to be a foundation phase teacher. In 10 to 20 years, I want to be a principal (Bamanye, Interview, July 6, 2018).

My own house but an apartment will be absolutely fine. A car, a steady job and studying further to become something better (Tara, Interview, July 10, 2018).

I see myself as, not only a teacher, but also a community worker and also a student. I want to do so much stuff, my head, I can't even keep it in anymore. I want to study Grade R but also child psychology. But I see myself as someone serving the community (Felicia, Interview, July 11, 2018).

These new goals that the participants set for themselves is a verification that they have come full circle and that they once again believe in themselves.

Summary

The data in section 4 revealed that there was a distinct relationship between access, barriers to participation and success. Archer (2003) describes the relationship between structure, agency and barriers very succinctly by stating that barriers only have the ability to bound agency once an agent has chosen a project. The data attested to this and illuminated the innovative ways that the participants managed to overcome these barriers to achieve success and the effect that achieving success had on their feelings of self-efficacy and optimism for the future.



SECTION 5 - SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, I will provide a summary of my research study, discuss my findings and new theoretical insights, generate recommendations and offer some concluding thoughts.

Summary

The main aim of this research paper was to investigate the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success among adult students, and to generate new theoretical perspectives about access, barriers to participation and success in respect of adult students at a TVET college in the Western Cape.

The research questions were as follows:

Main research question:

What are the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success among students at a TVET college?

Sub questions:

1. What structural and dispositional barriers do students experience with regard to their participation?
2. How does the relationship between structural and dispositional barriers affect students' participation?
3. How did these students address and/or overcome their structural and dispositional barriers and manage to participate successfully?

I applied a qualitative research approach which was most suitable for investigating adult students' experiences about access, participation and barriers from their perspective. My conceptual framework was premised on the sociological perspectives of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003) and the social psychological perspectives of Bandura (2006) and Hitlin and Elder (2006); and Rubenson and Desjardins's (2009) Bounded Agency.

The semi-structured interview, and interview guide as a research instrument were useful to gather data. The micro recording device was a useful tool for recording the interviews because I could go back and refer to the recordings whenever I felt the need to refresh my memory. Twenty participants were selected using a non-probability purposive sampling. When I encountered difficulties with the selection of participants, I opted for snowball sampling, requesting the students that I had already interviewed, to assist me in identifying more participants.

I used the complementary strategies of coding and thematic data analysis to process and analyse my data. Utilising my conceptual framework as a theoretical lens, I analysed and interpreted the data and derived the following findings.

Findings

Barriers to access

- The adult students encountered their first barrier when they tried to access a course at the university.
- It was a structural barrier and institutional in nature. The access policies of the university, which was the institution of their choice, required a bachelors pass in matric which they did not have.
- Despite experiencing this barrier, the adult students remained resolute and focussed on their goals.
- They overcame this obstacle by using predominantly two dimensions of agency - intentionality and resilience. This was demonstrated when they sought an alternative option by accessing the TVET College instead.

What structural and dispositional barriers do students experience with regard to their participation?

- The adult students experienced both structural and individual barriers which undermined their participation to post-school education.
- The structural barriers were institutional and situational in nature and the individual barriers were mostly dispositional in nature.

- The most critical institutional barrier was transport to and from college. This was caused by the public transport crisis within the Western Cape Province.
- Another institutional barrier was the bursary policy that refrained from paying a travel allowance to students who lived closer than 10km from the college.
- The most prominent situational barriers were financial constraints, limited resources and limited time to study.
- The dominant dispositional barriers that the adult students experienced were fear of failure, not being able to cope with all the tasks and fear of social rejection.
- The knowledge of alternative modes of transport that was available and the other participants who lived in their area, assisted them in applying creativity to overcome their institutional barriers.
- With both the situational and dispositional barriers, the adult students applied resilience, inventiveness and planfulness to overcome these barriers. The support that they received from their family and peers assisted them in overcoming these barriers.

How did these students and/or overcome their structural and dispositional barriers and manage to participate successfully?

- The majority of the adult students indicated that they found post-school education, a necessity to be considered a success in life.
- This motivated them to apply at the TVET College when their application to the university was rejected.
- The data revealed that they came to the realisation that planning is crucial to achieving success.
- Several adult students indicated that striving for a better future strengthened their resilience which assisted them in persevering despite all the barriers that they experienced.
- At the end of the course, their goals became clearer and more authentic.

Unanticipated findings

Although my main aim was to probe the relationship between access, barriers to participation and success by using the theories of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003), there were a few unanticipated

findings that emerged. The data revealed that overcoming the barriers that they experienced, affected the adult students' self-confidence, their sense of achievement and their personal growth which made them more confident about their future prospects.

Adult students' answers to the question: what would you advise other students who are interested in this course, highlighted another unanticipated finding. The reflection on what advice they would give to prospective students, revealed that adult students should have academic preparedness. These are skills that include regular attendance, knowing what your goals are, feeling confident about your skillset to achieve those goals and being able to plan so that your student life can be balanced and geared towards success.

The third unanticipated finding that was revealed through my data, was the power of projectivity as alluded to by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Bandura (2006) and Hitlin and Elder (2006). When the adult students were asked what their goals for the next three to five years were, it drew them into a future of possibility and made them reinvent their future goals. Their answers revealed that they were more resolute to revisit and fulfil their initial dream of becoming an educator. The majority of them were more specific about where they saw themselves in the future.

New theoretical insights and perspectives in terms of the main research question

Although I originally intended to look at my study through the eyes of the sociological theorists of Giddens (1984) and Archer (2003), using structure and agency, my research led me to the social psychological theories of Bandura (2006) and Hitlin and Elder (2006) which I found suitable for framing the success that the students experienced by overcoming their barriers and the ripple effect it had on their sense of self-efficacy and optimism for the future.

The dispositional barriers of fear of failure and their perceptions of 'too many tasks', highlighted academic skills that the adult students needed in order to overcome these barriers. These academic skills included academic resilience, academic self-efficacy, academic intentionality and academic planfulness. It is my belief that these academic skills need to be investigated further to see the significance it will have on the success rate of TVET students.

Considering my main research question about what the nexus between access, participation and success is, I would say that there is a distinct and undeniable relationship between access, barriers to participation and success. The narrative that emerged through my data, illustrated how the participants experienced structural and individual barriers, how they applied their agentic capabilities, in the form of resilience, self-efficacy and planfulness to overcome these barriers and how this led to an evolvment in their feelings of self-efficacy and success.

Reflecting on my main research question: What are the relationships between access, barriers to participation and success: within the context of my conceptual framework, I arrived at the insight that success is but a pause in-between reaching goals. Success is having reached that initial goal. But it is also only that, an initial goal. It leads to feelings of elation and the pinnacle of self-efficacy which is a stimulus for setting more goals. It is the opening up of possibilities and the moment when agents feel that they can achieve so much more. It is the future that draws agents into new possibilities and another cycle of setting new goals, experiencing new obstacles and overcoming new challenges to reach new heights.

Recommendations

Initially the NSFAS travelling policy did not award a travelling allowance to participants who resided “within a radius of ten (10) kilometres from the college” (DHET, 2016, p. 13). This imposed an institutional barrier on these participants and they had to find alternative ways of dealing with their travelling dilemma. Fortunately, NFSAS amended this policy at the beginning of 2019 (DHET, 2018, p.19) which eradicated this barrier. I recommend that NSFAS should remain attuned to the adult students’ needs and continually improve their service delivery.

The public transport system in the Western Cape remains a situational barrier to the adult student corps and a major problem to the public at large. I recommend that government prioritise the support of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) which will enable them to establish an efficient public transport system.

To give the students a head start and to help alleviate the fears of failure and being able to cope with post-school studies, I would recommend that the TVET college provide all prospective adult students with some basic computer skills, study skills, planning skills and goal setting skills. Some counselling or life skills workshops would also assist in dealing with feelings of anxiety, fear of failure and being too old to study that prospective students might be experiencing. It would be advisable to implement this a month or two in advance of starting the course.

Continued individually focussed support should also be provided to at-risk students. This should be a joint effort between the student support services and lecturers.

Implications for further study

- Investigating the reasons for the high dropout rate in the TVET sector is a possibility for further research.
- Investigating how access, participation and barriers affect the adult students in the Learnership programme, as well as the part-time and distance Nated courses to see how it correlates with and differs from the NATED ECD course.
- A longitudinal study of the current participants in three to five years would be useful to ascertain whether they are any closer to fulfilling their goals and dreams.

Conclusions

This research study makes a small contribution to the empirical studies about access, barriers to participation and success among the adult students at TVET colleges and adds to the emerging body of knowledge relating to this field. I trust that my findings will provide people involved in TVET colleges with more insight into what challenges adult students experience and what compels them to persevere in the face of adversity. It would be constructive to utilise this knowledge to create teaching and learning strategies that enable adult students to overcome barriers and achieve success.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE /ONDERHOUDSGIDS

Personal information /Persoonlike inligting:

Name/ Naam	
Age/ Ouderdom	
Gender/ Geslag	
Home language/ Moedertaal	
Marital status/ huweliksstatus	
No. and ages of dependants/ <i>Getal en ouderdomme van afhanklikes</i>	

Access and Agency/ Toegang en Agentskap

1. Why did you decide to study?
Hoekom het jy besluit om te studeer?
2. Why did you choose this College?
Wat het jou laat besluit om hierdie te kies?
3. How did you hear about this course?
Hoe het jy van hierdie kursus gehoor?
4. What were your main reasons for applying for this particular course?
Wat was jou hoofredes hoekom jy spesifiek vir hierdie kursus aansoek gedoen het?
5. Was it easy to get into the course?
Was dit maklik om aanvaar te word vir die kursus?
6. Do you think it is necessary to have a qualification nowadays? Why?
Dink jy dit is belangrik om deesdae 'n kwalifikasie te hê? Hoekom?
7. How did you experience school?
Hoe was jou ervaring van en op skool?

8. In what way did your high school education contribute to the success whilst attending the course?

Op watter manier het jou skoolervaring bygedra tot die sukses wat jy ervaar het op kollege?

9. What was it like to return to studying after school?

Hoe was dit om weer verder te studeer na skool?

Agency and overcoming dispositional barriers /

Agentskap en die oorkoming van disposisionele struikelblokke

10. Before you started the course did you have the confidence that you will cope and succeed with the course?

Voordat jy begin het met die kursus, het jy die selfvertroue gehad dat jy dit sou baasraak en sukses behaal?

11. What were your greatest fears?

Wat was jou grootste vrese?

12. How did you manage to overcome your fears?

Hoe het jy dit reggekry om jou vrese te oorkom?

13. Was age ever an issue when you considered enrolling for this course?

Was jou ouderdom ooit 'n probleem toe jy besluit het om aansoek te doen vir die kursus?

14. Did you experience any problems with the demands of the course?

If yes/no, please explain.

Het jy enige probleme ondervind met die demands van die kursus?

Indien ja/nee, verduidelik, asseblief.

15. Did you ever think about leaving the course?

Het jy ooit daaraan gedink om tou op te gooi?

16. Since you started the course has confidence in your coping ability changed?

If yes/no, please explain.

Vandat jy begin het met die kursus, het jou selfvertroue dat jy 'n sukses van die kursus kan maak, verander? Indien ja/nee verduidelik, asseblief.

17. If someone who is considering doing this course, ask you how to succeed in completing this course, what would you say to them?

As iemand, wat belangstel in die kursus, jou moes vra hoe om die kursus suksesvol te voltooi, wat sal jou antwoord wees?

Agency and overcoming structural barriers

Agentskap en die oorkoming van strukturele struikelblokke

18. Do you have any responsibilities/chores/ family commitments at home?

Het jy enige verantwoordelikhede/ takies/ familie commitments tuis?

19. Did you have any other responsibilities or problems that impacted on your studies?

Het enige van hierdie verantwoordelikhede of probleme jou studies beïnvloed?

20. How did you manage to fit your studies in with these responsibilities?

Hoe het jy dit reggekry om jou studies in te pas met jou verantwoordelikhede?

21. How do you travel to college?

Hoe het jy college toe getravel?

22. How do you feel about your mode of travel?

Hoe voel jy oor jou manier van vervoer?

23. How do you cope financially seeing that you are studying full time?

Hoe het jy finansieël gecoep met jou voltydse studies?

24. Are you receiving any support from your family to be able to cope with your studies?

Kry jy enige ondersteuning van jou familie om te kan cope met jou studies?

25. Did you experience problems with the language of the lectures, the assignments or any other demands of the course? Please explain.

Het jy enige probleme ervaar met taal van die lectures, die take of enige ander demands van die kursus? Verduidelike asseblief.

26. How did you manage to overcome these problems?

Hoe het jy gemanage om die probleme te oorkom?

Agency and Success

Agentskap en Sukses

27. Do you feel any different about yourself now that you are at the end of the course? Explain?

Voel jy anders oor jouself nou dat jy die einde van die kursus bereik het? Verduidelik.

28. What is the main thing that has contributed to your growth in confidence/success? (if applicable)

*Wat, sou jy sê, is belangrikste ding wat bygedra het tot die groei in jou selfvertroue/sukses?
(indien toepaslik)*

29. Where do you see yourself in the next 3 to 5 years career-wise?

Waar sien jy jouself in die volgende 3 tot 5 jaar wat jou loopbaan betref?

30. Do you think this course is taking you in that direction?

Dink jy hierdie kursus help jou op jou pad na jou doel?



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APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

The Campus Manager

Dear Mr.

KIND REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Priscilla Andrews and I am registered as a student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). I am enrolled for the Masters Degree in Adult Learning and Global Change (MALGC). As part of the Master's program, UWC requires me to conduct a research study.

Because the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2013) in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training outlines access, participation and barriers to participation as a critical issue, I have decided to conduct my research in this field. These sentiments are reiterated by many notable scholars who see access, participation and barriers to education as one of the most critical issues facing the South African post-school sector presently. It is for this reason that I would like to research what made students choose your TVET college as their choice for further studies, what barriers they might have encountered during their eighteen months of studies and how they managed to overcome these difficulties to reach this point in their studies.

I trust that my findings will give me more insight into what makes students succeed; what compels them to persevere in the face of adversity. I hope to use this knowledge to be more sensitive to their needs, inform my future teaching and learning strategies as well as add to the body of knowledge relating to this field.

I hereby request permission to conduct an investigation into access, participation and barriers to participation amongst adult students at your college. If you grant your permission, I would like to collect data by conducting interviews with 20 - 30 N6 students using an interview guide. All participants will receive a letter of consent and an information letter to inform them of the purpose of the study. They will be requested to sign the letter of consent. I want to ensure you that all the information which they will disclose, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. I will not be using their names at all. The interview is entirely voluntary and they will have the right to withdraw at any stage. I will record this interview with an electronic recording device, but all the data will be stored, in a secured facility, for a period of five years.

I hope this request meets with your approval.

If you have any questions about the research, I include the following contact details:

Researcher: Priscilla Andrews
Tel. number: 078 279 1365
Email: priscillamandrews@gmail.com
Course: Master's degree in Adult Learning and Global Change (MALGC)
University: University of the Western Cape (UWC)
Supervisor: Professor Zelda Groener
Tel. number: 021 959 2801



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APPENDIX C
INFORMATION LETTER(S) TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear (Name to be inserted later)

My name is Priscilla Andrews and I am registered as a student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). I am enrolled for the Master’s Degree in Adult Learning and Global Change (MALGC). UWC requires me to conduct a research study.

The purpose of the research is to find out what difficulties students experience with getting into and being a student at this TVET College. The reason why I am interested in this topic is because I want to gain more insight into what makes students succeed despite all the problems they are experiencing. I hope to use this knowledge to allow me and other lecturers to be more sensitive and understanding towards students’ needs and to keep this in mind when we plan our teaching and learning strategies.

Should you agree to participate, I would like to interview you. I would also like to obtain your permission to record this interview with an electronic recording device, to help me remember what has been said and to be as truthful as possible. I want to ensure you that all the information which you will provide, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. All this information will be stored, in a secured facility, for a period of five years.

If you agree, I will provide you with a consent form to sign before I conduct the interview. If you have any questions about the research, I include the following details:

Researcher:	Priscilla Andrews
Tel. number:	078 279 1365
Email:	priscillamandrews@gmail.com
Course:	Master’s degree in Adult Learning and Global Change (MALGC)
University:	University of the Western Cape (UWC)
Supervisor:	Professor Zelda Groener
Tel. number:	021 959 2801
Email:	zgroener@uwc.ac.za

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Access, Participation and Barriers to participation amongst adult students at this TVET College.

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. Please be assured that any information that you are giving will be held in strict confidence and that your name will not be used in any documents. Please sign this form and return it to the person that gave it to you. By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to the following:

- ❖ You have read and understood the information letter.
- ❖ You freely consent to being interviewed by the researcher.
- ❖ You freely consent to being recorded with an electronic audio recorder by the researcher.
- ❖ You understand that your words may be quoted and used in publications, reports and in webpages but that your name will not be used.

You are also free to withdraw from the research project at any time and no questions will be asked as to why you do not want to participate any longer.

Please fill in the following information:

Name of participant:

Participant's signature:

Place of interview:

Date of interview:

Researcher's signature: