

The Effects of Professional Occupational Competence Deficiencies on the TVET Lecturers: A Case Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/jtet.2024.16.01.002>

Article Info

Received: 5th August 2024
Accepted: 2nd January 2024
Available online: 30th June 2024

Keywords

Beliefs, communities of practice, motivation, self-regulation, social learning, values, vocational knowledge

Abstract

The quality of TVET college lecturers significantly affects the development and performance of students and, as a consequence, the economy. This study utilises Wenger's theory of social learning to explore the impact of professional occupational competence deficiencies on TVET lecturers at selected public colleges in Gauteng Province, South Africa. This study aimed to explore the effects of professional occupational competence deficiencies on the TVET lecturers across selected TVET colleges in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. Central to the challenge of lecturers professional occupational competence deficiencies is the lack of training and development to capacitate them with the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure that they play their roles optimally in providing students with quality education. A case study design was adopted in this study, underpinned by a qualitative research approach. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from five public TVET colleges in Gauteng Province. Data were collected from fifteen sampled participants through semi-structured interviews and processed through Atlas.ti. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the data. The findings of this study show that due to professional occupational competence deficiencies, TVET lecturers are experiencing profound challenges such as low self-efficacy, self-regulation failure, low motivation, anger, and resentment towards college management. To improve TVET lecturers' competence, efforts need to be made to focus on teaching professional occupational competencies as a priority. This study outlines the challenges that professional occupational competence deficiencies pose for the TVET sector and, by implication, the national development imperatives of South Africa.

1. Introduction

The challenge of lecturer incompetence has dire consequences for the reputation of TVET colleges. TVET lecturers from developing countries lack the necessary qualifications, reputation, experience and training to effectively facilitate their duties (Mohammad Yunus & Mohamad, 2022; Teane & Gombwe, 2022). Lecturer incompetence is also exacerbated by infrastructure inadequacies, socio-economic challenges, and the social status of TVET colleges (Yeap et al., 2021).

Infrastructure inadequacies: This refers to physical and technological infrastructure inadequacies. Physical infrastructure refers to the physical facilities of TVET colleges, such as classrooms, laboratories, workshops, and libraries. Inadequate physical infrastructure can hinder the effective delivery of lessons. Technological

infrastructure, on the other hand, refers to the availability and functionality of technological resources, including information and communication technology. Inadequacies in technological infrastructure can impede the integration of technology into teaching methods, limiting the effectiveness of educational activities (Wanjala et al., 2020).

Socio-economic challenges: TVET colleges cater to students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. TVET lecturers face challenges in accommodating the varied needs and learning styles of students, especially if there are disparities in economic status, educational preparedness, access to resources, and family support (Maluka, 2022). Furthermore, insufficient funding for educational materials, research, and professional development opportunities for lecturers can contribute to the shortcomings of the TVET sector (Edel, 2022; Mushwana & Chiromo, 2020).

Social Status of TVET Colleges: The social status of TVET colleges is lower compared to traditional academic institutions such as schools and universities (Naziz, 2019). This perception affects enrolment rates and the morale and motivation of lecturers, potentially leading to a lack of enthusiasm for professional development and innovation in teaching methods (Yusoff et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, the quality of TVET lecturers is highlighted as a major challenge affecting the quality of graduates (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020). In Malaysia, the competencies, qualifications and skills of TVET lecturers were found to be significantly problematic and lacking (UNESCO, 2021). In the context of TVET lecturers in Malaysia, lecturers' competencies, qualifications, and skills were "problematic" in that they were not addressing the needs of the students as well as the industry. The problems identified about lecturer competencies and qualifications were challenges in delivering effective teaching, inadequacies in subject matter expertise, difficulties in adapting to evolving educational methodologies, and issues related to professional development. Describing the competencies, qualifications, and skills of TVET lecturers as "lacking," implies a deficiency or insufficiency in lecturer preparedness and capability to fulfil their roles effectively. This includes gaps in academic qualifications, insufficient practical experience in relevant industries, or a lack of up-to-date knowledge and skills required for TVET education.

TVET lecturers in South Africa have been found wanting in teaching practice and strategies (McPherson & Foncha, 2022). The National Plan for Post-School Education and Training 2021-2030 outlines DHET's plans to improve the quality of lecturers and produce well-qualified staff in the PSET system by facilitating professional development efforts and monitoring the recruitment and retention of lecturers (DHET, 2021). These plans need to be given the highest level of attention as not doing so would allow for the further widening of the TVET lecturer skills and knowledge gap which is detrimental to learner throughputs.

1.1 Reflecting on Wenger's Theory of Social Learning

Wenger's theory of social learning takes a distinct approach to social learning from previous social learning theories by situating learning in the context of lived experience and social interaction (Wenger, 2013). The following presumptions form the foundation of Wenger's theory:

- Competence is a question of knowledge.
- Learning results in meaning.
- Learning requires interaction with the outside world.
- Humans are sociable creatures by nature.

According to Wenger, identity, community, belonging, meaning, and practice both influence and are affected by learning. According to Wenger (2000), entrepreneurship, mutuality, and repertoire can be used to measure community progress. As stated by Kaiser and Krugmann (2018), acknowledging the social component of professional growth is necessary for global progress. To promote dedication, involvement, and participation with the outside world and other stakeholders, they also suggested putting more of an emphasis on building mutual trust among TVET workers. According to Wenger, the learning and participation that take place in communities of practice are what make collaboration valuable. He added that the alignment, meaning, and identity that learning fosters in communities is what gives it its worth.

Wenger's theory of social learning states that to strengthen both individual and organisational learning culture and experience, organisations such as TVET colleges should be designed or structured in a way that allows for the free flow of information, resources, and knowledge both within the organisation and with other organisations and communities outside of itself (Ordonez & Serrat, 2017). According to a study by Batholmeus and Pop (2019), mentorship, communities, industry, and higher education providers were key enablers in TVET lecturer education. Taylor and Van der Bijl (2018) emphasised that there was little social, collaborative, or community learning occurring among lecturers and that the idea of communities of practice was not well-known in the TVET sector.

The limited social, collaborative, and community learning among TVET lecturers, along with a lack of awareness about communities of practice, can be attributed to factors such as organisational isolation, insufficient resources for professional development, a focus on practical skills over pedagogy, and time constraints (Matabane et al., 2022). Addressing these issues would involve fostering a culture of collaboration, providing resources for training, and promoting awareness and understanding of the benefits of communities of practice within the TVET sector (Badawi & Dragoicea, 2023).

1.2 Understanding Professional Occupational Competence

According to Zinn et al. (2019), professional occupational competence refers to a set of skills required to efficiently and effectively manage or facilitate one's performance. Zinn et al. assert that professional occupational competence has four components, namely: vocational knowledge, self-regulation, motivational orientation, and beliefs and values.

1.2.1 Vocational Knowledge

Content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical, psychological knowledge, and counselling knowledge are all components of vocational knowledge. A lecturer's comprehension of the concepts and information about his or her subject area is called content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge provides information on the most effective ways to present information considering the audience one is teaching (Mulder, 2017). The knowledge necessary to facilitate teaching and learning disciplines, such as classroom management, teaching strategies, classroom evaluation, and student diversity, is known as the pedagogical psychological knowledge (Voss et al., 2011). The ability of a lecturer to provide characteristics like situational awareness, empathy, affection, mentorship, psycho-social support, direction, and coaching to promote cognitive and behavioural change in students demonstrates their counselling knowledge (Moses & Anyi, 2015).

TVET lecturers perform an essential task in teaching content, specifically introducing new concepts (Papier, 2021). Many TVET lecturers lack academic qualifications and vocational knowledge (Van Der Bijl & Oosthuizen, 2019). Inadequate vocational knowledge elicits low self-efficacy (Wiyarsi, 2018). According to Dahri et al. (2021) and Teane and Gombwe (2022), lecturers with low self-efficacy fail to motivate their students, leading to learner passivity and producing poor student performance. Dahri et al. (2018) opined that poor student results could also be due to a lecturer's lack of empathy; empathy is a characteristic/quality that shows a person's maturity, compassion, and emotional intelligence.

1.2.2 Self-regulation

The capacity to successfully manage and control one's emotions, thoughts, actions, and behaviour is known as self-regulation (Inzlicht et al., 2021; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Self-regulation is a key component of emotional intelligence and is necessary for managing interpersonal relationships in the workplace and in the community (Nopiah & Sattar, 2018). Mukhin (2021) identified self-regulation as a critical factor in the success of any TVET lecturer. There is evidence that TVET lecturers lack the emotional intelligence and self-control needed to balance their work and well-being (Meiring, 2019). Rudman and Meiring (2018) found that TVET lecturers lacked self-control and self-management skills, and that their challenging working environments only served to perpetuate this behaviour.

1.2.3 Motivational Orientation

An individual's motivation to carry out a specific action might come from either internal wants (intrinsic motivation) or external rewards (extrinsic motivation) (Linke et al., 2010). Leaders in the TVET sector must understand lecturers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation drivers to keep them inspired and committed to carrying out their responsibilities (Nzembe, 2017). TVET lecturers rely on intrinsic motivation to function, with evidence showing very little meaningful extrinsic motivation in the TVET sector; this has an overall negative impact on lecturers work experience (Anne, 2015).

1.2.4. Values and Beliefs

The TVET sector has a pervasive culture of silos, which is fostered by stakeholders' lack of trust and confidence in each other (Boka et al., 2016). Due to broken promises and a lack of interest in lecturers' professional development, college leaders, in the opinion of the lecturers, are not to be trusted. Lecturers are only concerned with what transpires within the confines of their classrooms and they show little interest in other college activities (Omar et al., 2018). Lecturers care about their students, and their prosocial motivation is fortified by the positive impact they have on the students (Dahri et al., 2018).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to understand the impact of professional occupational competence deficiencies on TVET lecturers at selected colleges in the Gauteng province. This study sought to answer the following question: what are the effects of professional occupational competencies on TVET lecturers employed in selected TVET colleges in Gauteng Province, South Africa?

1.4 Ethics Statement

This study complied with the University of South Africa (UNISA) Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The application for research ethics clearance was approved by UNISA Human Resource Management Ethics Review Committee (Ethics Certificate Reference Number 2020_HRM_011) on the 08th of October 2020.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Approach and Strategy

Grounded on an interpretivist/constructivist philosophy, this study employed an inductive method of inquiry. A qualitative research approach was adopted, and a case study research design was implemented. This was to enable participants to share their views, knowledge and emotions about professional occupational competence (Dudovskiy, 2018).

2.2 Research Setting

The TVET sector has been recognised in the Republic of South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) as an integral sector that can aid the country in accomplishing its national imperatives (National Planning Commission, 2011). There are fifty (50) public TVET colleges spread across the nine provinces of South Africa. The province of Gauteng has a share of eight colleges, KwaZulu-Natal has nine, the Western Cape has six, the Eastern Cape has eight, the Free State has four, Limpopo has seven, Mpumalanga has three, the Northern Cape has two, and the North-West Province has three (DHET, 2021). This study did not include the other 8 provinces of South Africa due to practical reasons such as costs, time, and the study's objectives. Instead, this study focused exclusively on the Gauteng province. The TVET colleges that participated in this study are, Central Johannesburg TVET College, Tshwane North TVET College, Ekurhuleni East TVET College, Ekurhuleni West TVET College and Westcol TVET College. Gauteng was found to be an appropriate context for this study because it has the largest Gross Domestic Product contribution to the country's economy; it is the most industrialised Province with excellent infrastructure; it is the most densely populated province; and it has the most TVET institutions per capita in South Africa (DHET, 2022).

2.3 Establishing Researcher Roles

The researcher undertook the role of interview coordinator and facilitator during the data gathering stage of the study, assuring that participants and their managers were fully apprised of details pertaining to the interviews. The researcher organised the data collection instruments and analytical tools ensuring that interviews took place in a structured manner. The researcher conducted interviews being self-aware and self-reflexive, drawing upon his experiential knowledge in the TVET sector. Furthermore, the researcher remained aware not to unduly influence events and participants in their responses to interview questions.

2.4 Research Participants and Sampling Methods

Lecturers at the public TVET colleges in Gauteng were the study's intended target population. Each TVET college campus has Post Level 1 [PL1] lecturers (classroom and workshop-based lecturers), PL2 lecturers (Senior lecturers), PL3 lecturers (Heads of Department) and PL5 lecturers (Campus Managers). A total of 15 Gauteng Post Level 1 [PL1] lecturers participated in this study. These TVET lecturers teach across a variety of programmes and subjects offered within their respective colleges. The TVET lecturers that participated in this study were from Central Johannesburg TVET College, Tshwane North TVET College, Ekurhuleni East TVET College, Ekurhuleni West TVET College and Westcol TVET College. Gauteng public TVET PL1 lecturers were suitable cases because they are lecturers who teach in classrooms or workshops and frequently engage with students, the college setting, and college administration. Non-probability sampling, a recommended method in qualitative research, as described by Saunders et al. (2019), utilises subjectivity in selecting participants. Two main types of non-probability sampling are convenience sampling, which involves collecting information from readily available individuals, and purposive sampling, which focuses on specific target groups capable of providing essential information. Purposive sampling is used when only a small number or category of people

possess the required information and ensuring representation of a particular subgroup for essential information acquisition (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling was used to identify and select cases with relevant information on the phenomenon of interest. This was the best sampling technique because there are not many accessible and available Gauteng public TVET PL 1 lecturers to interact with. This type of sampling enabled the researcher to select a particular homogeneous subset where each sample participant was comparable.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

To adhere to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and attendant regulations, semi-structured interviews were conducted online (Archibald et al., 2019). The interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom. Semi-structured interviews were used because they would allow for participants to express their personal opinions about the topic of the professionalisation of lecturers using open-ended questions while still maintaining some structure during the interview (Ruslin et al., 2022). Shortly after the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed into written material and then analysed. The participants' identities were concealed to ensure anonymity of the responses and for protection against any potential harm. Field notes were kept by the researcher, and they contained reflections on the process of interviews.

2.6 Strategies Employed to Ensure Data Quality and Integrity

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher took into account the following criteria, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Anderson, 2017). Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings of a study are believable. It is enhanced through rigorous research design, data collection, and analysis (Bushkin, 2020). Dependability relates to the consistency of the research findings over time and under different conditions. Ensuring dependability involves providing a vivid account of the research process (Janis, 2022). Confirmability addresses the objectivity of the study's findings, emphasizing that the findings are not unduly influenced by the researchers' biases or perspectives. It is established by maintaining an audit trail, documenting decisions, and employing reflexivity to acknowledge and manage personal biases (Johnson et al., 2020). Transferability pertains to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied or transferred to other contexts or settings. To enhance transferability, the researcher provides detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures (Daniel, 2019). All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent, to maintain the accuracy of the data and prevent bias. Additionally, field notes were made and used as references. The participants selected were individuals with varying experience in the sector which provided useful data for the study. The interviews were conducted online in accordance with COVID19 regulations. The codes and themes were gleaned from participants responses based on similarities discovered during the analysis.

3. Data Analysis

The researcher chose thematic analysis over other data analysis methods such as content and phenomenological analysis due to seeking a flexible approach to identify patterns and themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis allows for a nuanced exploration of meaning, making it suitable for a wide range of research questions and types of qualitative data (Braun et al., 2022). The following steps were followed to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews and prepare them for data analysis:

- a) Ensuring that all interview transcripts were comprehensible. The researcher listened to the recordings multiple times to ensure that the transcripts reflected the views of participants.
- b) Eliminating identifiers that could compromise anonymity and confidentiality. Information that could identify participants was deleted before recordings were transcribed.
- c) Writing down every significant piece of information before, during, and after each interview. The researcher took fieldnotes for reference purposes.
- d) Coding the transcripts before transferring the data to Atlas.ti version 9.0.19 (Atlas.ti, 2021), a software that was used for data analysis. Codes were assigned to participants and cases before transcribed files were exported to Atlas.ti.

Themes and patterns of relationships that appeared in the data set were then expounded upon using Atlas.ti. The recurring themes and patterns were then discussed. The findings are presented in the next section.

4. Research Findings

The findings of this study show that professional occupational competence deficiencies have profound effects on TVET lecturers. TVET lecturers have effects such as low self-efficacy, self-regulation failure, low motivation, anger, and resentment as a consequence of professional occupational competence deficiencies. Although these

findings do not fully cover the extent to which competence deficiencies directly compromise teaching and learning and wellbeing, they provide enough evidence for policymakers and post-school education and training (PSET) stakeholders to prioritize professional occupational competences for TVET lecturers. Figure 1 depicts themes about the effects of professional occupational competence deficiencies on TVET lecturers and the TVET sector at large. The findings emerging from these themes are presented below.

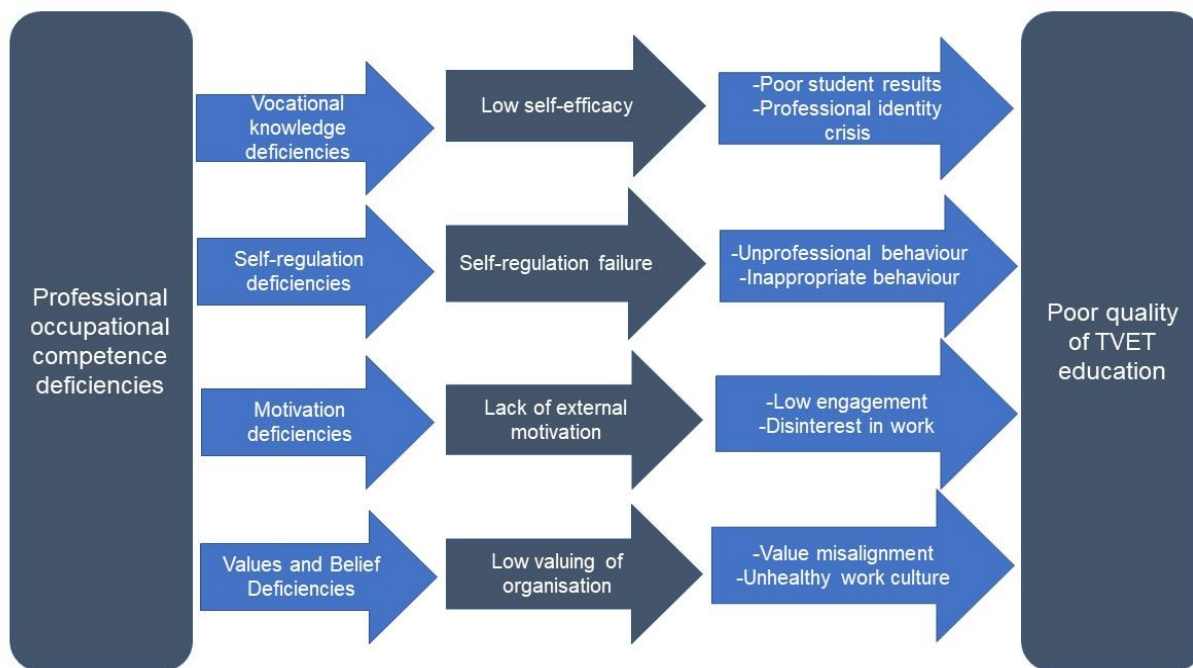


Fig. 1 The effects of professional occupational competence deficiencies
Source: Authors' own compilation

4.1 Theme 1: Poor Student Results

TVET lecturers struggle with their vocational knowledge, this in turn negatively affects student results. Participant C2, a male PL1 TVET lecturer, said, “You cannot really rely on one method. You need to maybe use what you call a blended learning...So most lecturers struggle with that part”. Participant C2's response indicates lecturers' inadequate pedagogical knowledge, a scenario which is a precursor to low self-efficacy. This study finds that TVET lectures struggle with the task of teaching learners and providing lessons that demonstrate their pedagogical psychological knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge for a diverse set of learners, a finding that is confirmed by Boka et al. (2016). Lecturers do not hold the right qualifications for the sector and therefore they cannot apply the necessary competences to adequately execute their work. This study revealed that lack of suitable qualifications for the sector, lack of diverse skillsets among TVET lecturers as well as their low self-efficacy are contributors to their professional identity crisis. Participant D1 said, “I had applied for a job based specifically on what I had studied in varsity...And once I arrived at the college, you find that there's shortage in a specific field of which is not one that you necessarily have experience or any knowledge in. Then you are forced to learn the content as you're teaching”. Lecturer shortages in specific fields allows for the placement of lecturers who do not have subject matter expertise. Non-expert lecturers are then “forced” to teach what they do not fully comprehend. The subject expert shortages in TVET colleges negatively affects temperament and performance (Taylor & Van der Bijl, 2018).

Participant E2 said, “Understanding of the content, I think that's where the problem comes in, because you have lecturers who are being moved constantly from one subject to another. So you find it very difficult for one to be able to understand and be able to deliver”. Lecturers are teaching directly from the textbook and often must learn concepts as they teach them. Lecturers do not have a firm grasp on pedagogy and teaching skills; they have no experience or skills in practical tasks. Participant D2 said, “My one greatest worry there is, if you can check in all the 52 colleges that we have across the country, most of your lecturers are mainly previous teachers. These guys are trained as teachers. They are not the people that are having a specific skill”.

4.2 Theme 2: Unprofessional Behaviour and Emotional Dysregulation

The findings of this study revealed that emotional and behavioural regulation is a challenge for TVET lecturers. Meiring (2019) discovered that lecturers had emotional difficulties. Participant E1 described how a co-workers had "anger issues" which manifested in negative social interactions with his colleagues and leaders. While Participant D2 indicated that some male instructors would engage in "romantic relationships" with students, an action that is unethical. This response was also corroborated by Participant A3 who said, *"I've seen many of my male lecturers got fired because they couldn't handle their emotions properly"*.

Lecturers are under enormous pressure, experiencing heightened anxiety and consternation (Papier, 2021). Participant E3 said *"Most of the lecturers they lack it (self-regulation). They rely more on their life experience. They are not emotionally intelligent to even manage their emotions. So that is why when they are faced with pressure from students. They burst and they don't know the impact that this has on the students from their aggression. They are not much specialised in dealing with that"*. Lecturer wellbeing is critical to the performance of duties. With a compromised sense of control and wellbeing, their ability to perform their duties is jeopardized. Lecturers' inability to cope with stress may lead to performance and productivity decline and the adoption of negative coping mechanisms. Lecturers must learn effective coping mechanisms to combat the effects or impact of stress and high pressure. The difficult working environment under which lecturers find themselves precedes challenges such as presenteeism and absenteeism as well as failure of transcendence.

Participants, however, were less critical of lecturer low self-relatedness and emotional intelligence. Participant E1 said *"I am saying it is 50/50. There are those who can handle it properly; who can behave in a professional way. There are those who cannot behave in a professional way"*. Participant A1 said *"I try my best, uh, to provide that good education to the student, so I don't need someone to sit around me to see that I'm doing my work very well. So I believe that I can self-manage myself and if I need help, there is a help here"*.

Although evidence shows that lecturers are mostly self-regulated, there are notable cases where lecturers fail to self-regulate due to environmental and/or personal factors. Participants' accounts of how lecturers expressed annoyance, rage, stress, and fatigue also served as evidence of this.

4.3 Theme 3: Unhealthy Work Environment

The TVET environment is one that is bureaucratic and run by top-down management. Participants' responses showed an institution which is highly controlled and hierarchical. Participant E3 said, *"I think that lecturers are demotivated, they don't have a voice in the college. They are not part of decision making at all. They feel that they're being isolated; so they feel they have this thing of being anti-cooperative"*. This study revealed that TVET lecturers are voiceless, disempowered, and unrecognised. This finding aligns with Peter (2022) who found that college leaders did not involve lecturers and students in the decision making processes of the college which consequently led to lecturer disengagement and apathy. The exclusion of lecturers in decision-making creates a schism in the sharing of information and knowledge within the college. College leaders need to be trained on the management and amelioration of experiences of exclusion within their organisations. Furthermore, leaders need to commit to the inclusion of lecturers in decision-making processes of their colleges, in that way they will win the engagement and support of lecturers during the implementation process of those decisions. Organisations with more inclusive cultures and policies see increases in productivity, innovation, engagement and social perceptions (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022).

Participant D2 said, *"As long as you are having a person who is not ready and prepared to walk an extra mile, I tell you, this is a person who will simply say as long as I am doing my job. It's okay. You will never achieve much from such kind of a person at the end of the day"*. The findings of this study show that TVET lecturers have abandoned the values of altruism, organisational citizenship behaviour and extra-role behaviour and have adopted a lethargic and self-centred approach to their work. Lecturers are not willing to go the extra mile. Participant C3, *"What I've told myself is that we are at work, You don't need to have that much interaction with others, you can't be stressed that no one is paying attention to you"*. Participant C3 has accepted and adopted isolation as a strategy and culture in the work environment. A culture of silos creates a feeling of disconnectedness and lack of belonging (Moore, 2023). Low interaction with others minimizes the chances of one learning from others, asking for help as well as providing help.

Participant E2 said, *"I think we have resorted to internal motivation because there's nothing besides that. There's nowhere else you can look for motivation because even management, even the department itself, there's no form of motivation whatsoever. There's no being recognised for your hard work, even if you put extra hours, so it's just down to you and how you wish to see your students succeed"*. Extrinsic motivation complements intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation means that at least the lecturers are self-directed and are responsible, having an internal locus of control. Participant E2 highlights the challenge of lack of recognition and rewards within the sector. Due to low rewards, lecturers find it difficult to go out of their way. This study revealed that TVET lecturers draw motivation from the impact that their contribution has on their students. The influence

they exert on their students is a motivational factor for lecturers and is often the only reason why lecturers come to work.

Participant B3 said, "When you work with people, it means you need teambuilding. The teambuilding is supposed to build and shape you, prepare you for upcoming challenges. Lifestyle also, how you gonna fit into that environment. So if you get to a place where the environment is welcoming but it's focused on each person pulling differently, you then get less motivated". The study revealed that there is lack of a cohesive community or team from which TVET lecturers can learn, develop, and share ideas. Without a viable community, lecturers forfeit the chance to build a strong sense of belonging as well as a strong professional/social identity. Ryan and Deci (2017) found that organisations which did not prioritize autonomy, competence, and relatedness experienced low staff engagement.

4.4 Theme 4: Anger and Distrust Towards Authority

The findings of this study show that participants bore a significant amount of anger and resentment towards college management. Participant A3 said, "*How would I motivate my staff as a manager? I would make sure that I give them the tools, everything that is needed. We've been promised as lecturers at college, that we're going to move over to a salary band of public sector, yet it's not happening*". Participant A3, when given an opportunity to hypothesize on leadership, provided an illustration of the leadership they desired instead of the leadership they had. The participant's response shows how TVET lecturers were negatively affected by the slackness in the actioning of promises that were made to them. When staff members are not supported, rewarded and incentivized accordingly or equitably, their productivity and motivation decreases and resentment for their work and their leaders develops (ILO, 2022). Lecturers manifest high self-transcendent values and citizenship behaviour with regards to their students but little with regards to their organisations or leadership due to colleges being low trust organisations.

This study revealed that TVET lecturers are transferring their anger against management on the students they are supposed to be nurturing and educating. This could also be having a detrimental impact on learners' wellbeing. Participant D1 said, "*People come here demotivated, feeling down, frustrated, you know, taking out their frustrations on the students*". Lecturers lack self-directedness due to the lack of validation and external motivators from their leaders (Jeremiah, 2018). TVET lecturers' lack of personal motivation to learn has a detrimental impact on the social learning process because it prevents the realisation of communities of practice, shared identities and purpose, as well as the sharing of information (Taylor & Van der Bijl, 2018).

Participants opined that they could only effectively exercise their self-regulation functions—namely, control, monitoring, reflection, and planning—within the boundaries of their own classrooms, not the entire college. Participants felt linked to their classrooms but cut off from the rest of their campus environment. According to Mmako (2016), TVET lecturers are disengaged at work, and it will take a concerted effort to help them engage with their work. Disconnection from the larger college environment has a detrimental impact on lecturer involvement, commitment, and sense of belonging (Jeremiah, 2018). The findings of this study further show that TVET lecturers have a slow career development and progression due to a heavy workload and inadequate pedagogical expertise.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has revealed that the professional occupational competence deficiencies experienced by TVET lecturers have the sustained effects of breeding low self-efficacy, self-regulation failure, low motivation, anger, and resentment towards college management, and of perpetuating the negative attitude that society and industry have towards the TVET sector. Furthermore, the findings of this study support Kayumbu (2020) who asserts that TVET lecturers' lack of professional occupational competence is what causes their helplessness, disillusionment, disengagement, and dejection. Due to disinterest, low self-directedness, lecturer and leader apathy, and lack of managerial and collegial support, lecturers may not participate in continuing professional development, further disrupting competence development in the sector.

TVET lecturer's professional identity crisis is due to poor professional identity formation, and a fractured sense of belonging and community (Giladi et al., 2022). Trainee TVET lecturers should be trained on what it means to be a professional TVET lecturer prior to them being instated as lecturers. TVET lecturers are not sufficiently capacitated to fulfil their duties, and this reflects in their poor self-efficacy, self-regulation and lesson delivery in the classroom (DHET, 2021).

The finding that TVET colleges have a toxic or unhealthy work environment suggests that the sector has an unhealthy culture, and a poor leadership and management cohort. Leaders need to be capacitated so that they can positively contribute to the development of their colleges and their lecturers. Leadership deficits affect the morale of the lecturers (Rachman, 2021). When leaders model the right values and beliefs, then the staff follow suit, and the staff then displays the right attitude, culminating with the college having the right culture suitable

for productivity. Failure to overhaul the culture and environment in the sector would entrench dysfunction, a high attrition rate as well as poor student results across the sector.

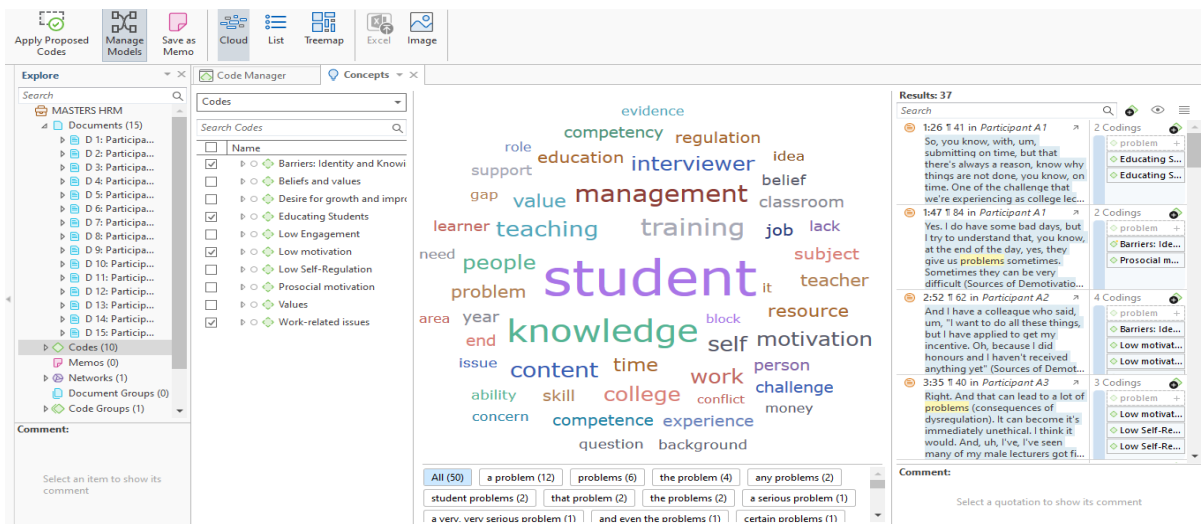


Fig. 2 Word cloud

Source: Authors' own compilation

Figure 2 displays the word cloud extracted from Atlas.ti indicating frequent words which manifested in the interview transcripts. It is apparent that 'lack', 'problems', 'challenge', 'need', 'gaps', and 'conflict' are associated with words such as 'students', 'management', 'training', 'education' and 'lecturers' in the word cloud. This highlights that TVET colleges are experiencing significant challenges.

A conclusion drawn from this study is that there are several problems or negative effects that have been occasioned by professional occupational competence deficiencies experienced by TVET lecturers and these have bred feelings of animosity and other negative attitudes such as anger and resentment towards college management, further perpetuating the negative perception that society and industry have towards the TVET sector in South Africa. More should be done to improve this situation for the benefit of TVET lecturers, the TVET colleges and society in general.

6. Practical Implications

The Department of Higher Education and Training and TVET college leaders need to introduce effective interventions to address the challenges that TVET lecturers experience in their career journey. It is contingent upon TVET college leaders to engage in discourse that will develop ideas around the effective competence development of lecturers as well as an overhauling of the work environment in which lecturers and leaders in the TVET sector find themselves. Lecturer should be given resources and opportunities to upskill themselves to maximise their potential thus gaining self-actualisation (self-mastery). To reverse the impact of professional occupational competence deficiencies, both TVET lecturers and leaders will have to be trained thoroughly to improve engagements on matters of mutual interest, and they should work together to create communities of practice which can support competence development. Furthermore, trainee TVET lecturers will have to be fully prepared and capacitated prior to their recruitment and from onboarding to ensure that competence gaps are closed from the foundation.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

The following are the limitations of this study:

- This study only explored the opinions and perspectives of the lecturers; the opinions and perspectives of the college leaders were not examined, giving a biased perspective of the effects of professional occupational competence deficiencies on TVET lecturers.
- The researcher needed more resources. Due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, the researcher could only interact with gatekeepers and participants online using the Zoom application, which presented both technological and physical challenges. The researcher could only rely on the availability and accessibility of technology to connect with the gatekeepers and participants. Thus, an opportunity to observe participants' gestures and postures during the interview was also missed.

- The findings of this study must be interpreted with the necessary caution because they are based on personal views and experiences obtained from a sample of lecturers representing selected TVET colleges in Gauteng Province.

The following are the recommendations for future research.

Further research may be conducted in the following areas based on the findings and recommendations of this study:

- The viewpoints of departmental heads and middle and senior managers in the TVET college sector could be investigated.
- Only the viewpoints of TVET lecturers in the province of Gauteng were the focus of this study. Future studies should examine the effects of professional occupational competence deficiencies on TVET lecturers in other South African provinces.
- A quantitative survey based on a bigger sample that is representative of the sector may be considered in the future to tap into the perceptions of TVET role players with regards to the effects of professional occupational competence deficiencies on TVET lecturers.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge the leadership and staff from Gauteng TVET colleges that participated in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **Study conception and design:** MD Maluka, MC Mulaudzi; **project supervision:** MC Mulaudzi; **ethics application and review:** MD Maluka, MC Mulaudzi; **data collection:** MD Maluka; **analysis and interpretation of results:** MD Maluka, MC Mulaudzi; **draft manuscript preparation and revision:** MD Maluka, MC Mulaudzi. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for profit sector.

Data availability

Data can only be made available with permission from the University of South Africa.

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