ACCESS WITH SUCCESS: A CASE OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AT A TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Lihle Mbalenhle Ndlovu (217078620), declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation is my own work, except where stated otherwise.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree purposes at any other university.
3. It does not have another person's graphs, pictures or tables extracted from the Internet unless acknowledged in the dissertation and in the references.
4. All the resources used have been referenced and acknowledged accordingly.

_____   _____

Student's signature   Date

_____   _____

Supervisor's signature   Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to:

- My supportive husband, Bhekani. It is through his encouragement, sacrifices and understanding that I accomplished this journey.

- My two precious children, Halala and Syamthanda. They were so patient with me throughout this lonely journey. They looked after each other and never complained about my absence and mood swings when it really got tough. Halala's tender hugs comforted me when I felt discouraged and tired.

- My mother, Beauty Mkhwanazi, who always worried about whether I was taking enough supplements or getting enough rest.

- My father, Themba Mkhwanazi, who always sees great potential in me. This is the first step to bigger dreams has for me.

- My siblings, Fanele, Thokozani, Sphelele and Nongcebo, whose love and support sustained me, even when they could not understand my journey.

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"Bless the LORD, Oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name…"
(Psalms 103)

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ABSTRACT

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in South Africa has been acknowledged for its capabilities necessary for skills development. However, its role in transferring these abilities to students with learning disabilities (SWLD) in an inclusive environment has not yet been made explicit. Nevertheless, the proven increase in the numbers of SWLD in TVET colleges leaves questions about issues of success after access has been granted to SWLD. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore how SWLD access education and succeed at TVET colleges in South Africa.

The study was theoretically located within the assets-based approach. It intended to establish the available assets that were utilised or underutilised by the college in addressing concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities at a TVET college.

It further utilised qualitative research methods. An interpretivist paradigm was used to understand how access with success of students with learning disabilities (SWLD) at a TVET college is perceived, understood and experienced by SWLD, hereafter).

The researcher worked with six participants: three SWLD, and three TVET staff members (a head of department, an inclusive support coordinator, and a lecturer). Considering the fact that the study had only mentioned the word "students" in its topic, staff members were purposively targeted under the assumption that they interact daily with issues of SWLD to ensure smooth access and success.

Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. Thematic content analysis was used to identify and record themes and subthemes within the data. The results suggested that while SWLD have learned to mobilise their internal capacities or assets, as well as other assets in and around the college, to independently achieve access with success, various impediments exist such as underutilised assets, untapped student potential, and the lack of availability of an internal inclusion policy document. The study revealed that these are unmapped assets which could address threats that were identified by

participants while navigating the current situation regarding access with success at the TVET college.

The study identified lecturers as assets, community involvement and coordinated efforts as important potential ways of enhancing opportunities to expand access with success at a TVET college. The need for the proper implementation of inclusive education was pointed out by the SWLD. This need emerged from the discovery that most SWLD are taught in a different setting, and have limited opportunities to enrol in their desired field of study. Furthermore, a need for economic independence was further identified, as SWLD have the same aspirations and career dreams as all other students. Lastly, the intrinsic motivation of SWLD was observed to be a key factor in their success at TVET college, as it enabled them to develop the necessary survival skills to make a successful transition to higher education.

The study recommends that the TVET college provide lecturers with special pedagogical training to develop their skills and confidence in relation to teaching SWLD; that it foster more awareness within the college to minimise discriminatory attitudes; that it learns to map and mobilise assets in and around the college to address existing gaps in the education of SWLD, while waiting for external support; that it fast-paces the finalisation of the internal inclusion policy draft; and that it consider employing people with disabilities in order to develop a better understanding and implementation of inclusion.

KEY WORDS: Access, success, Students with learning disabilities, technical vocational education and training (TVET) college.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABA	Asset-Based Approach
AIM HE	Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EWP6	Education White Paper 6: Special needs education, building an inclusive education and training system
FET	Further Education and Training
FGD	Focus-group Discussion
GET	General Education and Training
HEDSA	Higher Education Disability Services Association
HET	Higher Education and Training
HRDC	Human Resource Development Council
HoD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Training
ILO	International Labour Organization
KZN	Kwa-Zulu Natal
NCV	National Certificate (Vocational)
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
R191	Report 191
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SWLD	Students with Learning Disabilities

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVETMIS	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Management Information System
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the improvement of access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges has become a pressing concern in South African higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2011, pp. 9–15; United Nations Educational; Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016). The TVET sector has become more attractive to many young people in South Africa (Chepkemei, Watindi, Cherono, Ng'isirei & Rono, 2012; Loynes, 2018). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2016, p. 4) has also supported the need to increase access to education opportunities and "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", as enshrined in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Although the TVET sector has been identified as a system for producing the competencies essential for socio-economic development, for skills development, for employment and for job creation for young people (Akoojee, 2016; Ansah & Ernest, 2013; Arfo, 2015; Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training [COTVET], 2012), its role in transferring these competencies to SWLD in an inclusive environment has not yet been made explicit. This is in spite of number of discourses, policies and pieces of legislation that support the need to improve access to and the success of SWLD.

In fact, there is evidence of a lack of understanding of the current situation regarding access of SWLD at TVET colleges (Makanya, 2015; Malle, 2017), and there is very little research on the factors that impede the access and success of SWLD at TVET colleges (Malle, 2017). There is also no firm research established on strategies that could be employed to promote and enhance access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges.

In fact, the problem is compounded, as shown by Fichten, Asuncion and Scapin (2014), who lament the inadequate empirical research on TVET institutions regarding SWLD. There are,

however, a number of studies (Engelbrecht, 2013; Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela & Okkolin, 2017; Makoelle, 2014b; Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel & Tlale, 2014; Phasha, Mahlo & Dei, 2017; Shelile & Hlalele, 2014; Subban & Mahlo, 2017) that focus on inclusive education in schools and universities. The above-mentioned unresolved gaps, both in practice and in the literature, form the basis of the current research.

A large part of the discussion on the lack of understanding of the current situation regarding access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges is based on the studies of King (2011), who more than a decade ago questioned the relevance of TVET colleges, McGrath (2012), who criticises the insignificant impact of TVET colleges on skills development in South Africa, Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2016), and Malle (2017), who advocates for more accessibility to and the increased relevance of TVET colleges. To examine the need for access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges, more attention needs to be focused on the Policy Brief of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2017) (*Making TVET and skills systems inclusive of persons with disabilities).* Lastly, strategies that could be employed to enhance and promote access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges were addressed, through the lens of Mokiwa (2014), Ngubane-Mokiwa (2013) and Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2016).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The TVET sector in South Africa underwent extreme reforms following the disbanding of the apartheid regime in 1994. However, Mummenthey (2010, p. 9) notes that "despite this progress, low levels of skills among the majority of the formerly disadvantaged population and stubbornly high unemployment rates, especially among youths (age 15–24), still remain one of the country's most pressing concerns and greatest impediments towards a better future for all". The "disadvantaged population" Mummenthey refers to includes people with disabilities and those with learning disabilities.

To respond to this concern, the democratically elected government embarked on the drastic transformation of TVET Colleges which led to A New Institutional Landscape for Public

Further Education and Training Colleges in 2001 (Department of Education [DoE], 2001a), which resulted in the establishment of 50 public Further Education and Training (FET) colleges (Wedekind, 2010; Wedekind & Watson, 2012). This change included the change of name from Further Education and Training (FET) colleges to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. Thereafter, The Further Education and Training Colleges Act of 2006 (The Presidency: Republic of South Africa, 2006) saw a necessity to restructure the TVET programme into two areas: the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV), which consists of learning programmes that should be registered on levels 2 to 4 of the national qualifications framework, and which would match with grades 10 to 12 in the traditional school system; and Report191 (R191), which starts from N1 to N6 in the technical college system (DoE, 2007). The purpose of this change was to permit the sector to address the economic and human development needs of the country.

It is imperative to mention that education in South Africa is divided into three bands: general education and training (GET), further education and training (FET), and higher education and training (HET) (South African Council for Educators [SACE], 2011, p. 3), with TVET situated in the FET band. In 2009, the Department of Education (DoE) was split into the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and TVET was placed under the DHET (SACE, 2011; Simbo, 2012). The TVET sector was therefore included in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2014).

Having said that, it has been more than a decade since the National Plan for Further Education and Training Colleges (Department of Education, 2008) in South Africa advocated for the need for flexible programme delivery in TVET to promote more access and success for different groups of students with different learning abilities. However, this plan had no specific reference to SWLD, in spite of the fact that in 2001, *Education White Paper 6: Special needs education, building an inclusive education and training system* (EWP6) (DoE, 2001b) was presented as a policy to direct the implementation of inclusive education. It is important to state that nothing much has explicitly been said in this document by the DoE on post-school education and training of SWLD at TVET colleges. Moreover, a call to increase access of SWLD to post-school education sectors was accelerated by the establishment of

the Higher Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA), a non-profit organisation, in 2007. HEDSA advocates for the rights of students with disabilities and learning disabilities in higher and further education institutions in South Africa, and is endorsed by the DHET.

It is only recently that the inclusion of SWLD in post-school sector institutions such as community colleges, universities and TVET has been considered in the *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2014). The policy obliges all higher education institutions to have plans to address various disabilities within their own settings, as was recommended a decade ago by Matshedisho (2007). This move by the DHET reflects the commitment of the South African government to improving the education system to make it more inclusive, in order to enable SWLD in post-school sectors to realise their potential. Such inclusive policies are supported by the *White Paper on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (Department of Social Development, 2016), developed by the Department of Social Development to clearly legislate the rights of people with disabilities in South Africa. Furthermore, the establishment of the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) of South Africa in 2010, and the hosting of a TVET Imbizo by the DHET in 2017, are other initiatives aimed at improving the educational outcomes of the TVET sector. The then chairperson of the HRDC, and the current president of the country, the Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa, stated that "for too long, this has been an area of education and training that has been neglected, both in policy and in practice. Unless we attend to sign language and deaf education, a significant portion of our people will remain excluded from meaningful economic participation by virtue of disability" (Loynes, 2018).

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Institutions of higher education and training in South Africa and internationally are striving to improve the mainstreaming of inclusive education (Osman & Hornsby, 2018), TVET colleges are no exception. This progressive move is guided largely by numerous discourses and policies that support the implementation of inclusive education, as mentioned in the previous section. Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2016) contend that the fact that these policies are available is clearly a step in the right direction towards achieving Goal 4 of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals, as stated earlier. In trying to increase and improve educational access for all students, in my view, SWLD are no exception. However, some of the provisions of these well-intended policies seem to suggest otherwise. For example, section 2.2.5.3 of EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) states: "It will not be possible to provide relatively expensive equipment and other resources, particularly for blind and deaf students, at all higher education institutions. Such facilities will therefore have to be organised on a regional basis" (p. 31). It is for this reason that Mutanga (2017) contends that SWLD will always be burdened with having to justify their right to be successfully accommodated in the institutions of higher learning if policies are not explicit on the provision of resources.

Institutions of learning are obliged to accommodate SWLD within the institutions' scope by the *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2014), and the college at which this study takes place has responded positively to the ongoing discourse on the rights of SWLD. This directly contributed to the researcher's observations of massive growth in the enrolment of SWLD, particularly in this one selected college. However, the college seemed to have significant difficulty in understanding and meeting the needs of SWLD once they were on site.

The college had good intentions of supporting inclusive education, and wanted to send a strong message that the institution was indeed serious about accommodating students with various disabilities. However, this sadly led to tremendous academic frustrations on the part of the SWLD, who, instead of having an exciting post-school education experience, felt deprived of their academic and social independence. Transition to the world of HET should be a very exciting time for any student who has just left high school (Scott, 2018), but this

was not the case for these students. The students had no relevant resources and most lecturers kept on lamenting about how difficult it was to teach SWLD.

In spite of these challenges, the pass rate for the first intake of thirty (30) SWLD in that particular semester was 100%. I was particularly amazed by the dedication, courage and discipline these students showed in their independent learning. In fact, these results were eye-opening for the entire institution's community. These students used their own resources and abilities to meet their own needs, and to forcefully and successfully access education and training.

It is in view of the above that I was motivated to explore issues and concerns related to access and success of SWLD at TVET colleges, with specific reference to their perceptions and experiences. A large part of this research focuses on bridging the gap to include SWLD in TVET colleges.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the researcher's understanding, there is little research in South Africa that examines issues and concerns about access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges. To date, South African studies have concentrated on inclusive education at schools and universities. There is therefore a necessity to understand the issues of access and success of SWLD at TVET colleges. Important questions to ask are whether TVET colleges are accessible to SWLD, whether available inclusive education policies are being implemented, and whether there are any success stories to be told about TVET colleges and SWLD. It is in view of the above that this study is titled *Access with Success: The case of students with learning disabilities in a TVET college*.

1.5 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate and understand the thoughts and views of SWLD on issues of access and success at TVET colleges. Although the study focused primarily on SWLD, other parties, such as administrators, lecturers and management staff involved in the day-to-day academic lives of students with disabilities, also contributed to the study to increase the understanding of the processes, practices, and current situation of the TVET sector. These insights contributed to improving the understanding of the necessity for the TVET sector to create more access for SWLD, and will hopefully assist the sector to identify factors that impede access and success of SWLD. It is anticipated that the study may enlighten the TVET sector on how it can successfully accommodate SWLD. Through its specific findings and recommendations, the study hoped to improve the access and success of SWLD at TVET colleges.

1.5.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To explore the current situation regarding access with success of SWLD at a TVET college.
2. To examine the need for access with success (if any) of SWLD at a TVET college.
3. To anticipate impediments to access with success of SWLD at a TVET college.
4. To propose how we can enhance and promote access with success of SWLD at a TVET college.

1.6 CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In response to the stated objectives above, the critical research questions this study sought to address were as follows:

1. What is our understanding of the current situation regarding access with success of SWLD at a TVET college?
2. Why is there a need for access with success of SWLD at a TVET college?
3. What are the potential impediments to access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges in South Africa?
4. How can access with success of SWLD be enhanced and promoted?

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The four basic concepts of this study (access, success, SWLD and TVET college) are discussed below.

1.7.1 Access

Access in this context refers to the opportunities available that allow students to physically enter an educational institution's infrastructure (Giese & Ruin, 2018), to acquire knowledge, information and skills (Islam, 2015), to benefit from the full services and social activities of an institution (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018), and to enjoy the institution's general curricula (Molosiwa, Mukhopadhyay & Moswela, 2016).

1.7.2 Success

Success in this research study refers to meeting SWLD's academic goals, such as progressing to the next level, obtaining good results, successfully graduating, achieving their aspirations, and being accepted by others socially (Engelbrecht, Shaw & Van Niekerk, 2017; Ndlovu & Walton, 2016; Siwela, 2017; Wehman et al., 2015).

1.7.3 Students with learning disabilities

Defining learning disabilities in the South African context is an extremely complex issue as there is no single clear definition and causality of learning disabilities (Nel & Grosser, 2016). The term "learning disability" may refer to people who process information differently from others, and therefore learn differently. This is due to "neurological differences in brain structure and function and affect a person's ability to receive, store, process, retrieve or communicate information" (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014, p. 3). Lehohla and Hlalele (2014) refer to learning disabilities as "hidden disabilities", because the disabilities are often not observable. In this study, SWLD includes those students who learn more slowly than others, those who have low literacy skills in a learning situation, and those who are visually impaired, since this is the dominant learning disability at the campus under study.

1.7.4 TVET college

TVET colleges, which were previously known as FET colleges, are post-school educational institutions that provide practical, theoretical and vocational training in the fields of business and engineering studies (Diale, 2018, p. 413; Terblanche, 2017; Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). They offer National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) and R191 programmes, and other short courses. TVET colleges were previously seen as institutions for accommodating people who are not strong academically (Akoojee, 2016), and even accommodated students who had not completed matric (Branson, 2018; DHET, 2014), but that is no longer the case now. Most of the programmes provided require matric as an entry requirement (Papier, Needham, Prinsloo & McBride, 2016).

The terms defined above will be used throughout the study, as they are the basic concepts.

1.8 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Access to TVET is a still a delicate issue for students with disabilities. Transformation is a continuous process, especially when it involves addressing and correcting historical prejudices against students with different learning needs. Thus, creating equal opportunities for learning at TVET colleges for SWLD has been a long and difficult road. However, through perseverance and determination, these students are being offered platforms that increase their representation at TVET colleges.

Despite the recent improvements, much still needs to be done to provide equal access and to facilitate success in pursuing TVET qualifications among historically underrepresented student populations. After all, "technical and vocational education and training is not just preparation for work, it is preparation for life. And this is why it is so important to make it accessible to all" (UNESCO, 2013). UNESCO, (2015b) emphasises that the TVET sector should be seen from a lifelong learning perspective, as a sector that promotes competencies for work and life, and that ensures that all youth and adults have equal opportunities to learn. That youth includes SWLD. It is with this in mind that this study aims to create awareness in the TVET sector about the importance of inclusion of SWLD.

The study may be of great assistance to the TVET sector, as this sector is still finding its footing in relation to implementing inclusive education. TVET institutions that are still at the stage of developing their policies on disability to support access to, practices and processes of inclusive education may find this study useful. Moreover, the study might be of benefit to SWLD who have an interest in pursuing their post-school education in the TVET sector.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Qualitative research approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Creswell and Poth (2017) explicitly state that qualitative research is conducted when there is a problem or issue that needs to be explored. Qualitative researchers conduct research to provide detailed and in-depth data on

a particular group or context (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2016). Moreover, qualitative research allows the researcher to understand a particular social situation or event through ongoing interaction (Putnam & Banghart, 2017).

The use of a qualitative design was deemed appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge of the experiences of SWLD, as well as the academic staff of the TVET college, based on their first-hand opinions and perceptions and suggestions. The study sought to examine if there was a need for access with success for SWLD at the TVET college, and the researcher's engagement with the participants was specifically related to how they experience and perceive access, with the overall purpose of achieving success within the college. Working closely with the participants allowed me to interpret the data in a way that was true to their experiences and attitudes.

1.9.2 Research paradigm

This study was informed by an interpretive paradigm, which is predominantly directed towards establishing the meanings and understanding of individuals in terms of their own interpretations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). An interpretivist researcher seeks to understand people's experiences through and listening to what they say, and through interacting with them, as Cohen et al. (2013) state that in order to maintain the reliability of what is being studied, the researcher must try by all means to understand the people under study from within. It is for this reason that the researcher paid close attention to how the participants felt, thought, acted and reacted in the TVET environment. The researcher acknowledged that the interpretive approach affirms that there is no single reality, but instead "embraces a view of reality as socially constructed or made meaningful through actors' understanding of events" (Putnam & Banghart 2017; Rahi, 2017; Scotland, 2012).

With this in mind I attempted to discover the different ways in which the participants interpreted reality in this context. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) add that an interpretivist researcher does not aim to predict what people will do, but rather describes how they make

sense of their worlds, and how they make meaning of their particular actions. The focus was to understand participants' perceptions on access and success of SWLD at a TVET college, and to understand the factors that impede access with success of SWLD at a TVET college.

Scotland (2012) argues that reality in the interpretivist paradigm is individually constructed; there are as many realities as individuals. Multiple interpretations are equally valid, and results are created, not found (Rahi, 2017). Therefore, by using the interpretivist paradigm I intended to describe how access and success was understood by the participants who had direct experience in the education of SWLD, and not to try to predict.

However, an interpretivist paradigm has its weaknesses. Amongst other weaknesses, interpretivists rely on subjective data from the participants, which is always influenced by their individual emotions, which constantly change. To overcome this weakness, the findings were shown to the participants, so that they could check them and make alterations if necessary.

1.9.3 Research design

1.9.3.1 Case study design

The study made use of a case study research design. A case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual, group or institution to determine the variables, and relationships among the variables, that influence the current behaviour (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Thomas (2011) and Creswell (2013) postulate that case study research seems to be a popular approach among qualitative researchers, as it is useful for analysing and interpreting in detail the behaviours and beliefs of people who have a similar culture. The use of a case study design can provide rich insights into particular situations (Rule & John, 2011). The researcher saw it fit to use a case study design because it allowed the researcher to generate data from one institution, a TVET college in KZN. A case study design permitted the researcher to capture the reality of the thoughts, opinions and perceptions of the participants (Cohen et al., 2013), based on the participants' "individual subjective experiences" (Creswell & Poth, 2017), in order to provide rich insights into particular situations (Rule & John, 2011). The case in this

study was the phenomenon of access with success at a TVET college. From the interpretivist perspective, this access with success could only be understood from the perspective of the people who experienced it, and those people are SWLD. The researcher sought to understand issues of access with success as interpreted and socially constructed by SWLD (Putnam & Banghart, 2017).

1.10 DATA GENERATION METHODS

1.10.1 Semi-structured interviews

Since semi-structured interviews are face-to-face encounters (Cohen et al., 2013), they permitted the researcher to read the participants' non-verbal cues to better comprehend their experiences, thus allowing the researcher to gather more in-depth data. Some of the questions were open-ended, broad and general, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2017), in order to allow the participants to communicate their meaning of situations, and to allow the researcher to probe further with more questions to gather crucial data for this study. In this study, semi-structured interviews questions were constructed according to themes, to facilitate easy data interpretation. Since the semi-structured interviews were open-ended in nature, they allowed a degree of flexibility in the process, and gave the researcher an opportunity to do ask follow-up questions in relation to participants' responses, as some other questions emerged from the dialogue.

The study aimed at firstly establishing an understanding of the participants' perceptions on the current situation regarding access and success of SWLD within the college. By so doing, the researcher aimed to establish an idea of what is actually happening in the college in terms of access and success of SWLD, and also hoped to get a glimpse of how access and success are currently experienced and perceived by the participants. Secondly, the researcher attempted to obtain views from participants on why there was a need not only to open the gates of access, but to maintain successful curricula access as well as ensure success throughout the academic lives of SWLD in a TVET. Thirdly, the semi-structured interviews were used to identify impediments to access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges in

South Africa, even though the study was aimed at being affirmative and optimistic. Lastly, the semi-structured interviews aimed to obtain suggestions, proposals and ideas on how the TVET study could enhance or promote access with success, not only for the benefit of the TVET college in study, but for the benefit of the TVET sector as a whole.

1.10.2 Focus-group discussion

Using more than one method of data collection allows a researcher to compare and cross-check (Hussein, 2015), and hence triangulate the data. For this reason, the researcher later organised a focus-group discussion that facilitated an informal conversation with a purpose. A focus group

> is a planned discussion led by a moderator who guides a small group of participants through a set of carefully sequenced (focused) questions in a permissive and nonthreatening conversation. The goal is not to reach agreement but to gain participant insights on the topic of discussion. (Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015, p. 506)

Both the focus-group discussion and the individual interviews were tape recorded (with permission from the participants). The findings generated during the semi-structured interviews were compared with those of the focus groups interviews.

1.11 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants were selected using purposive and convenience sampling, which is defined by Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) as choosing participants based on the qualities they have. An email was sent to the campus manager to request permission to visit the campus. The gatekeeper's letter was also attached to the email. The purpose of the project was explained to the campus manager in the email, and the researcher requested to meet with three SWLD, with lecturers who teach SWLD, and with student support services personnel

and the head of department. The campus manager replied to the email with pleasure and gratitude that the study would be conducted on his campus, and gave formal permission.

Since the study involved SWLD, who could be regarded as a vulnerable group, I took extra precautions to avoid exploiting or abusing the participants, and a comfortable environment conducive to information sharing was created for the participants to feel safe and secure. Moreover, a student counsellor was contacted to offer counselling services to support students who may have had emotional, traumatic or stressful experiences. Students were assured that counselling services were available to them should they feel it was necessary. The researcher was also empathetic and came prepared for difficult and emotional instances.

The inclusion criteria for participants in this study were that they had to be current students and employees or previous students of the selected campus. The researcher was at liberty to make specific choices about which people to include in the sample (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014), and selected six participants. This was considered to be a manageable number and also allowed for a focus group interview. The participants were made up of two groups, students and staff, and the profile of the participants was as follows.

The student group consisted of three students, two male and one female (the researcher's focus was not on a specific gender), who all had a learning disability. One student had completed N6, and was doing in-service training. This student was among the first group that enrolled with the institution in 2014, at a time when the institution had no clue on where to begin in terms of accommodating SWLD. These students have now been placed in internship programmes with local organisations. The second student was registered in the Report 191 Business Studies programme. Report 191 programmes run for six months (business), or three months (engineering) per level, and require a vast amount of reading to be done in quite a short time period before the end of a semester or trimester. The third student was registered for a National Certificate (Vocation) NCV NQF L2, L3 or L4. NCV takes up to one year to complete a level, and 25% of the syllabus is theoretical while 75 % is practical.

Considering that the title of this study only mentions the word "students", it is imperative that the researcher declare the involvement of participants other than SWLD. As mentioned previously, three personnel were purposively selected based on the assumption that they

interact daily with issues experienced by SWLD in order to ensure smooth access and success. These staff members interact with SWLD and play a huge role in the lives of students on campus; therefore, their views yielded interesting ideas or explanations which may not have been revealed by individual interviews with the SWLD only. These three staff members were one educator, who was fully involved in teaching SWLD, one head of department, and one member of student support services.

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated was analysed using thematic analysis, as this form of analysis is mostly used in qualitative studies (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thematic analysis entails outlining, examining and recording themes within the data that has been generated (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). These themes are patterns across data sets, which are integral to the description of a phenomenon as they are linked to the research questions and are later grouped into categories for analysis (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). Thematic analysis was performed through a process of coding, which consisted of six phases: getting familiar with the data, creating first codes, formulating themes among the codes, reviewing those themes, naming the themes, and producing the final report (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2018).

1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations that needed to be taken into account during this research were prioritised before embarking on and during the research, as recommended by Bertram and Christiansen (2014). These principles were confidentiality, anonymity, autonomy, informed consent and non-maleficence. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee (see Appendix A) and permission was obtained from the DHET (see Appendix B). A consent letter was sent to the college principal, to gain formal permission to conduct the study at the TVET college (see Appendix B). Lastly, the participants were given consent forms to sign (see appendices C.1 and C.2, D.1 and D.2, and

E.1 and E.2), in order to gain their formal, informed consent to participate in the study. Before they signed the consent form, the researcher informed the participants of the aim of the study, and explained their role and how they would benefit from the study, in order to adhere to the principle of beneficence. The researcher also explained to them that the study would bring no harm to them physically, psychological, mentally or otherwise, in order to address the principle of non-maleficence. The principle of autonomy was addressed by informing the participants that they were respected, that their participation was voluntary, and that they would withdraw from the study and any stage if they wished to do so, without any penalties or consequences. Lastly, I informed them that their names would not be revealed in the study, and that they would remain anonymous, in order to address the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. On conclusion of the study, I gave back the results of the study to the participants to verify whether the data was a true reflection of the data they had provided and whether it represented their voice, which is known as member checking or respondent validation.

1.14 THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness is a term associated with qualitative studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2017) state that trustworthiness means that an informed reader should be able to trust that the way the researcher conducted his or her study was free from bias, and that the findings and conclusions are appropriate for the study.

Trustworthiness requires a researcher to establish credibility, which concerns the accuracy of the data generated and analysed, and assesses whether the study really measures what it intended to (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In order to ensure credibility in this study, a triangulation method was used, whereby more than one data collection tool was employed (Hussein, 2015), namely semi-structured interviews and a focus-group discussion (Baškarada, 2014). The questions for the semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions followed the same format and sequence for all research participants (see appendices F, G, H and I). The questions for the academic staff and management were slightly different to those for students, but all participants were asked about the same issues

in the same way. Trustworthiness also requires a researcher to demonstrate dependability, which, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016), is defined by consistency, whereby variability can be traced down and ascribed to the identified sources. Finally, trustworthiness requires a researcher to demonstrate confirmability, which is concerned with whether the findings reveal the lived experiences, ideas and perceptions of the participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It questions whether the findings are a true reflection of the participants' voices, or a reflection of the bias of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2016).

It is worth noting that the researcher was an employee on this particular TVET campus, and was familiar with the organisation, with the stakeholders and with the culture of the participants' organisation before the first data-collection interviews took place (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

The data to be generated was qualitative, using focus groups and interviews as instruments of data collection. Therefore, the responses from the participants could not be quantified. Participants shared their perceptions, opinions and experiences, which are categorized as qualitative. I ensured the rigour and authenticity of the study through recording the data verbatim and transcribing it. Thereafter, the transcriptions of the data were presented to the participants so that they could verify whether everything had been captured correctly (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Furthermore, a rapport was established in the opening moments of the interviews and discussion, and the researcher encouraged honesty on the part of the participants by assuring them that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that were asked. The researcher used a reflective journal for the duration of the study so that the study to enhance the dependability of the study, to record factors that would influence the study, such as feelings, opinions, perceptions and thoughts (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also continuously engaged with other researchers to avoid bias (Noble & Smith, 2015).

1.15 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In this chapter the researcher has provided an overview of the whole study.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework that frames the analysis in this study.

Chapter 3 constitutes the literature review, and addresses issues and concerns related to access with success of SWLD in TVET colleges.

Chapter 4 provides the research design, methodology and procedures that were followed in order to collect the data. It also explains the instruments used for data generation, describes the participants, and discusses how the data was analysed.

Chapter 5 presents and analyses the data according to the themes and sub-themes that were identified in the participants' responses, and interprets and discusses the findings.

Chapter 6 presents a summary, conclusions, recommendations, the implications of the research, the limitations of the study, and the overall conclusion.

1.16 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an overall summary of this study. The background and the purpose of the study were discussed, and the main objectives and research questions were presented. The rationale of the study was also discussed, and was related to the significance of the study. A brief overview of the research design and methodology was also mentioned, situating the study as a qualitative study within an interpretivist paradigm. The data analysis procedures were briefly discussed, and the ethical considerations taken into account were identified, including the elements that ensured the trustworthiness of the study. This chapter ended with a summary overview of the five subsequent chapters of the study. The following chapter will present the theoretical framework that frames the data analysis in this study.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the researcher provided an overview of the whole study. This chapter presents the theoretical framework that forms the basis of this study. Tavallaei and Talib (2010) indicate that a theoretical framework is a critical component of an academic research study. The theoretical framework for this study was the assets-based approach (ABA) (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993). In this chapter, the researcher firstly explores the origins and tenets of ABA, and their importance. A discussion follows on how other scholars have used ABA in different fields. The researcher then explains and discusses the applicability of ABA in the context of this study, and finally identifies the limitations of the approach.

2.2 THE ASSETS-BASED APPROACH

The study draws from the broad area of professional knowledge that applies positive psychology to teaching and learning, and that emphasises individuals' strengths, enabling situations, positive character, self-worth and positive emotions in moving towards rich and full livelihoods (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2017). Within positive psychology, there are various theoretical frameworks that scholars have developed or proposed. In line with this knowledge base, ABA (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993) has been identified to frame this study. ABA is an alternative to the deficiency model or needs-based approach to community development (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015), which understands people as needy, deficient and always requiring external support to solve their problems. Missingham (2017, p. 341) postulates that "a deficit perspective effectively silences target communities and blinds development workers to seeing the strengths, knowledge, skills, and other kinds of human, cultural, social, or material resources possessed by communities". On the other hand, the ABA is "seen as an alternative to the predominantly needs-based approach to development through alternatives that explore the capacity of the local people and their associations to

build a powerful and developed society" (Fuimaono, 2012, p. 25). My choice of ABA is in line with researchers within the broad area of professional knowledge who believe that people or communities possess some capabilities to respond to their own challenges, even though they may still require necessary external support (Ebersöhn & Eloff 2006; McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993; Khanare, 2018; Missingham, 2017). To understand ABA, it is imperative to have an understanding of its origins, and in the next section, I provide a brief discussion thereof.

2.3 THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF ASSETS-BASED THEORY

The ABA was pioneered by McKnight and Kretzmann. In their seminal work, *Building communities form inside out: A path towards finding and mobilising a community asset* (1993, 2012), McKnight and Kretzmann demonstrated their belief that people have different capabilities that can be used as resources to solve community problems. They pointed out that the development and empowerment of communities includes the assets, resources and abilities of the individual and the community (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993). This seminal work became influential in the individual and community development fields, and has been taken up by many researchers to influence positive and sustainable livelihoods in the United Kingdom (UK) (Gutierrez-Montes, Emery & Fernandez-Baca, 2009; Scoones, 2009). According to Scoones (2009), assets-based thinking has influenced and has been promoted by the UK's Department for International Development, and Friedli (2012) highlights the significance contribution of ABA in Scotland. The title of Friedli's (2012) research article broadly sums up the ABA: "'Always look on the bright side': The rise of assets-based approaches in Scotland". At the centre of Friedli's discussion in this article is that the recognition of assets can reduce the health inequalities that permeate Scottish health care facilities (Friedli, 2012). ABAs have also been important in building successful international teaching assistant development programmes in the United States, according to Swan, Kramer, Gopal, Shi and Roth (2017).

Although the concept is described in different ways and draws on different traditions, there are some common features in African countries' conversations about assets. In South Africa,

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) have been hugely influential in using ABA in the discipline of educational psychology and in educational research. In their support of the ABA, Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) describe it as a "glass half full" approach, and this perspective is supported by Khanare and de Lange (2017) and Makhasane and Khanare (2018), who observe that even in deeply rural contexts there exists a pool of assets that can be unearthed to improve the community. In their support for ABA, Myende and Chikoko (2014) and MacFarlane (2006) concur that assets already exist within communities, and that external partners only need to be there to fill up the rest of the glass. This perspective emphasises empowering, developing and rebuilding communities from the bottom up, or from the inside out (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Nene, 2017; Venter, 2013). Focusing on people's strengths rather than their deficiencies, recognising their capabilities, and involving people and communities in transforming their own worlds, has permeated current research in South Africa (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Ferreira, 2013; Fourie & Theron, 2012). Hence, some researchers refer to ABA as a strength-based approach (Brolin, Quennerstedt, Maivorsdotter & Casey, 2018; Theron & Malindi 2010; Zhang et al., 2018). The terms "ABA" and "strength-based approach" will therefore be used interchangeably in the context of this study. In the following section I discuss specific tenets of ABA and how they are relevant in the context of this study.

2.4 TENETS OF THE ASSETS-BASED APPROACH

A number of important contributions have been made to the literature underpinning ABAs. However, there is a clear need to consider how this knowledge can be further drawn upon so that it can inform the work of TVET colleges. Some researchers view ABA as a result of mobilising and harnessing different assets from the communities. Khanare's (2009) adapted asset-building framework incorporates i) individual capacities, ii) neighbourhood capacities and iii) institutional capacities. In a similar vein Myende (2014), who incorporates Ebersöhn and Mbetse's (2003, p. 324) model of assets mapping, identifies three inventories: a) the community capacity inventory, b) the inventory of local associations, and c) the inventory of local institutions. The research suggests that even though people may have capacities from which to build their inventories, they may also use a few at a given time in a particular

classroom context. Therefore, it is important there is a clear understanding of how to identify and mobilise the resources/assets (Khanare, 2009).

Mourad and Ways' (1998) model of the framework for assets building (Figure 2.1) incorporates three tiers that are adapted to provide a framework for a deeper understanding of access and success of SWLD in this study. The components of assets generally fall into three tiers: the primary tier, the secondary tier and an 'outside' tier (Mourad & Ways (1998).
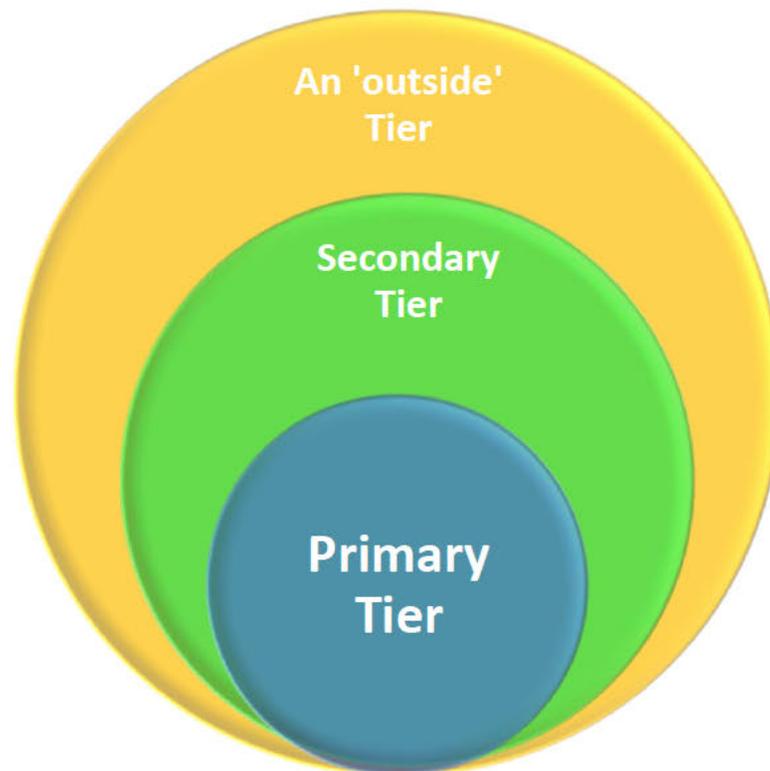
Figure 2.1 Framework for assets building (adapted from Mourad & Ways, 1998)

Mourad and Ways' (1998) model has been chosen because it incorporates more knowledge bases, it clearly explains the assets within each tier, and it allows the researcher to consider both established and personal resources, which are helpful in differentiating which resources are immediately available within the TVET and which could be mobilised and harnessed from other institutions to support TVET colleges. The above model rejects the underlying assumption of deficit thinking (Swan et al., 2017), and identifies and builds on the primary

assets or resources that are found in the community. Moreover, the model indicates that by focusing on the primary assets, one does not necessarily reject and embrace external resources that could be drawn from the secondary and outside tiers. Adopting an inside-out approach (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018) towards the identification and mobilisation of assets could be employed to improve the well-being of SWLD in TVET colleges. According to Mourad and Ways (1998), each tier consists of specific individuals or institutions and specific roles, which may be very useful for improving the success of SWLD in TVET colleges. In the following section I discuss each tier from which assets mapping can take place.

2.4.1 Primary tier

According to Mourad and Ways (1998), the primary tier represents the first pool of assets or resources. They argue that the most easily accessible assets are those that are located within the school. Thus, the primary tier refers to the immediate environment within which learners or students spend their time. Unique resources located within the school include educators, learners and the school infrastructure. The role of educators as assets has been documented widely, but educators alone, without the complementary roles of learners (Khanare & de Lange, 2017; Nene, 2017), cannot achieve success. Furthermore, Mourad and Ways (1998) refer to the school's infrastructure as a crucial asset, which the researcher finds very useful for understanding the access and success of SWLD in TVET colleges. If, as argued by Mourad and Ways (1998), school infrastructure is among the important resources necessary for development communities, the researcher is of the view that in every TVET college the non-human resources should be viewed as assets of the TVET College, rather than liabilities.

2.4.2 Secondary tier

The next pool of resources from which assets-building can take place is referred to as the secondary tier, according to Mourad and Ways (1998). In the secondary tier, there are assets that are located in the neighbourhood but are not controlled by the school. The secondary tier illustrates the assertion that no school is an island, and that schools are rather a microcosm of the whole ecological system (Myende & Chikoko, 2014). Therefore, assets in the secondary tier could include community halls, local sports grounds, parks, local health centres, faith-based organisations, local businesses, police stations, and vibrant cultural groups. These resources suggest that a rich ecology could be beneficial to both the students and educators at the TVET colleges. To counter deficit assumptions and their consequences, McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) hold that other kinds of human, cultural, social or material resources possessed by communities are all needed, and should be employed to make and sustain local livelihoods. Therefore, the secondary tier is crucial for the growth of the school and its community. It shapes the way the school understands its community and relates to it, and can also influence the way community members identify themselves and understand their place in the school.

2.4.3 An 'outside' tier

Mourad and Ways (1998) draw attention to the least accessible assets that are 'outside' the community, both in location and ownership, including private businesses, national corporations, non-governmental organisations, the media, information and communications technologies, and cultural beliefs and attitudes. Thus, ABAs reveal not only immediate assets but the assets of the entire community, which in turn reveals how to access those assets (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993). Beyond identifying and building assets from the primary and secondary tiers, this third tier is designed to promote new possibilities for new assets that the TVET could bring to the classroom to build on the existing resources. The 'outside' tier also echoes general assets-based thinking, and embraces diversity and multiple resources and the benefits of such diversity for both the students and the educators. Given the general mission of colleges and universities to achieve excellence in teaching and learning, there is

a pressing need to integrate technologies to support students and educators. For example, Section 1.12 of *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997) notes that

> economic and technological changes create an agenda for the role of higher education in reconstruction and development. This includes: human resource development, and the mobilisation of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society. (DoE, 1997, n.p.)

Kruss, Petersen, Fongwa, Tele and Rust (2017) identify collaborations between industry and training institutions, such as public-private partnerships between particular businesses and TVET colleges, as important assets to improve students and educators, and future faculty. Thus, assets in the 'outside' tier are not easily accessible but are forms of engagement that could be used to strengthen individuals, groups and whole communities.

Mourad and Ways' (1998) model, which draws insights from McKnight and Kretzmann (1993), is used in this study to deepen an understanding of how educators in selected TVET colleges could use various assets or resources to improve access and success of SWLD. The model shows that even in South Africa there are various resources that educators can tap into. The research suggests that even though TVET educators might have knowledge of resources, context-specific resources could be also relevant to improve access and success of SWLD. Mourad and Ways' (1998) model is used in this study as it incorporates awareness of existing assets, but it is important to note that the focus on existing assets, particularly in underprivileged communities, does not imply that additional assets are not needed. Mourad and Ways (1998) model encourages TVET educators to identify other potential resources, talents and assets from different tiers within and around the school, and to mobilise and harness them for the benefit of their students. These kinds of assets can be employed to make "individuals and collectives [...] focus on agency and community members' ability to create social change" (Missingham, 2017, p. 342).

2.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSETS-BASED APPROACH

The ABA concentrates on the strengths held by human beings rather than their weaknesses. Therefore, the approach encourages communities and individuals to be aware of and to harness their available and present capabilities in order to solve or address their challenges (Venter, 2013). Furthermore, the approach aims at employing the existing assets by forming relationships with others (Loots, 2011). In addition, the ABA, as a strength-based approach, enables individuals and the community to develop self-confidence and self-esteem, as they discover their newly acquired skills to help themselves to solve problems and address challenges (Hammond, 2010). Lastly, this approach is also significant in confirming that communities should recognise themselves as capable and empowered to look after themselves (Myende 2014; Van Wyk & Lemmer 2007).

2.6 MAPPING OF ASSETS IN A TVET COLLEGE

The process of identifying available assets is referred to as the mapping of assets (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993). This is when the community, associations or individuals identify their strengths, talents, resources, skills and capacities (Myende, 2014), to focus on what is presently available to communities and individuals that may be utilised to address challenges (Venter, 2013). At this stage, the community identifies possible participants and include as many partners as possible from inside and outside the immediate surroundings (Khanare & de Lange, 2017). The inside-outside approach recommends that the communities must first be committed to devoting themselves and their resources so that development can start taking place (Mourad & Ways, 1998), and so that the additional resources may be appreciated.

Khanare and de Lange (2017) argue that assets mapping is more than simply drawing together information about a community; in fact, it is about connecting people and building relationships based on the communities' capacities and strengths, and merging a community together in a new way through relationships (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018, p. 63). Thus the ABA emphasises that continuous relationships are of the utmost importance (Erbersöhn & Eloff, 2006). It is for this reason that Misener and Schulenkorf (2016) view assets mapping

as an essential process for local associations and community residents to develop and strengthen connections, and to appreciate the prospective interconnectivity amongst different assets.

In this study the process of assets mapping identifies assets that are able to contribute to improving SWLD's access to TVET education, as well as improving their success at TVET colleges. This means that the focus shifts away from deficiency or needs-based thinking that perceives SWLD as incapable of successfully accessing TVET education and achieving academic success like their peers. The focus also shifts away from perceiving TVET colleges as inaccessible to SWLD, and towards mapping resources and assets that assist in expanding and increasing opportunities for access and success. The ABA suggests that both SWLD and TVET colleges have inbuilt potentials and capabilities to achieve academic success, as long as SWLD are given opportunities to access TVET education, and support to succeed.

2.7 MOBILISING OF ASSETS IN A TVET COLLEGE

Myende (2015) postulates that the process of asset mobilisation aids in strengthening the abilities of the community by identifying possibly underemployed resources and recognising what the inside assets are not able to address. The process also builds relationships and partnerships as communities share knowledge and resources to identify common interests (Loots, 2011).

Adapting and applying the ABA involves a shift in focus away from the challenges of SWLD that are always mentioned and towards ways of mobilising different stakeholders to enable SWLD to have access to TVET education, thus responding to the need for equal opportunities in adult education for people with learning disabilities (Preece, 2017). However, one cannot dismiss the fact that educators have limited skills and knowledge on how to creatively craft lessons to allow those with different learning abilities to participate actively in their lessons (Lumadi & Maguvhe, 2012). This challenge is significant in the context of the TVET sector, where educators have to identify ways to deliver the practical components of their programmes in formats that are accessible to SWLD (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016).

Therefore, the ABA does appreciate and acknowledge the existence of deficiencies within the community.

2.8 MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS IN A TVET COLLEGE

It is important that the process of empowerment through mobilising assets is monitored and managed on a daily basis (Venter, 2013), hence the necessity of the last phase: asset management. The ABA provides the chance to reflect on the mobilisation of assets phase and to recognise newly discovered and underutilised assets in the process (Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016).

2.9 THE RELEVANCE AND APPLICATION OF THE ASSETS-BASED APPROACH TO THE CURRENT STUDY

The ABA has become influential and is being widely applied in many fields of study. Some recent global examples include community development education in higher education in Australia (Missingham, 2017), international teaching assistant training (Swan et al., 2017), evaluation support in Scotland (Evaluation Support Scotland, 2017), health care settings in Texas (Zhang et al., 2018), curriculum studies in health and physical education in Sweden (Brolin et al., 2018), and teacher professional development in the Netherlands (Zwart, Korthagen & Attema-Noordewier, 2015).

The ABA has also become influential in the African continent and has been taken up by many researchers studying rural schools and communities. Examples of this research includes climate adaptation in rural regions in Southern Ethiopia (Kidane, Prowse & Neergaard, 2019), leadership practices in transforming low-performing schools in rural Lesotho (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018), sustainable rural school-community partnerships (Myende, 2014), school leadership practices that work in deprived contexts in South Africa (Chikoko et al., 2015), and educational psychology (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Venter, 2013; Ferreira, 2013).

This study draws from this professional knowledge base in proposing that TVET colleges boast strengths, knowledge, skills and other kinds of human, cultural, social and material resources that need to be understood and employed to improve the livelihoods of the students. In connection with this, I have therefore highlighted the usefulness of Mourad and Ways' (1998) framework for the current study.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the ABA as the theoretical framework guiding this study, and has outlined the origins and development of the ABA. Thereafter, the aims and objectives of the ABA were discussed, followed by the basic tenets of the theory. The researcher then attempted to establish the relevance of ABA as a theoretical approach for the current study. Lastly, the mapping, mobilising and management of assets were briefly explained.

CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explored the theoretical framework that guides this study. This chapter provides a detailed review of literature on how inclusive education is conceptualised, its relevance within the TVET sector, and factors that influence and inhibit access with success of SWLD, particularly at TVET colleges. Access, success, SWLD, and TVET colleges are four basic concepts of this study. Therefore, it is paramount that the researcher reads and interrogates literature from scholars who have already conducted research related to these concepts in order to establish trends and gaps.

It is important to note that there is scarcity of research on inclusive education in TVET colleges, particularly in relation to SWLD in South Africa. Hence, some of the literature included has been borrowed from studies conducted at schools and universities, as TVET colleges in South Africa fell under the DBE from their inception until 2009, but are now under the umbrella of the DHET and are thus considered post-school education institutions.

3.2 THE ROLE OF TVET COLLEGES IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

3.2.1 Emergence and development of TVET colleges

The TVET sector is recognised as a significant component in the improvement of education and training systems (Pereira et al., 2015). These training systems are progressively perceived as part of lifelong learning for the promotion of skills, knowledge and attitudes, not only for work, but for life as well. Therefore, it is vital that TVET colleges are accessible for all (UNESCO, 2015a). The promotion of accessible higher education institutions is supported at international level by policies such as the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006),

which strongly advocates for equitable access to higher education for people with disabilities, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26.1 (1948) (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2013). It is for this reason that most international bodies have dedicated themselves to the rights of learners with disabilities and learning disabilities, including South Africa (Mutanga & Walker, 2017; Ngcobo, 2015).

According to the DHET (2014), prior to 1994 people with learning disabilities did not have much access to post-school education in general, and to TVET colleges in particular. The National Plan for Higher Education (Ministry of Education, 2001) mandated the post-school education sector to expand access for SWLD, and the sector was required to develop plans for how their aim to improve access would be implemented. Guidance was provided by *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (EWP6) (DoE, 2001b), which offered a blueprint for inclusive education in South Africa as a progressive means of tackling the challenges of disability in education across the education spectrum (Akoojee, 2016).

However, it is only recently that the inclusion of students with SWLD in post-school sector institutions such as community colleges, universities and TVET has been specifically considered in the form of the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2014; Mutanga, 2017). Furthermore a Strategic Policy Framework for Disability in the post-school education system has recently been developed to address issues of disability in all private and public post-education institutions, including HET institutions, community colleges and TVET colleges (DHET, 2018). With this background in mind, inclusive education should be viewed as in being in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which explicitly advocates for all learners' rights to education (du Toit, 2018). It is therefore necessary that education of SWLD is treated as a human rights issue (Makhanya & Botha, 2015). These rights are discussed in the following section.

3.2.2 Human rights and social justice

Human rights declarations and legislation position access to education as a firm human right that all people are entitled to, irrespective of their religion, language, or ability (Malle, 2017). Srivastava, De Boer and Pijl (2013) further assert that the learning needs of every student need to be accommodated in order for their basic right to education to be fulfilled, and that education institutions must therefore promote inclusive education by improving access to and participation in learning. What is equally important to note is that increasing access and participation should not involve tailoring institutions according to students who were previously disadvantaged, but should involve transforming learning institutions to better accommodate a more diverse population of students (Lourens & Swartz, 2016).

SWLD strive for similar opportunities as students without learning disabilities (Yu, Novak, Lavery, Vostal & Matuga, 2018). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2013) states that students with disabilities need to develop skills in order to acquire jobs just like everyone else, and that they should therefore not be isolated or segregated from others. The ILO (2013) further warns that full participation in society is what inclusion really means to people with disabilities, in this case SWLD. Hence, the South African Constitution mandates an inclusive approach towards all people, especially vulnerable people, as they deserve the right and dignity of being accepted as contributing members of the society (DHET, 2016).

In light of this, promotion of social justice for people with disabilities is paramount, to reflect their rights to freedom, equality and dignity as expressed in the Constitution. Therefore, the empowerment of all people, able or disabled, in relation to access to learning environments is vitally important (DHET, 2016; Parker & Folkman, 2015), and the learning environments of TVET colleges are no exception. Parker and Folkman (2015) advise that SWLD should be provided with information to empower them with knowledge about their educational opportunities and rights. This could develop their pool of capacities by strengthening agency, self-worth, self-determination and self-empowerment, which they can draw on when making educational decisions (Khanare & de Lange, 2017).

3.2.3 Equality and quality education

As has been shown, inclusive education is constructed on the values of democracy, where everyone is considered equal and must receive a quality education, which places a responsibility on learning institutions to reasonably accommodate and support SWLD so that they can participate in the education system just as fully as their more able peers (ILO, 2017; Mosia & Phasha, 2017). In this way the learning institutions will meet their constitutional obligation to provide equal opportunities and equitable access to education, and commit to meeting the needs of all learners, especially those from previously disadvantaged communities (DHET, 2016).

In essence, quality education and inclusive education work hand in hand, because when learning settings are inclusive, accommodative and welcoming, quality education naturally blossoms (Pereira et al., 2015). However, some researchers, such as King (2011), doubt the relevance of TVET colleges, or, like McGrath (2012), argue the insignificance of TVET colleges. These institutions are seen by many as the "poorer cousin of the academic system" (Pereira et al., 2015, p. 2). Improvements to the quality of TVET education are therefore vital for the advancement of the system and for improving its reputation (Papier & McBride, 2018). This can be achieved through continuous monitoring of practices and policies of inclusive education (DHET, 2014).

Notwithstanding the well-intended efforts of TVET colleges' inclusion of SWLD, it can be noted that the lifetime exclusion that SWLD previously experienced tends to breed concerns and suspicions about the quality education that SWLD students receive (ILO, 2013). This is caused by the fear that when SWLD are included and given reasonable accommodation, it might not be genuine (Garraway, Bronkhorst & Wickham, 2015). As a result, SWLD often spend more time and effort than their non-disabled peers on coping with the challenges that face them in their academic studies (Järkestig Berggren, Rowan, Bergbäck & Blomberg, 2016; López Gavira & Morina 2015). More SWLD are therefore at risk of leaving post-school institutions prematurely, compared with their non-disabled counterparts.

3.3 TVET COLLEGE RESPONSES TO STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The following section seeks to explore how responsive the TVET colleges are in the development process of SWLD as they acquire the capabilities and skills for lifelong learning and career pathways. It is important to first understand who SWLD are in the context of this study, before attempting to address the TVET college's response to their academic and career aspirations as they make the transition to higher education, and later to the professional world of work.

3.3.1 Who are students with learning disabilities?

Firstly, it is important to clearly articulate that the phrase "students with learning disabilities" (SWLD) will be used interchangeably with "students with disabilities" in this study. This is because the concepts "learning disabilities", "disabilities", and "hidden disabilities" are similarly used interchangeably in the literature that will be explored here. Having said that, Nel and Grosser (2016) advise that it is important to first look at different factors in a student's life before the student can be identified as having a learning disability. Furthermore, Ramnarain and Magano (2015) advocate for the deconstruction of the concept "disability", as it still depicts those individuals as being in need of extra care and special attention, thus perpetuating a stigma; instead, more emphasis should be placed on human capabilities, rather than on any lack of capability (Sefotho, 2018, p. 290).

The term "learning disability" refers to people who process information differently compared to others, and therefore learn differently. This is due to "neurological differences in brain structure and function that affect a person's ability to receive, store, process, retrieve or communicate information" (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014 p. 3). However, different writers and researchers, such as Boardman et al. (2016), use different phrases, depending on the countries and the context in which their research is situated. Some use "person with an intellectual disability" (Chou, Wehmeyer, Palmer & Lee, 2017).). The ILO (2013) provides the example of people with dyslexia, who process information differently, but are not necessarily

considered intellectually disabled; however, in the UK, people with dyslexia are often associated with people who have intellectual or learning disabilities (Shankar & Wilcock, 2018). Some South African writers, such as Lehohla and Hlalele (2014), refer to learning disabilities as "hidden disabilities", as they are experienced by learners without the learners displaying an observable disability. Some disabilities are invisible and can only be identified or diagnosed over time, while others are never identified or disclosed (DHET, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, there are studies that still loosely and generally make use of the phrase "people with disabilities", even when the study includes people with learning disabilities. For an example, the United Nations (2006, p. 4) describes people with disabilities as "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". Similarly, the DHET (2016, p. 11) describes people with disabilities as "those who have physical, psychosocial, cognitive, neurological and/or sensory impairments". However, Cortiella and Horowitz (2014) argue that learning disabilities are not necessarily caused by hearing, visual and intellectual disabilities.

What is common to these definitions is firstly that people's disabilities can be visible or invisible. Secondly, whatever the case may be, information barriers and physical barriers can be a major hindrance to the academic access and success of people with physical disabilities and people with learning disabilities, resulting in them remaining academically far behind their counterparts who do not have physical disabilities or learning disabilities (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Lastly, the use of respectful, people-first language is strongly advocated internationally, hence one should refer to "people with disabilities" or "people with learning or intellectual disabilities" ("students with learning disabilities" (SWLD) in the context of this study).

In this study, SWLD includes those students who learn more slowly than others, for example students with low literacy skills in a learning situation, and those with vision-related learning disabilities, such as visual impairments, since this is the dominant learning disability on the campus in this study. TVET colleges were previously associated with students who had difficulties with concentration, attention, reading, writing and learning in a foreign language (Makhanya & Botha, 2015). These students were considered to be students who

underperform academically, and they opted for TVET colleges as their last choice (Papier & McBride, 2018). However, now that disability inclusion in South African post-education institutions has created access for and has accommodated SWLD, this TVET college in particular has also responded to the call to address the need to provide services to students with visible and invisible learning disabilities, such as vision impairments and low literacy skills.

However, this study does not focus explicitly on learning disabilities per se, because all students are expected to be successful and complete their academic goals. Hence, the study seeks to understand issues related to the access and success of SWLD in a TVET context.

3.3.2 Academic achievement as a transition to further studies

There is concern over where SWLD will go after they complete their high school education (Bridge, 2014; Yu et al., 2018). Obviously, the options SWLD have, just like their peers, are TVET colleges, universities, universities of technology, or other higher education institutions. Broadly speaking, opting for a TVET college seems to be their best option, as they are required to "develop skills and vocational-oriented exit level qualification at Grade 9 level […] which would enable them to enter the world of work or further vocational training programmes at further education and training level" (DBE, 2011, in Bridge, 2014, p. 13). A TVET education therefore lays the groundwork for further higher education, thus creating a transition or ladder from school education to the world of work (Rami et al., 2016), which in turn leads to having SWLD living independently and also participating in contributing to the economy of the country (DHET, 2014). However, this kind of academic success can only be successfully achieved through the provision of career guidance or career development services at an early stage, especially for SWLD, thus preventing dropouts (DHET, 2016; Marope, Chakroun & Holmes, 2015).

3.3.3 Academic achievement as a transition to participation in professional and employment opportunities

Since the role of the TVET sector is to address vocational needs and to promote social, personal, and economic development in the country (DHET, 2014; Powell & McGrath, 2013; Terblanche, 2017; UNESCO, 2016), there is a strong motivation to increase access and advance quality education for all (UNICEF, 2007). Many young people still have no formal education or training, and many of them are SWLD who, after many decades, are still not included in education (Pereira et al., 2015; Sefotho, 2018, p. 287). Sefotho (2018) states that these young people with disabilities are identified as "not in education, employment or training" (NEET). Even with the expanded access to post-school education that has been achieved in South Africa, the ability of the country's youth to access decent employment still remains of national concern (Paterson, Keevy & Boka, 2017), and SWLD are no exception.

However, in the past two decades, there has been an increased awareness of the distinctive role of TVET colleges in meeting the multidimensional economic needs of people in relation to employability (Kraak & Paterson, 2016; Malle, 2017), that is, preparing students for employment as the overall purpose of TVET sector education (Garraway et al., 2015). Furthermore, the need for stakeholders' cooperation and for partnerships to align the skills required by the workplace with those communicated by the TVET system, has been identified (Pereira et al., 2015).

Perhaps the question one might ask is: what role does the TVET sector play in preparing SWLD for the transition into the new global labour market, thus developing marketable skills that will support them in securing employment? A study conducted by Eurostat (2014) shows that the unemployment rate for people with learning disabilities is twice as high as that of unemployment people without disabilities, meaning that there are proportionally more people with learning disabilities who live poverty-stricken lives. It is for this reason that Ngubane-Mokiwa (2013) recommends the improvement of responsive TVET education that is student centred and that responds to the labour market. Moreover, the establishment and development of student job placement channels for the placement of SWLD in traceable internship programmes, in experiential learning, and in formal employment (South Cape TVET College, 2015) also increase employability.

3.3.4 Psychological and emotional wellbeing

Improving access for SWLD at TVET colleges also improves their emotional and psychological wellbeing of. TVET colleges mould SWLD by building their academic skills and giving them the tools to adjust to everyday barriers and learning challenges (Maimane, 2016). As with other students, if SWLD are not in class learning, they are likely to be engaging in activites that negatively affect their emotional wellbeing. One of the responsibilities of TVET colleges is therefore to be a public and holistic entity (Munyaradzi & Addae, 2019). They are mandated to shape individuals who are emotionally stable so that they may have a fulfilling post-school experience. In fact, if students are emotionally stable, they can achieve well and contribute socially and economically to their community. The role of ensuring students' emotional and psychological wellbeing is played mostly by the student support services within a TVET institution (Maimane, 2016; Munyaradzi & Addae, 2019; South Cape TVET College, 2015).

3.4 ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN TVET

While the concepts of access and success have been defined in Chapter 1, this section seeks to elaborate on the different kinds of access that may lead to the success of SWLD in a TVET college. This study appreciates that there is more to access to education than merely opening a TVET college, and the sections that follow therefore examine the following areas: the conceptualisation of access at TVET institutions; the academic access of SWLD; access to curricula; accessible resources; and the importance of access with success in a TVET institution.

3.4.1 Conceptualisation of access at TVET institutions

It is an undeniable fact that the complexity of the fast-changing world requires people to continuously advance their understanding of life, their occupational competencies, their

abilities, and their mind-set throughout life (Papier & McBride, 2018). The progressive view of TVET education is that it is an opportunity to advance those competencies for adults and youth, by creating equal opportunities to access lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2015b). Pereira et al. (2015), Paterson et al. (2017) and Hlalele and Alexander (2012) emphasise the importance of lifelong learning as the only way for previously marginalised African youth to succeed and adapt in a society that is rapidly changing, and thus the importance of promoting every individual's right to access education.

It is for this reason that TVET colleges have adjusted to the demands of the society by moving from a simple focus on traditional work competencies towards a more holistic and complete set of humanistic competencies (Marope et al., 2015). TVET education is therefore now not only for students who have left school early as a result of not doing well and who have been identified as being not so intelligent (Paterson et al., 2017; Powell & McGrath, 2013), but is for every individual in pursuit of lifelong learning. To this effect the TVET curriculum no longer only provides occupational and vocational courses, but now includes soft subjects like Life Skills (DHET, 2014), which gives individuals a perspective on the various competencies they need to master to navigate their daily lives successfully.

3.4.2 Academic access of SWLD at TVET colleges

Access to higher education is still a delicate subject for people with disabilities (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016; Mutanga, 2017; Pereira et.al, 2015; Yssel, Pak, & Beilke, 2016). However, numerous findings presented by Everett and Oswald (2018), Connor (2012), Lourens and Swartz (2016), Mutanga (2017), Langørgen and Magnus (2018), Morgado, Cortés-Vega, López-Gavira, Álvarez and Moriña (2016), Chiwandire and Vincent (2017), and Kendall (2016) have revealed that there is an increase in SWLD accessing the post-education sector with the aim of furthering their education, and this trend is evident at TVET colleges. This has been a direct result of the existing policies and support services offered to SWLD (Everett & Oswald, 2018), and indicates a strong possibility that the intended inclusion goals will be achieved by 2030. According to the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2014, p. xv), "participation rates in universities are expected

to increase from the current 17.3 per cent to 25 per cent — that is, from just over 937 000 students in 2011 to about 1.6 million enrolments in 2030". In the researcher's opinion, this suggests a strong likelihood that large numbers of SWLD will pour into higher education (and therefore into TVET colleges) due to the equal access requirements

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Management Information System (TVETMIS) records indicate that there has already been a rise in the numbers of SWLD (DHET, 2016). This is confirmed by the *Draft strategic disability policy framework for the post-school education and training system* (DHET, 2016), which provides the following enrolment figures for students with disabilities in the 50 public TVET colleges in South Africa:

> In 2010, 834 students with disabilities were enrolled in TVET Colleges out of a total population of 358 393, accounting for only 0.23% of the total enrolment; in 2011, 1 459 students with disabilities were enrolled in TVET Colleges out of a total population of 400 273, accounting for only 0.36% of the total enrolment; in 2012, student numbers decreased to 1 369 out of a total enrolment of 657 690, accounting for 0.21%; in 2013, student numbers increased to 2 266 out of a total enrolment of 639 618, accounting for 0.35%; and in 2014, student numbers further increased to 2 884 out of a total enrolment of 702 383, accounting for 0.41%. (DHET, 2016, p. 27).

The increasing numbers of SWLD suggests that they are gradually gaining confidence that the TVET institutions of their choice will identify and understand the barriers to their learning, and will accommodating their learning needs.

However, Molosiwa et al., (2016), Lourens (2015) and Lyner-Cleophas (2016) contend that SWLD experience quite a lot of vulnerability during the period of transition from secondary school to higher institutions of learning. These researchers argue that this vulnerability is caused by difficulties experienced by SWLD in relation to academic loads, inaccessible teaching methods, societal expectations, difficulty in accessing the course material, their own emotional or personal growth, and even putting up with being ridiculed, (Sefotho, 2018) shamed and mocked (Lehohla & Hlalele, 2014) by those students without disabilities or learning disabilities.

3.4.3 Access to curricula

Molosiwa et al. (2016), Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016), Nel et al. (2016) and Yssel et al. (2016) are in agreement that every student should be able to access the general curriculum to fulfil the aims of education for sustainable development. However, granting improved access for SWLD without improving the relevant knowledge, capacity and practical resources of the institution, its curriculum and its staff, can result in serious problems with implementation and delivery (Lourens, 2015; Molosiwa et al., 2016; Mosia & Phasha, 2017). The TVET colleges' general curriculum can be made accessible to SWLD by allowing a flexible curriculum, which of course, does not mean a watered-down curriculum that leads to uninteresting lectures and low expectations (Garraway et al., 2015). It is noteworthy to mention that the TVET curriculum still remains a big concern (Malle, Pirttimaa & Saloviita, 2015). The concern is that TVET courses do not seem to be addressing the altering labour market needs in order to provide SWLD with the skills that are required to successfully transition to the work environment, in accordance with their aspirations (Pereira et al., 2015). This concern is compounded by the prescribed TVET curriculum, which is difficult to simply integrate with the contextualized and specific approaches to learning required by many SWLD (Garraway et al., 2015; Terblanche, 2017). Mutanga (2017) finds that there is a demand by both the students and TVET trainers for the curriculum to be adapted and modified to address the training needs of students with disabilities. Perhaps more collaboration between industry and DHET training institutions, in the form of inclusive public-private partnerships (PPP) (Kruss et al., 2017), should be promoted in order to enhance and establish congruence between subject curricula and labour market needs.

3.4.4 Accessible resources

In any learning environment, SWLD need information and materials in accessible formats in order to engage in their studies (Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017). It is of concern that there is insufficient accessible information available for SWLD, such as books that have been converted into more accessible formats (Lyner-Cleophas, 2016). Without these resources, students acquire information mostly from lecturers' oral presentations, and are unable to read

difficult material and large volumes of work (Everett & Oswald, 2018; Lehohla & Hlalele, 2014). It is for this reason that Smyth et al. (2014) suggest "the development of international legislation" that acts as a benchmark for how study material should be developed and made available to SWLD and those students from lower socio-economic and diverse cultural backgrounds. The National Federation of the Blind (2016) in the US has already proposed the implementation of the Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM HE) Act. However, Yssel et al. (2016) and Mokiwa (2014) argue that the legislation granting SWLD full access to the general education curriculum does not always produce the expected results, and Basham, Smith and Satter (2016) warn about the time factor as a major challenge when learning materials are converted into new, accessible learning materials.

Khoza (2016) proposes the use of information and communication technology in post-school education as an assistive device to access and engage with learning materials. However, Lee (2014) argues that the use of technology does not completely resolve the challenge of inaccessible learning materials, since students with visual impairment still struggle to read electronic texts. Lee (2014) discusses the example of e-readers and Google applications that are challenging for students with visual impairments to access. Similarly, Fichten, Asuncion, Barile, Ferraro and Wolforth (2009) discuss the difficulties involved in students with visual impairment (SWVI) using a screen-reader to read PowerPoint presentations, and Redpath et al. (2013) concur that it is impossible for SWVI to read learning materials of this kind. It is for these reasons that SWLD still find some institutions of higher learning to be inaccessible.

3.4.5 Importance of access with success

Various factors for successful educational inclusion at the technical and vocational training level have been identified across different countries, and this suggests that there is evidence for efficiency and good practices in implementing inclusive education at TVET colleges (Pereira et al., 2015). This means that there is potential for improvement in the inclusivity of TVET colleges. For SWLD to successfully experience access and success (in terms of completing training courses), TVET colleges need to be aware of the range of specialised needs of SWLD (ILO, 2017). Their needs depend on the nature of their learning disability as

well as the academic opportunities that were previously available to them at school (Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017). It is unfortunate that some special schools do not expose SWLD to the full subject range, as this often prevents them from accessing the TVET programmes of their choice due to the entry requirements (Morningstar, Lombardi, Fowler & Test, 2017), thus limiting their options. A good example is Mathematics, which is required in TVET courses for financial and engineering careers. Lowering of entry requirements is discouraged, but the introduction of bridging courses, and the extension of course periods for SWLD may increase opportunities for access and for success, so that SWLD can successfully complete their preferred programmes with a standard equivalent to their peers (ILO, 2017; Mutanga, 2017). Furthermore, the DHET (2014), Yu et al. (2018) and Rami et al. (2016) encourage the establishment of a coordinated and coherent post-school system that will allow SWLD to logically progress from one institution or programme to another within the system.

3.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESS OF SWLD AT TVET COLLEGES

This section addresses key factors that have been found to influence the success of SWLD at TVET colleges. These factors are: the college's inclusion policies, human support and collaboration, cooperative learning and peer support, classroom climate, infrastructure, and TVET-community partnerships.

3.5.1 College inclusion policies

The implementation of inclusive policies has a significant impact on the increased access and success of SWLD at any learning institution (Burgstahler, 2015; Hadley & Archer, 2017; Lyner-Cleophas, 2016; Ramaahlo, Tönsing & Bornman, 2018). The mere fact that policies on inclusive education exist means that there is a need to increase the access and success of SWLD (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016), and also suggests that access to education is becoming increasingly available for all students (Khoza, 2016). The implementation of inclusive policies relating to people with disabilities and vocational training, is not only beneficial to the country in terms of community economic development,

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but also benefits the independence of people with learning disabilities (ILO, 2013). However, Bell and Swart (2018), Mokiwa (2014) and Yssel et al. (2016) argue that the challenge of non-implementation of policies is still a sensitive concern of SWLD in institutions of higher learning, as South African inclusion policies seem to only open doors during the registration process, and are not properly implemented thereafter. Their concern is shared by Molosiwa et al. (2016), who note that these well-intended policies are vaguely presented and are not explicit. As a result, translating policy into practice still remains a challenge, and SWLD will be forever burdened with justifying their right to be successfully accommodated in South African institutions of higher learning (Mutanga, 2017).

In the context of TVET colleges, this gap between inclusive policy and inclusive practices is noticeable, and is also partly caused by internal policies that do not allocate budget or resources to disability educators or units. There is therefore a great need for TVET colleges to acquire knowledge on how to develop and implement internal policies that are in line with the government's inclusive policies, in order to address students' human rights in relation to their education (DHET, 2016).

It is in view of the above that the Department of Social Development (2016) proposes to develop plans to guide the implementation of inclusive policies for universal application, and to hold institutions that still fail to implement policies and legislation accountable.

3.5.2 Human support and collaboration (HoD, educators, peer support)

Access with success is possible if there is collaboration amongst the different departments within institutions of higher learning, such as admissions and registration, exams, support services, various curriculum departments, transportation, parents, students, psychological health services, and policy developers and designers (Burgstahler, 2015; De Villiers, 2015; Lourens, 2015; Lyner-Cleophas, 2016; Nel et al., 2014). Each of these departments cannot work in isolation but need to collaborate with other stakeholders (Makhanya & Botha, 2015; Nel et al., 2014). It is critical that the different role players in every post-school educational institution possess knowledge about the inclusion of SWLD in order to support lecturers who

work with SWLD. These departments must work in collaboration to provide their expertise in addressing the various needs of SWLD while supporting lecturers, thus indirectly or directly providing supporting SWLD (Nel et al., 2014).

Similarly, educators need to collaborate with and support each other, as teamwork is at the heart of inclusive education. The provision of pedagogical support in turn increases the effectiveness of educators, therefore increasing student engagement and participation, and increasing the opportunities for success (Fourie, 2018; Lyons, Thompson, & Timmons, 2016). Nel et al. (2014) and Makoelle (2014a) find that when one educator shares their experiences of assisting students, other educators gain a better understanding of how to work with SWLD. This kind of teamwork not only optimises students' performance but also promotes caring institutions of learning, fosters a sense of purpose and commitment amongst educators, and enhances students' knowledge retention (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; DHET, 2016; Fourie, 2018; Lyner-Cleophas, 2016). This is supported by a Canadian study conducted by Lyons et al. (2016), which aimed to understand why some schools move forward while others are left behind. The findings indicated that successful schools emphasised collaborative teamwork, a commitment to inclusion and supportive leadership. This resonates with Bridge (2014) where a school principal's vision and commitment to inclusion was identified as the primary indicator of success. Similarly, TVET college principals and campus managers need to role models and champions of inclusive education in the TVET sector. The fact that there are schools that are successfully implementing inclusive education shows that it is also possible for TVET colleges to successfully achieve access with success of SWLD.

Furthermore, EWP6 (DoE, 2001b) suggests regional collaboration. This is when resources are shared across institutions. If the resources of one institution are not being used, they may be used by another institution. Perhaps TVET institutions, especially campuses of a similar institution, may adopt a similar culture. In this way, educators could share knowledge and resources to support SWLD with similar support needs, without having to wait for resources to become available on their own campus. However, this may, on the other hand perpetuate the idea of SWLD being restricted to certain campuses, as it may create the impression that only one campus is able to accommodate a certain special disability (DHET, 2016).

3.5.3 Cooperative learning and peer support

Peer support may be an advantageous source of support for SWLD (Makhanya & Botha, 2015). This is when students are able to demonstrate or explain a lesson to their peers more effectively than their lecturer due to their unique understanding of the lesson (Couzens et al., 2015). In support of this, a study conducted by Matshedisho (2010) found that most students with disabilities declared that their success was because of the support and contribution of their peers. Even though peer support seems to be a support system that operates naturally, there is still a need for peer-support or mentor training to ensure that there is effective peer mentoring and support.

At the heart of inclusive education is an appreciation of the different learning styles that need to be embraced and accommodated by applying different teaching methods to achieve the expected learning outcomes (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2016). Being able to apply various teaching style in the classroom plays a vital role in stimulating student's learning (Ismail et al., 2019). Therefore, when TVET colleges conduct awareness about SWLD, it can be combined with practical guidance on teaching methodologies, in order to enhance lecturers' different teaching styles (Bridge, 2014).

3.5.4 Classroom climate

TVET lecturers need to create a learning environment where every student is able to experience success, where everyone feels included, and where everyone benefits (ILO, 2013, 2017). This is to minimise the possible instances where some SWLD could feel excluded or rejected by their peers, especially if their interaction with other students is seen as intimidating (Lehohla & Hlalele, 2014). It is for this reason that the inclusion and support of SWLD in classrooms depends to a large extent on educators' attitudes, in this case lecturers (Couzens et al., 2015; Mutanga, 2017). Lecturers also play a critical role in advocating for SWLD in their classroom (Parker & Folkman, 2015). As a result, awareness of the needs of SWLD is indirectly inculcated in students without learning disabilities. This not only

advocates for SWLD but also educate all students in how to treat their peers who have learning disabilities (Lehohla & Hlalele, 2014).

Furthermore, the recognised tendency of TVET institutions to admit SWLD only to programmes involving low-level skills creates the wrong assumption of low expectations of SWLD, thus resulting in low self-esteem for these students (ILO, 2017). SWLD must be admitted to their programmes of choice — programs they are comfortable in — so that their passion can be expressed in spaces of their choice. This encourages the full utilization and recognition of students' strengths, capabilities and skills, hence building up their self-esteem and confidence (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2017). However, lecturers have to be prepared to learn to accommodate SWLD through adapting their teaching styles and assessments, and through using assistive technologies, in order to produce successful teaching and learning (Clouder et al., 2018). These assistive devices may be used in class or at home with the support of peers and families (Mutanga, 2017; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2016).

Moreover, it is vital that basic orientation programmes be conducted for SWLD on their arrival at TVET colleges. Students should be informed on what is expected of them so that they may be adequately prepared for campus and lecture room activities, feel confident to contribute in class, and feel connected to their peers (Mutanga, 2017).

3.5.5 Infrastructure (physical environment): Disability unit and recreational facilities

Provided there is suitable infrastructure in place, there are many ways to increase access and effective services for SWLD (Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017; South Cape TVET College, 2015). SWLD should be able to access and utilise all buildings and facilities, and thus be able to enjoy the benefits of being in TVET spaces, just like all the other students. Hence, TVET buildings must be built on the principles of universal design to prepare for access and use by everybody (ILO, 2013). These facilities include, but are not limited to, lecture rooms, student support centres, disability units, centres for social activities, and sport and recreation facilities, since such facilities have a positive impact on the social and academic lives of SWLD (ILO, 2017). Sport and recreation facilities can assist in reducing discrimination,

stigmas about SWLD and exclusion, by focusing on the abilities and talents of SWLD (DHET, 2016). Therefore, sport can be used as a tremendous platform for fostering inclusion strategies and for social transformation (Lorenzo, McKinney, Bam, Sigenu & Sompeta, 2019).

The disability unit, however, may be provide a lot of different supportive activities, such as assisting students in making academic choices that are in line with their career aspirations, their interests and their aptitudes (Maimane, 2016). A disability unit assists SWLD in accessing the necessary support and concessions, and advocates for them in terms of accessing the appropriate course material and specialised computer software, being allowed extra time for writing tests and exams, and raising awareness with lecturers with regard to the support required to meet students' needs. The DHET (2016) recommends that disability units and student support centres should be located within the educational facility for more accessibility and to enhance service delivery.

3.5.6 TVET–community partnerships

While the educational success of SWLD at TVET colleges depends mostly on the motivation of the people in the social environment to support students' needs (Langørgen & Magnus, 2018), the alignment of the services provided, and the coordination and cooperation of different stakeholders, including government departments, is equally important (DHET, 2016). Community partnerships have a vital role in successful learning institutions, as they provide the support and resources to meet students', family and staff needs (Gross et al., 2015).

The DHET (2016) identifies some of the different stakeholders and their possible contribution to successful access to learning as follows:

- the Department of Basic Education, which should be responsible for the smooth transition of SWLD from high school to TVET institutions
- the Department of Labour, which should create and communicate employment-placement opportunities for SWLD

- the Department of Social Development, which should be responsible for the provision of disability grants
- the Department of Health, which needs to ensure that medical support is available for SWLD, even on campus
- the Department of Public Works, which is required to assist and support in the building of the relevant infrastructure to facilitate access for SWLD
- the Department of Communication, which should provide communication strategies to enhance access to connectivity and information for SWLD
- and other non-profit organisations, which may support TVET colleges with guidance in improving inclusion on campuses.

However, as mentioned previously, the TVET community does not only have to rely on the government for support, but could form meaningful relationships with the local community, such as with a local carpenter who could assist with the building of a ramp or adjust the height of a student's table according to the student's needs and preference. Local companies could donate computer software to assist students with visual impairments, or agree to place SWLD in their internship or in-service training programmes. Retired local educators may even be willing to work as scribes. By including local individuals and organisations, the TVET institutions would be sending out a strong message about the importance of including SWLD, and creating awareness about the efforts required to support their inclusion.

In addition, the families of SWLD must be part of raising awareness about their needs. Ismail et al. (2019) note with concern that there is scarcity of studies that examine the relationship between parents' involvement in the learning of SWLD on the one hand, and the quality of the attention SWLD receive from educators on the other. The South African education system recognises that as contributors to students' successful learning, parents play a major role in encouraging better academic performance by SWLD; the inclusive education system therefore requires more involvement from parents and from the community (Cilliers, 2018). Furthermore, some parents may have expressed concerns or doubts regarding the inclusion of their loved ones in training that is meant to provide employment thereafter (ILO, 2013). Therefore, it is important that parents be involved in and be kept up to date on the training activities on campus, so that they can provide more support, which may in turn increase the

motivation of SWLD once they see that their potential and their abilities to acquire skills are recognised and valued (Garraway et al., 2015).

3.6 FACTORS THAT INHIBIT THE SUCCESS OF SWLD AT TVET COLLEGES

Walton, Nel, Muller and Lebeloane (2014, p. 321) note that

> inclusive education is not about admitting previously excluded learners into untransformed schools where attitudes, policies and practices prevent these learners from participating, experiencing success and feeling that they belong. Instead, it is about identifying and addressing exclusionary pressures in schools and harnessing the resources needed to provide the support that learners require.

Thus, this section attempts to outline the different inhibiting factors that have been identified by various researchers.

3.6.1 Negative attitudes towards inclusion at TVET colleges

Numerous studies conducted on inclusive education (Chiwandire & Vincent, 2017; Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Kendall, 2016; Lourens, 2015; Lourens & Swartz, 2016; Molosiwa et al., 2016; Strnadová, Hájková & Květoňová, 2015) lament the negative attitudes that inhibit the proper implementation of inclusive classrooms. Negative attitudes are frequently the most significant barrier that SWLD experience, and they often trigger a failure to address similar barriers related to accessibility (ILO, 2017; Kempen & Steyn, 2016; Mutanga, 2017).

The negative attitudes of lecturers towards inclusion are often based on a lack of confidence or a fear of being incompetent in teaching or training SWLD, since it is believed that teaching SWLD requires specialised knowledge and expertise (Collins, Azmat & Rentschler, 2019; DHET, 2016; Mosia & Phasha, 2017). This fear causes educators or trainers to feel that they are victims of change, and that they are powerless to face the demands of transmitting the curriculum to SWLD (Walton et al., 2014). A possible solution to this is to involve influential

and qualified people with disabilities in educating or training TVET staff members, as suggested Mutanga (2017). This is supported by the ILO (2013), who emphasise the importance of always including people with disabilities whenever there are matters involving SWLD, thus sending a strong message of inclusion.

3.6.2 Poor implementation of inclusive education policies

In spite of the procedures, guidelines and requirements that are explicitly stipulated in South Africa's legislated policies on inclusive education, learning institutions still find it challenging to successfully implement inclusive practices (Nel, 2018). A large part of the reason for the poor implementation of these policies in South Africa is the top-down approach that is used to disseminate new concepts, which does not give lecturers the chance to influence or even reflect on the process (Bridge, 2014).

3.6.3 Inadequate training of TVET personnel

The inadequate training of TVET personnel in South Africa often produces lecturers who are unsure about how to shift from ordinary teaching strategies and assessments to inventive ones (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2013). Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2016) propose the reconstruction of teaching strategies that could contribute to making TVET colleges more relevant and accessible for SWLD, and the International Labour Organization recommends the continuous development of educators' skills through follow-up training (ILO, 2017). The focus should not only be on TVET lecturers but also on administrative personnel, in order to enhance their disability etiquette and to ensure compliance with and implementation of inclusive policies in their respective departments (Bridge, 2014).

3.6.4 Poor infrastructure

The accessibility of the physical environment is a constant challenge for SWLD, with many buildings and spaces in the post-education environment remaining beyond their reach (Lourens & Swartz, 2016; Lyner-Cleophas, 2016), and TVET colleges are no exception. Molosiwa et al. (2016) and Chiwandire and Vincent (2017) posit that it is still a major inconvenience and embarrassment for SWLD to navigate college successfully. SWLD find the physical world very challenging, hostile and inaccessible, and it takes them much longer to complete certain everyday life activities. If the physical environment is not accessible, it contradicts the idea of making the teaching and learning environment accessible (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016).

3.6.5 Uncoordinated efforts

The literature above indicates that the TVET sector is well aware of what should and should not be done in order to achieve access with success. That means that efforts are being made, but are fragmented. The availability of resources means nothing if there are uncoordinated efforts. As alluded to in the literature, inclusive education requires a synchronisation of activities. No department should work in isolation.

3.7 THE NEED TO IMPROVE ACCESS WITH SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITES IN TVET COLLEGES

What is found from the literature is that there is access for SWLD, but it is not successful. This is largely due to the fact that there are uncoordinated efforts, and resources are not fully mobilised and harnessed to achieve sustainable inclusion. The literature shows that though the correct policies are in place, the implementation of these policies is fragmented. Therefore there is a need to improve the access with success of SWLD in TVET colleges. This study therefore explores the current situation regarding access of SWLD at a TVET college in order to propose strategies that may be used to improve their access with success, as well as strategies to be used in monitoring the implementation of inclusive of policies at TVET colleges.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is clear that TVET colleges play a significant role in addressing not only skills shortages in South Africa, but also in creating lifelong learning pathways for those transitioning between education and the world of work. A large group of beneficiaries of the TVET sector in terms of skills development are those young people who are identified as "not in education, employment, or training" (NEET), and young people with disabilities are often part of this group. As much as TVET colleges seem to be part of the answer for equipping SWLD with skills for the workplace, the literature indicates that there is very little research on the inclusive education policies of TVET colleges. Hence, some of the literature informing this study was based on research conducted mostly at universities and schools, as declared at the beginning of this chapter.

It is safe to conclude that TVET colleges in South Africa currently rely on the values contained in the country's Constitution, and in the *White paper for post-school education and training* (DHET, 2014) in order to provide access to education and training for SWLD. The literature shows that SWLD in post-school education are no different from students without learning disabilities in terms of their academic and career aspirations. However, many SWLD opt for the academic path offered by TVET colleges, as they are required to expend much more effort to achieve learning compared with their non-disabled counterparts, due to gaps between policy and practice at most academic institutions. Factors that have contributed to the challenges and successes experienced by SWLD at other institutions of learning seem to be likely to be experienced by TVET colleges as well. Furthermore, there is still much to be done to align TVET programmes to workplace market requirements so that SWLD may achieve more success in making the transition to the world of work. This chapter therefore concludes by emphasising the need to enhance access with success of SWLD in the context of TVET colleges.

The following chapter presents and discusses the research design and methodology that informed how this study was conducted.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher reviewed the existing literature relevant to the issue of access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges in South Africa. The current chapter focuses on the methods used by the researcher to understand access with success of SWLD at a specific TVET college. The chapter begins by clarifying the research topic and questions, followed by a justification of the interpretive research paradigm employed. The researcher then discusses the qualitative research approach and its relevance to the research, and the appropriateness of the case study research design, before briefly describing the research setting. After discussing the sampling techniques, there is a brief description of the study sample to provide some background on the participants. It is then followed by the profiling of the research participants, which is presented in a table format. The semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions used to generate data are described, followed by a discussion on the thematic analysis used to analyse the data. The principles of trustworthiness that guide the data analysis are presented, along with the ethical considerations taken into account, and the chapter is then concluded by presenting the limitations of the study.

4.2 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach informed by an interpretive paradigm to understand how access with success is experienced and perceived by SWLD in a TVET context.

4.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

Selecting a suitable paradigm is vital because a paradigm, as Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Asghar (2013) suggest, provides the particular world view that defines how the researcher conducts his or her research.

This study is informed by the interpretive paradigm, which allows people to interpret their own world and is primarily directed towards establishing the meaning and understanding of individuals' experiences and circumstances in terms of their own interpretation (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Understanding is at the centre of the interpretive paradigm, rather than explanation (Cohen et al., 2013), meaning that an interpretivist seeks to understand people's experiences through listening to what they say and through interacting with them. Furthermore, interpretive research is context and time dependent, as interpretations depend on the context in which they are made and the period during which they are made (Biggam, 2015).

In other words, in an interpretive paradigm, reality and knowledge are socially constructed or made meaningful through understanding events (Putnam & Banghart, 2017; Scotland, 2012). With this in mind, the researcher attempted to discover the different in which "access" and "success" were understood by participants who had direct contact with the education of SWLD or were SWLD themselves. This is in line with Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Scotland (2012), who contend that an interpretivist researcher does not aim to predict what people will do, but rather to describe how people make sense of their worlds, and how they make meaning of their particular actions. In light of this, the researcher was conscious of the possibility of multiple interpretations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Scotland, 2012), due to the fact that interpretivists rely on subjective data from the participants, which is always influenced by an individual's emotions which constantly change (Christiansen, Bertram & Land, 2010). It was for this reason that the findings were later shared with the participants for verification purposes.

4.2.2 Qualitative approach

In line with the interpretive paradigm, this study adopts a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. One of the features of qualitative research is that the researcher is not interested in numbers or statistics, but in the spoken and written words that express how people view the world as they talk about their lived experiences (Yin, 2016). In this study the participants shared their understanding on to how they view access with success of SWLD in a TVET college context. As Creswell and Poth (2017) explicitly state, qualitative research is conducted when there is an issue that needs to be explored.

Nieuwenhuis (2016) further indicates that qualitative research is concerned with understanding the cultural processes and social contexts that outline behavioural patterns. In the same vein, qualitative researchers such as Yin (2016), Creswell (2014) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) state that through probing, a qualitative researcher is able to go deeper in order to obtain detailed, rich and in-depth data. Moreover, qualitative research allows the researcher to understand a particular social situation or event through ongoing interaction (Putnam & Banghart, 2017), by understanding and exploring the meaning human beings ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014; MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Furthermore, since qualitative research allows participants to talk about their lived experiences, people have different ways of constructing information, so they use multiple methods. Therefore, one of the attributes of qualitative research is that it allows the use of multiple data-generation instruments (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), thus allowing the researcher to be flexible, and allowing everybody to interpret their world. However, it is acknowledged that a disadvantage of the qualitative approach is that the data analysis may be laborious and the researcher may oversimplify the results in a very limited way (Flick, 2015).

The use of a qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to get an in-depth knowledge of lived experiences from the first-hand opinions, perceptions and suggestions of SWLD, as well as the academic and support staff of the TVET college. The researcher's engagements with the participants were specifically related to how the participants experienced and perceived access with success within the college. Remaining close to the participants allowed the interpretation of data in a way that was true to the participants' experiences and attitudes.

4.2.3 Case study

The main methodology used in this research report was a case study design. Case studies provides rich insights into particular situations (Rule & John, 2011), as they capture the thought and lived experiences of participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Since there are different types of case studies, this study opted for a single case study that represents a

unique case (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). The primary motive for selecting the single case study method is that the TVET college (the selected campus in particular) itself is distinctive compared with other educational institutions, and a single case study would indicate this distinctiveness, the challenges faced and the opportunities presented regarding issues of access with success of SWLD within the selected college.

A case study was deemed appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to understand issues of access with success at a TVET college from the perspective of people who experienced them, and those people are SWLD. The researcher sought to understand issues of access with success as interpreted and socially constructed by SWLD (Putnam & Banghart, 2017). Furthermore, this methodology allowed the researcher to utilise different data-generation methods, hence the researcher was able to generate more data in a "great deal of depth" (Rule & John, 2011, p. 14).

As much as case studies are flexible methods of data generation, they can sometimes be difficult to manage (Patton, 2015). However, for this case study the researcher selected a small geographical area and a limited number of participants as the subjects of research, thus resulting in a manageable study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The researcher was further able to capture the reality of the thoughts, opinions and perceptions of participants (Cohen et al., 2013) based on their subjective experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

4.2.4 Research setting

A pseudonym was used to protect the identity of the college

This study was conducted at LEE* TVET College in the far North of KwaZulu-Natal. The college has 10 campuses which are located within communities in both urban and rural areas. The study focused on one campus situated in the township about 20 km away from Richards Bay. This campus was not too far from a police station, a clinic, the local offices of the Department of Home Affairs, and a number of high schools, and will be referred to as Happy* campus hereafter.

Since LEE TVET College is a public college, it is under the governance of the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006 and is administered by the DHET. This campus is under the leadership of a campus manager, two head of departments and four senior lecturers. The campus has security guards and controlled access, and employs approximately 35 academic staff, 15 administrative support staff, 15 grounds staff and security personnel who work different shifts.

There are approximately 2000 black students, 35 of whom have different learning and physical disabilities, who are currently enrolled for National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programmes, Report 191 (Business and Engineering), and skills programmes, which are subsidized by the state. The majority of the 35 students with disabilities are visually impaired. Happy* campus started an inclusive education pilot programme in 2014, in which only 14 students with visual impairment were enrolled. However, there was quick growth over the years with the enrolment of more students with a variety of learning and physical disabilities, and these students constitute the focus of this study.

Furthermore, this particular campus has boarding facilities that are mostly used by students with both physical and learning disabilities, and a few students who have provided evidence of being financially needy and who cannot afford rental houses in the township. In terms of recreational facilities, there are different sports grounds and codes within the campus. Classrooms are shared; however, there are two classrooms provided to teach students with visual learning disabilities. It is also noteworthy to mention that the campus has only one long ramp that extends from the parking lot to the classrooms.

4.2.5 Sampling and selection of participants

The participants were selected through purposive and convenience sampling, which is defined by Etikan et al. (2016) as choosing participants based on the qualities they have. This type of sampling was convenient because participants were chosen based on their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Yin, 2016). The researcher preferred this method as it was less time-

consuming and costly, and was convenient and easy, as the participants were readily available (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The participants were easy to reach because the researcher was the coordinator of the Disability Unit at Happy* campus from 2014 to 2017, and was familiar with the staff members as well as the SWLD. The researcher's decisions regarding sampling were in accordance with Bertram and Christiansen's (2014, p. 43) definition of convenient sampling as using a sample that is "easy to reach by the researcher".

In the context of this study, the qualities that the research required were that participants were either current SWLD on campus, former SWLD from the campus who had been placed in internship programmes, or employees of the selected campus. The researcher was at liberty to make specific choices about which people to include in the sample, as assured by Bertram and Christiansen (2014). The selection therefore totalled six participants, which was manageable and which also allowed for a focus group discussion (Saunders et al., 2016). Since the study adopted a qualitative approach, the selection of participants was not really about quantity, but about people who would provide quality information that would produce rich data.

The data for this study came from three SWLD, one support staff member (from student support services) and two academic staff (a lecturer who is fully involved in lecturing SWLD and a head of department). Considering that the topic for this study only mentions "students", it was deemed imperative that the researcher declare the involvement of participants other than SWLD. As mentioned previously, the following personnel were purposively selected on the assumption that they interact daily with issues of SWLD to ensure smooth access and success. Their interaction with SWLD plays an important role in the lives of students on campus, and their views therefore yielded interesting ideas and explanations that would not have emerged from the individual interviews with the SWLD. These participants were purposively sampled in order to acquire in-depth responses (Patton, 2015) regarding their perception, experiences and views on concerns and issues related to access with success of SWLD on this particular campus.

Prior to the selection process, the researcher sent an email containing the gatekeeper's approval letter to the campus manager, requesting permission to visit the campus. The researcher was welcomed warmly. The next step was to contact a head of department who

heads the schools containing numerous SWLD, to notify her that the researcher would be on campus, and to ask her to identify students and lecturer who would possibly like to participate. A day later, the researcher telephonically contacted one student who was in an internship programme, to explain the purpose of the project and to request his participation. The student was pleased to be able to participate.

4.2.5.1 Study sample

Brief description of the participants

Participant F had completed 18 months of R191 Business Studies in Public Management N6, was doing in-service training for 18 months at a local hospital in order to obtain a three-year National Diploma in Public Management. He was among the first group of students that had enrolled with the institution in 2014. That was at a time when the institution had no idea on where to begin in terms of accommodating SWLD.

Participant D was a current student from the Report 191 Business Studies programme, which runs for six months per level and requires vast amounts of reading to be done in quite a short time period before the end of the semester or trimester.

Participant E was from National Certificate (Vocation) NCV NQF L2, L3 or L4. NCV takes up to one year to complete a level. 25% of the syllabus is theoretical and 75% is practical.

Participant A is a head of department who has worked on the campus since 2008. She is in her late forties, holds a Master's degree in Education Management and is currently a PhD candidate.

Participant C has been lecturing SWLD in a separate setting since 2014. She has an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology and lectures R191 Business Studies.

Participant B has been an inclusive support coordinator since the inception of the campus's inclusive education pilot project in 2014. In fact, he is the person who advocated for the

implementation of the project with the college senior management. He is currently reading towards his Master's in Educational Psychology.

4.2.5.2 Profile of the research participants

Table 4.1 summarises the above information about the participants and presents the research participants' demographics. There are two female and four male participants. Their courses (or positions for employees) and their learning disabilities are also presented.

Table 4.1 Profile of the research participants

Participants	Course/Position	Gender	Disability
Participant F	In-service training student	Male	Visual impairment
Participant D	R191 Business N4 Student	Male	Visual impairment
Participant E	National Vocation Certificate	Male	Visual impairment
Participant A	Head of department: Business	Female	None
Participant C	Public Management lecturer	Female	None
Participant B	Inclusive support coordinator	Male	None

4.2.6 Methods of data generation

Maree (2016) described data-generation methods as research procedures that are utilised to collect and analyse data. Wahyuni (2012) asserts that these methods have specific measures, techniques and tools that are used to gather and analyse the data in order to create clues and evidence. With reference to this qualitative research study, the researcher employed two different methods of gathering data — a focus-group discussion and semi-structured interviews — in order to gather insights through structured, in-depth data analysis (Maree, 2016; Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

4.2.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Since a semi-structured interview is face-to-face or one-on-one guided conversation between the interviewer and interviewee, as defined by Cohen et al. (2013), it permitted the researcher to read the participants' non-verbal cues to better comprehend their experiences (Rule & John, 2011), thus allowing the researcher to gather more in-depth data. Some of the questions were open-ended, broad and general in order to allow participants to communicate the meaning of situation (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This also allowed the researcher to probe further to gather crucial data for the study, by interacting with the

participants and asking them additional questions to clarify their answers (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

In this study the researcher used semi-structured interviews with questions that aligned with the research questions and with the asset-based approach (ABA). Although the interview questions were design around the ABA, there were no specific instructions or questions that required the participants to have any background knowledge of the theory framing the study, and only the last two themed interview questions probed with the intention of framing the interview around the ABA. Considering that the topic focused on a positive orientation towards access with *success*, it would have been short-sighted for the researcher not to anticipate potential impediments to access and success. Hence this research question aimed at determining if there were any assets that had not yet been unearthed by the college which could have been the result of the impediments anticipated. While the researcher aimed at gathering ideas, suggestions and views from the participants on how access with success of the SWLD at the TVET college could be enhanced, the ABA was at the centre. The semi-structured interview questions were intentionally crafted to determine possible assets within and outside the college that could be identified by the participants in the improvement of access with success within the TVET. On the other hand, the first two interview themes attempted to gain an understanding of the current situation within the TVET college regarding issues of access and success of SWLD, and to determine if there was a need for the TVET to allow and even expand access, as well as to strive for the success of SWLD within the sector.

A limitation that the researcher experienced with the semi-structured interviews was that even though the researcher had planned the interviews ahead of time, and had ensured that the relevant questions would be asked to probe for more comparable and reliable data, the process of interviewing the participants was challenging as it required some skill. Certain questions were answered before they could be asked and that forced the researcher to jump around and skip questions that had already been answered. Moreover, an hour was allocated for the interviews, but they took longer than that with certain participants.

4.2.6.2 Focus-group discussions

A focus-group discussion involves people having an informal conversation about their beliefs, opinions, perceptions and attitudes toward an idea, product or service (Saunders et al., 2016). This requires the researcher to be immersed in those people's lives (Yin, 2016). It requires that one sets up an agenda so that the conversation can be a well-facilitated informal conversation with a purpose (Newby, 2010). Newby emphasises the importance of a setting that is conducive to a discussion, hence the focus-groups discussion with SWLD was conducted in an office, while the one with the academic and support staff was conducted in the boardroom to ensure the comfort of the participants.

Moreover, focus-group discussions (hereafter, FGD) allow participants to share knowledge as they learn from each other's perspectives, experiences and concerns. A researcher is able to gather more insight by encouraging the participants to reconsider their responses (Newcomer et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2016).

When selecting a sample for FGDs, it is recommended that the maximum number of participants should be 12 and the minimum six (Saunders et al., 2016; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). The six participants provided the researcher with flexible, elaborative, inexpensive and rich data (Yin, 2016). Furthermore, the participants were considered to be knowledgeable. The staff members had been with the institution since the commencement of the pilot programme, and were fully involved with the learning of the three SWLD, who directly participated in and experienced access and success at this particular TVET college.

The main aim of the FGD was to attempt to determine whether both SWLD and staff members were aware of the different assets within each tier of Mourad and Ways (1998) ABA model, in particular whether these assets had been mapped and mobilised to maximise access and increase opportunities of success for SWLD in the TVET college. The sharing of ideas as they responded in groups was a great platform to understand the staff members' and students' perceptions and observations of the resources and capabilities around them, since they had had the opportunity to participate in and observe issues of access and success on the campus since the inception of the SWLD inclusion programme.

Lastly, it is imperative to note that ground rules for the FGDs were established with both students and staff members. The researcher encouraged mutual respect to minimise the chances of the participants feeling reluctant to share their thoughts freely in the presence of others. Furthermore, the participants were made aware at the start of the FGD of the ethical considerations being taken into account by the researcher, and the researcher gave them informed consent documents to sign just before the commencement of the conversation, as advised by Saunders et al. (2016).

It is noteworthy to mention that although the FGDs were framed around the ABA, there were questions that were themed around potential impediments to access with success of SWLD in a TVET college. The aim of these questions was to understand the participants' interpretation of these factors, and at the same time to understand whether participants were aware of existing but under-mobilised or even unmapped assets, and if this constituted an impediment to access with success within the college.

The generation of data did not take more than an hour for each interview and was audiotaped to ensure that it was securely recorded for transcription.

4.2.6.3 Triangulation

The researcher uses two methods to generate data (Cohen et al., 2013), thus ensuring triangulation. This is a way of authenticating data that has been generated from different participants (Baškarada, 2014). Moreover, triangulation confirms the validity of the study, which is ensuring that tools used to collect data do measure what is expected to measure. Thus, similar questions (either verbatim or re-phrased slightly) were asked during the semi-structured interviews and the FGDs. Triangulation in this research study involved the use of semi-structured interviews, which were an important data collection method, and focus-group discussions for both SWLD and staff members.

4.2.7 Data-generation process

4.2.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

With the head of department (HoD): Business Studies

The first session was an outdoor meeting with the HoD, which took place in a quiet restaurant on 1 June 2019, just after 9am. There were no disturbances as it was a Saturday morning and there was not a lot of people at the resturant. The interview started off with an informal conversation to build up a rapport, which was not difficult since the researcher and HoD had known each other for a long time. The purpose of the study was explained to the HoD, after which the researcher began to engage with the interview questions. The session lasted about one hour. The interview was audio recorded with the permission of the paticipant. The researcher found the process quite challenging, as she had no experience in conducting research interviews.

With an in-service training SWLD

The second semi-structured interview was on 1 June 2019 at 3pm with the student who was doing his in-service training. This took place in the comfort of his home, as he arrived back home very late from work from Monday to Friday and this was convenient for him. There were no disturbances at all. The interview started off with an informal conversation to build a rapport, and was followed by the one-on-one semi-structured interview with the student. The purpose of the interview was to gather first-hand information about his ideas on his lived experiences, perceptions and concerns about issues of access with success of SWLD at the TVET college. This participant was able to provide in-depth data, since he was there when the SWLD inclusion programme was introduced, and had completed his studies and was busy doing in-service training. The session lasted a bit more than one hour due to the vast amount of information he had to share, and was audio recorded with the permission of the participant.

With two current SWLD

These interviews took place on 7 June 2019 at around 2pm. Initially the plan was to conduct the interviews at place that was convenient for and easily accessible to the students. An office that is normally used by students with visual impairment when they needed a quiet space for their audio reading was identified as a suitable venue, as the students were familiar with the setting and environment. However, the management of the inclusive support office on campus offered us their office, as the students were more familiar with it. It was a quiet, cool office with sufficient lighting. However, the office was not as convenient as anticipated. There were quite a few disturbances due to the continuous intrusion of SWLD who came to the office for their daily enquries. As a result, the interview recordings had to be paused and restarted frequently.

With the inclusive education lecturer

The interview with the full-time inclusive education lecturer was conducted on 7 June 2019 at 11.21am at the inclusive support office. The researcher took time to establish a rapport with the participant to put her at ease, as she appeared to be uncomfortable. The semi-structured interview lasted less than an hour, since she was hesitant and reluctant to respond to some questions.

With the inclusive support coordinator

The interview with the inclusive support coordinator took place on 6 June at 12.55pm at the inclusive support office, but began with a less informal conversation about the different learning disabilities that SWLD on campus have. It did not take too long to move straight to the actual interview, which lasted not more than a hour.

4.2.7.2 Focus-group discussions

SWLD

The focus-group discussions complemented the semi-structured interviews. The first focus group discussion took place on 12 June 2019 with two of the SWLD at the residence of one of the students. One of the SWLD participants had reported an emergency and could not therefore be available. It was too late to find a replacement. The researcher first introduced herself and then welcomed both the participants, who were asked to introduce themselves to the whole group. The researcher then confirmed with the participants that their partcipation was voluntary, and that they did not have to respond to any questions which made them feel uncomfortable. Participants were further reminded about the confidentiality of the study, and the respect that was stipulated in the consent forms. The converstation started informally, to build rapport. The FGD followed, which lasted for one hour and 20 minutes, and was audio recorded with the permission of the participants.

Staff members

The second phase of data generation took place on 11 June 2019 at 12.59pm in the inclusive support office, and lasted for about an hour. This was the second focus group discussion, which helped to produce qualitative data through encouraging collegial interaction between the inclusive education lecturer, the HoD and the inclusive support coordinator. The researcher first introduced herself and then welcomed all the participants. The purpose of the study was described, and the participants were asked to introduce themselves to the whole group. The researcher then confirmed with the participants that their participation was voluntary and that they did not have to respond to any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. As with the FGD for students, they were also reminded about issues of confidentiality and respect, which were discussed in the consent forms. Thereafter, the converstation started informally to build rapport, followed by FGD which was audio recorded with the permission of the participants.

4.2.8 Data analysis

The data generated was analysed using thematic analysis, as this form of analysis is mostly used in qualitative studies (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thematic analysis entails outlining, examining and recording themes within the data that has been generated (Terry et al., 2017). These themes are patterns across the data sets, which are integral to the description of a phenomenon as they are linked to the research questions and are later grouped into categories for analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Thematic analysis was performed through a process of coding, which consisted of six phases: getting familiar with the data, creating first codes, formulating themes among the codes, reviewing those themes, naming the themes, and producing the final report (Braun et al., 2018).

4.2.9 Trustworthiness

Creswell and Poth (2017) state that trustworthiness means that an informed reader should be able to trust that the way the researcher conducted his or her study was free from bias. Trustworthiness includes dependability, credibility and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The following sections elaborate further on these elements of trustworthiness.

4.2.9.1 Credibility

A researcher's deductions must stem from the data, since the researcher must attempt to yield findings that are convincing and believable (Noble & Smith, 2015). Credibility is proven when there is an agreement between the researcher and the participant about the interpretation and constructions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Several strategies to enhance credibility in research include explanation of the data-gathering process, transparent presentation of the data, and acknowledgment of any bias. Triangulation was also ensured by using more than one data-collection tool, namely semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions, in order to support the findings generated in this study (Baškarada, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The semi-structured interviews and the focus-group

discussions followed the same format and sequence of questioning for all research participants. However, questions for the academic staff and management were slightly different from those for the students, but all participants were asked about the same issues in the same way.

Credibility was also assured by the fact that the researcher was familiar with the organisational culture of the campus, the staff members and the students due to years of working with the institution (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Furthermore, the researcher ensured the rigour and authenticity of the study through recording the interviews to produce verbatim transcriptions. These transcriptions were presented to the participants so that they could verify whether everything had been captured correctly (Grbich, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

4.2.9.2 Dependability

Saunders et al. (2016) state that dependability in qualitative research is defined by consistency, where variability can be tracked down and ascribed to identified sources. The qualitative assumption is that the social world is always being constructed, unlike other researchers who believe in an unchanging world, hence the verification of the interview content scripts by participants.

Furthermore, a rapport was established in the opening moments of the interviews and discussions, and the researcher encouraged honesty on the part of the participants by assuring them that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that were being asked. The researcher used a reflective journal for the duration of the study in order to record factors that would influence the study, such as the researcher's feelings, opinions, perceptions and thoughts (Korstjens, & Moser, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015), and also continuously engaged with other researchers to avoid bias (Noble & Smith, 2015). The researcher also ensured that the study included clear research questions, and an unambiguous explanation of the research design (Saunders et al., 2016).

Moreover, adhering to the ethical considerations that must be taken into account in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017) also helped to ensure dependability. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the university and informed consent from the college and all the participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study, as well as during the reporting of the findings, through the use of pseudonyms.

4.2.9.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with whether the findings reveal the lived experiences, ideas and perceptions of the participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It questions the level to which the conclusions and findings are influenced by the participants more than by the researchers (Saunders et al., 2016), meaning that the findings should reflect the participants' enquiry itself and not the bias of the researcher. Triangulation was used to reduce the possible effect of the research's bias (Baškarada, 2014). Baškarada (2014) further states that one must ask oneself if the findings of the study could be confirmed by another. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that the statements about the research participants' socially constructed realities are in line what the participants meant (Saunders et al., 2016). To ensure this the researcher created trust and rapport with the participants. This was easy due to the researcher's familiarity with most of the participants. Lastly, the verification of the interpretation and analysis of the data by the participants was vital, and so the data was returned to the participants for verification. Furthermore the researcher spent time reading the transcriptions made from the audio tape recordings and identifying patterns, bearing in mind the conclusions of the relevant literature and the theoretical framework of ABA (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Finally, in order to diminish the researcher's bias the researcher had a discussion with her supervisor about the analysis and findings of the research.

4.2.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations must be given priority before embarking on and during a research study (Yin, 2016), and the principles involved are confidentiality, anonymity, autonomy, informed consent and non-maleficence. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee (See Appendix A). A consent letter was sent to the college principal to request permission to conduct the study at the TVET college (See Appendix B) Lastly, the participants were given consent forms to sign as participants in the study(See Appendix C1, C2, D1, D2, E1 and E2).

Before the participants signed the consent forms it was explained to them that the study would bring no harm to them physically, psychologically, mentally or otherwise (Putnam & Banghart, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016), thus addressing the principle of non-maleficence. The principle of autonomy was addressed by informing the participants that they were respected, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage if they wished to do so, without any penalty or consequences (Yin, 2016). I informed the participants of the aim of the study, and explained their role and how they would benefit from the study. This coheres with the principle of beneficence. Lastly, I informed them that their names would not be revealed in the study (Salkind, 2010), and that they would remain anonymous, thus addressing the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Upon conclusion of the study, I returned the results to the participants to verify if the data was a true reflection of the data they had provided, and if it represented their voice.

4.2.11 Limitations of the study

The limitations of a study are the shortcoming, influences, and conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher and that potentially restrict the methodology and the conclusions (Simon & Goes, 2013).

The study was conducted at a campus where the researcher was employed three years ago. That may have influenced in the manner in which the participants responded, because they knew the researcher. Secondly, the availability of the students for the interviews and focus-

group discussions was limited, as a result of their writing May/June examinations. But this potential limitation was overcome by arranging to conduct interviews after lectures in the afternoon, since most of the SWLD live on campus. Thirdly, time was a limitation, as students did not have long stretches of time to spend on the interviews and focus-group discussions, as they had to schedule them around their final examination. This was overcome by splitting the sessions into smaller, multiple sessions.

Furthermore, the type of questions asked could have been a potential limitation if the participants felt uncomfortable responding to them. That was overcome by reminding them of the ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity (Salkind, 2010). There was also a potential practical limitation in relation to the battery of the voice recorder possibly running flat when I conducted the interviews and focus-group discussions. This was overcome by having two audio recorders with rechargeable batteries, so that if one ran out I could continue with the interviews and discussions using the other one while I recharged. The final potential limitation was my possible bias as a researcher, as I work at this TVET college and have worked on this particular campus with SWLD. The process of data analysis could therefore have demonstrated my bias. However, as a researcher I was able to distance myself from the study to prevent my bias intruding into the data interpretation. I ensure that I used direct quotes or the exact words of the participants so that the data obtained from the participants was not distorted.

4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the methods used by the researcher to understand access with success of SWLD at a specific TVET college. The chapter began by clarifying the research topic and questions, followed by a justification of the interpretive research paradigm employed. The researcher then discussed the qualitative research approach and its relevance to the research, and the appropriateness of the case study research design, before briefly describing the research setting. After discussing the sampling techniques, there was a brief description of the study sample, followed by a profile of the research participants. The semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions used to generate data were described, followed by a

discussion on the thematic analysis used to analyse the data. The principles of trustworthiness that guide the data analysis were presented, along with the ethical considerations taken into account. The chapter then concluded by presenting the limitations of the study. The following chapter discusses the research findings according to the four main themes derived from the process of thematic analysis.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the researcher's justification for the methodology employed in the study. This chapter focuses on the data analysis and presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the four research questions. The data generated from the semi-structured interviews and the focus-group discussions is categorised into themes and sub-themes, informed by the following research questions:

1. What is our understanding of the current situation regarding access with success of SWLD at a TVET college?
2. Why is there a need for access with success of SWLD at a TVET college?
3. What are the potential impediments to access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges in South Africa?
4. How can access with success of SWLD be enhanced/promoted?

Verbatim quotations are employed when presenting the data to ensure that the participants' voices remain foregrounded, and to support interpretations. The discussion of the findings is informed by the theoretical framework (the assets-based approach), and is also presented in relation to the reviewed literature.

5.2 THEMES

Data from the semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions was categorised into themes and sub-themes (see Table 5.1) in response to the first two research questions:

- What is our understanding of the current situation regarding access with success of SWLD at a TVET college?

- Why is there a need for access with success of SWLD at a TVET college?

Table 0.1 Questions 1 and 2: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Participants' current experiences of access with success at a TVET college	- Willing staff members with no training - Looking beyond discriminatory attitudes - Flexible practices for reasonable accommodation - Accessibility of the physical environment
2. Justification of the need for access with success of SWLD at a TVET college	- A need for proper implementation of inclusive education - A need for economic independence - A need to search for intrinsic motivation

After the semi-structured interviews, two focus-group discussions took place with the same participants. The data enabled the researcher to gather information that had mostly not been shared during the semi-structured interviews. Five sub-themes that related to the tiers of Mourad and Ways' (1998) assets-based framework emerged from the focus-group discussion and semi-structured interviews. The analysis and discussion of asset tiers that are currently utilised and underutilised in the access with success of SWLD at the TVET College was categorised into themes and sub-themes, as shown in Table 5.2. These themes and sub-themes address the third and fourth research questions:

- What are the potential impediments to access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges in South Africa?
- How can access with success of SWLD be enhanced/promoted?

Table 0.2 Questions 3 and 4: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Unearthed assets as an impediment to access with success of SWLD at TVET colleges	- Underutilised assets - Untapped SWLD potential - Lack of availability of an internal inclusion policy document
2. Towards the enhancement of access with success of SWLD at a TVET college	- Lecturers as assets - Community involvement - Coordinated efforts

In this section, the researcher presents a discussion of the four themes that emerged from the analysis of the data generated from SWLD and staff members of the TVET college. Themes 3 and 4 discuss the mobilisation of asset tiers that are currently underutilised in the access and success of SWLD at the TVET college.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Participants' current experiences of access with success at a TVET college

5.2.1.1 Willing staff members with no training

The findings revealed that the staff members lack access to staff development in the area of special needs education. Both SWLD and staff members reported a need for staff members to receive training. According to the students, some lecturers are willing to support the students but have no confidence in how to teach or even understand the diverse needs of SWLD. This is in line with Mangope, Otukile-Mongwaketse, Dinama and Kuyini's (2018) findings on the experiences of special education student educators at the University of Botswana. Mangope et al. (2018) indicate that while the educators had received formal training on inclusive education, they still lacked confidence in teaching students with special needs. To this effect, this was what Participant F had to say about staff development:

I don't think they are even trained to handle people with disabilities. You can tell that they are struggling, or when they are trying to explain something, they don't even know what to do or what so say or how to say it.

He further stated:

The campus management also needs to be educated so that they'd know how to support students. But for now they are still trying but more training is needed

According to Participant D, it is not only special needs education training that is required, but specialised computer skills training, since most of the students make use of specialised software to access their study materials.

Just to equip othisha abakhona kwi campus ngama special skills so that they can cope with us, especial laba abafundisa amacomputers.

[Just to equip lecturers with special skills so that they can cope with us, especially those who teach computer studies.]

However, it was mentioned that some lecturers are well equipped and experienced in teaching SWLD, not necessarily because they have had any formal training on inclusive education, but because of training received during their first tertiary qualification and the small amount of informal training that was once provided by the TVET college. Participant C testifies:

I did get one informal training ngiqala ukubafundisa. Maybe ingoba ngenza psychology so, ngaba comfortable ngifika [I did get one informal training when I first started teaching. Maybe it is because I did a course in psychology, so I was comfortable from the first day I started…] I spend one-on-one after hours with students, even during the weekends…even to support them emotionally.

During the focus-group discussion, the same sentiments were shared by management, and Participant A who is the Head of Department stated that training is still underway:

Staff should get a thorough training. Lecturers are still not yet ready. We are still trying on getting assistance on how to deal with students. Only those that started with R191 are partially ready but not NCV lecturers.

The above findings imply that the lecturers do have a will to support SWLD but do not have adequate knowledge and the skills that are required to support SWLD. This contradicts most studies regarding inclusive education, for example Makhalemele and Nel (2016), Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) and Collins et al. (2019). Collins et al. (2019) report that their Australian participants described their tutors and lecturers as unhelpful due to a lack of awareness of their needs, and their findings indicate that most educators do not wish to teach SWLD due to a lack of training. However, in this study the fact that the lecturers had not received formal training in inclusive education did not stop them from going the extra mile and even spending extra hours after work and on weekends to support SWLD. This suggests that a willingness to teach SWLD can be laid as the foundation of any formal training on inclusive education. To this effect, and as alluded to in the above quotations, there is a need for staff development on inclusive education training to support lecturers' well-intentioned dedication to SWLD.

5.2.1.2 Looking beyond discriminatory attitudes

In this sub-theme the findings on the attitudes of students and staff members towards SWLD presented some contradictions. It was found that as much as there is a positive atmosphere in the TVET college regarding the acceptance and accommodation of SWLD on the campus, there is still a need to develop and practise non-discriminatory approaches and attitudes towards SWLD. During the interviews, staff members indicated that SWLD are well received by lecturers and management. This is similar to the findings of a study conducted by Mukhopadhyay (2014) in Botswana, where the exploration of teachers' attitudes revealed positive attitudes towards inclusion, as well as the acknowledgement of diversity and a willingness to accommodate all learners. Below are the statements expressed by the staff member participants:

Participant B:

> *Lecturers are very supportive. They love them. The campus manager is very supportive. I remember that one day he used his money to buy cement to build the ramps for the students. Other staff members are also supportive and have a good attitude while others feel that these students belong to someone else, they still don't know what's happening. So there is still that attitude.*

Participant A:

> *Initially they had negative attitudes, but as we continue the attitude started to change now because, we are having more and more of such students. The reason the attitude is changing now is because of training we are having.*

Participant C:

> *I think as bethola more training bazoba comfortable. Coz okwamanje they are not comfortable with students with learning disabilities. But as icollege iqhubeka to provide more trainings bazogcina be more comfortable.*

> *[I think as they get more training, they'll get comfortable. For now they (lecturers) are not comfortable with students with learning disabilities. But as the college continues to provide more trainings they'll end up being more comfortable.]*

However, the SWLD participants reported attitudinal barriers, and revealed that some lecturers are not as supportive and helpful in class. This is reflected in the findings of Yaraya, Masalimova, Vasbieva and Grudtsina (2018), who contend that a lack of knowledge in special pedagogy is the main reason for educators' unwelcoming attitude and low level of enthusiasm for working with SWLD.

Participant F even seemed reluctant to express his views on the lecturers. It was not long after taking a deep sigh that he said:

Lecturers differ. Sometimes I end up feeling excluded and ask myself why am I in class, Why am I here…Sometimes I sit alone, not knowing what to do in Maths Lit class.

Participant E viewed the attitudinal barrier as conscious and purposeful:

Attitude youkuthi ey uyahlupha lomfundi odisabled…I'm trying to say that umuntu wayeyibona kuma negotiations nomuntu onama powers owayengenza izinto zenzenke kodwa akhande I bareer nje.

[*This attitude of saying disable students are irritating…I'm trying to say it was clear during the negotiations that those who (senior management) were in power made things difficult even when they had to make things happen, they just purposely created a barrier.*]

Participants D highlighted a lack of respect for SWLD:

When you'd ask something abanye abantu [other people] would make a joke of you.

The feeling of being a burden and being ridiculed by their peers is in accordance with the findings of Lehohla and Hlalele (2014), and Nuwagaba and Rule (2016). This also resonates with Donohue and Bornman's (2014) study on South African educators' attitudes towards learners' inclusion in their mainstream classrooms, which found that there were still attitudinal barriers caused by discrimination on the part of students without disabilities or visible disabilities, thus leading to possibilities for exclusion and intimidation.

5.2.1.3 Flexible practices for reasonable accommodation

This sub-theme refers to lecturers' capability to adapt their teaching methods in order to accommodate students' learning styles. When lecturers were asked if they were aware of any different teaching methods and assessment techniques that could be used to accommodate SWLD in their classrooms, this is how all the staff member participants responded:

No, we only use scribes.

One lecturer, Participant C, further said:

During the continuous assessments, I don't think they are properly accommodated for. They are only accommodated for during the exams.

During the focus group interview with the SWLD participants, this is what was said by:

Those teaching methods used by our lecturers do not work for us, they usually forget that there are SWLD in class.

These findings support those of Mosia and Phasha (2017), but it is interesting to note that this campus's SWLD did not seem to be hindered from accessing curriculum knowledge just like their peers, regardless of the lack of availability of flexible practices. This was demonstrated by the following:

Participant D:

I rely on other students for assistance. I also record lecturers in class so that I can still learn on my own.

During the focus-group discussions, staff members were asked about the retention rate, the pass rate and the success of SWLD, considering the fact that there is little evidence of flexible practices and reasonable accommodation on the campus. The following similar views were shared:

Participant A:

Our students are hard workers…they are always the highest.

Participant B:

Even if the situation is not good, they (students) push through….the pass rate is good.

What has emerged clearly from these responses is that students' individual learning styles and assessments styles are not considered at all at this TVET college. The responses further

revealed that lecturers are not even aware of their students' preferred learning styles. According to Mohangi (2018), students have their unique learning preferences that assist them to learn at their level best, hence different teaching strategies must be utilised.

5.2.1.4 Accessibility of the physical environment

The findings indicated that the TVET college was not entirely physically accessible to SWLD, especially students with physical and visual impairments. This was confirmed by the following staff member testimonies:

Participant B:

> *I would rate it 50 percent accessible and 50% inaccessible. The campus is still an old building. There are no ramps in the classrooms, students need someone to assist them. If you look at the corridors, there are aircons all over. Students with visual impairments bump themselves on those aircons. There is chaos in the passages, even some staff members still park their cars where students move around.*

Participant C:

> *So far they are not accessible, that is why moving around becomes an emotional burden to them because each and every movement they make, they have to rely on other students.*

Participant A:

> *It's partially accessible, I cannot say it is completely accessible. Students can only access the ground floor buildings. I am happy to inform you that we now have someone who is working towards the revamping of the building.*

The students, on the other hand, seem to have accepted the inaccessible infrastructure. They did not perceive themselves to be victims of the inaccessible structures of the college, but

were instead guided by a positive attitude and a sense of self-determination in relation to their environment, as shown in these extracts.

Participant F:

> *I don't have any problems of moving around. My classes were all on the ground floor. We all use K1 and a computer lab on the ground. I was also given a hostel room on the ground floor. And my friends know that I cannot come move up so they must come to me, and I'm not bothered by that.*

Participant E:

> *The building was not user-friendly, maybe it is user-friendly. It is just that we never received an orientation and mobility to show us how to move around the hostels, classes and offices. So I'm saying it was not friendly because I never had a picture of what the building looked like.*

Participant D:

> *It's tough to navigate from one venue to venue, I used to get support from my class mates.*

The findings reveal that the TVET college was not completely accessible, but that did not hinder the students' academic access, social access and physical access.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Justification of the need for access with success of SWLD at a TVET college

5.2.2.1 A need for proper implementation of inclusive education

Upon examination of the responses, it was particularly apparent that the campus in this study is the only campus within the college that has attempted to grant access to SWLD. When the participants were asked if anything had been done by the college to promote inclusive education, it was clear that there is not much that the college does to invite or positively

influence SWLD to enrol with the institution. It is also noticeable that even those who do access the TVET college resort to opting for programmes that are not of their choosing. This is confirmed by the following student statements:

Participant D:

> *I was told to do Transport and logistic, nobody told me about other programmes. At least we are not denied access to get an opportunity to study. This is the only campus to give us an opportunity, others said they don't have the resources. But I am amazed how, if this campus can do it.*

Participant E:

> *I've been struggling since 2008 ngiqeda umatric bengine challenge youkuthi ngithole I institution ezongamukela. To be honest I didn't know anything about the courses. I was just happy ukuthi ngingene kwi tertiary institution ngoba besengihleli isikhathi eside.*

> *[I've been struggling since I completed matric in 2008. I could not find an institution that could accept me. To be honest I didn't know anything about the courses. I was just happy to be granted access at a tertiary institution after waiting for quite a long time.]*

Participant B:

> *To be honest with you, if ever there is anything it is too little. I've never seen anything done by the college. It's only when students come here when they get assistance. Even the students who qualify for universities. Students come here without clear information, they just want to register and they register for wrong programmes and I think that is not fair.*

This finding supports the findings of many other researchers (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016; Mutanga, 2017) that access to higher education is still a sensitive subject for many people with disabilities. Despite the existing legislation and the prevailing discourse that requires higher education to create access for SWLD, students still struggle to access

education at the institutions of their choice. Even if they do gain access, there are still limited opportunities to enrol in their desired field of study. This finding supports Malle et al.'s (2015) study that investigated the inclusion of SWLD in formal vocational education in Ethiopia, and which revealed that students with disabilities were excluded from some programmes due to their disabilities. Similarly, Mosia and Phasha (2017) sought to examine access to the curriculum by SWLD in Lesotho's institutions of higher learning, and discovered that SWLD could not freely select the courses of their choice due to institutional barriers.

Furthermore, as much as the college demonstrated good intent by allowing access to SWLD, the findings reveal that it was unable to fully implement what inclusive education intends. Most SWLD are taught in a different setting from other students, with the intention of giving them special attention, which one participant referred to as "fair discrimination". This fair discrimination is informed by the view that full inclusion is not always the best strategy for accommodating the educational needs of SWLD. The extracts below confirm that there is indeed a need for the proper implementation of inclusive education on this particular TVET campus. These findings echo those of Siwela (2017), who finds that SWLD are still excluded and marginalised, even though the South African Constitution emphasises the recognition of diversity and of the right to education for all. This is evidence that students with disabilities remain vulnerable to exclusion from the educational system, including the post-education sector, and in this case TVET colleges are no exception.

The staff members highlighted the exclusion of SWLD from mainstream classes:

Participant B:

> *Students should be included in the mainstream education. They should be in the classes like everyone, not that they should be on their own as it is happening in this campus. They should be included and learn to socialise with other people. We think we doing them a favour by letting them in their own classes, yet we are excluding them.*

Participant C:

It is still a challenge. Lecturers still feel like students with learning disabilities should be excluded…it's like abami (they are mine) with Mr. S. I think it will take time.

The student participants voiced their unhappiness with the college's failure to integrate SWLD and to implement inclusive education properly:

Participant D:

Ukuba kuya ngam, the campus ngabe idlala indima enkulu nge integration. Why sifuna Intergration? Izokwenza amastudents onke la ngaphakathi ekolishi eyiunderstande kancono lento yedisability, siphume kule attitude yokuthi thina as disabled students kumele sifunde sodwa. Omunye umuntu ucabanga ukuthi senza icourse ehlukile kwabanye. Abanye baze bebuze ukuthi le Public Management oyenzayo iyafana yini neyethu?

[If I were to do things, the campus would focus on integration. Why do we want an intergration? To make other students understand issues of disability, in that way it will be removing negative attitudes that we have to be taught in a different setting. Others even think that we are doing a different course compared to them…one even once asked me if our Public Management course was different from them.]

Participant E:

At least we are not denied access to get an opportunity to study even though the college is still doing it the wrong way.

Inclusion ayikakabi yi inclusion. Uma bengasusa lento youthi bayenze as a pilot project, ingaba inbaba ilento efuna ukuba iyona. Siqale I inclusive kodwa lababantu babekwe eceleni okuthiwa I inlcusive education, but why bengaka includiwe nabanye abafundi abangenamadisabilties…if kungasuswa that stigma nje.

[Inclusion is not yet an inclusion. If they could move from this idea of calling it a pilot project, it can become what it really should be. There are still people who are still excluded. Why are students still not yet included in the same classroom with other students without disabilities?]

Participant E further warned the college about not meeting the employment equity requirements regarding the employment of people with disabilities. Participant E was of the opinion that the college cannot completely implement inclusive education without representation from at least one staff member who has a learning disability. He therefore argued:

> *Uma ukhuluma nge inclusive kumele uyiqale la emsebenzini, but akekho umuntu osebenzayo onale disability who can advise the college. Abantu aba disabled banlenkinga yonkuthi uma uzokhuluma nge disability ungenayo abakuzwa kahle ngoba lento uyikhuma ngetheory awyphili. So inking enkulu iyi employment of people abane disability.*

> *[If we talk about inclusion, it must start here at work, but there is no employee with a disability who would advise the college. People with disabilities don't receive it well when a person without a disability speaks on their behalf, it's just a theory to them. So one big problem is the employment of people with disabilities in the college.]*

This warning resonates with Mutanga (2017) and the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013), who state that the involvement of people with disabilities in the matters that concern them is vital, as it is one way of sending a strong message of inclusion.

Drawing from the literature, it is clear that the necessary inclusive policies are already in place, hence the recognised increased access of SWLD to institutions of learning (Khoza, 2016). However, what is of serious concern is the lack of proper implementation of these policies, as outlined in the findings. It is clear, as indicted by Mokiwa (2014) and Yssel et al. (2016), that this lack of implementation of policies is an ongoing issue of concern in post-education institutions. The Department of Social Development (2016) has therefore proposed strategies to guide policy implementation at institutions that are still failing to implement policies and legislations, and to emphasise accountability.

5.2.2.2 A need for economic independence

When SWLD were asked about their motivation to study at the college, they unanimously stated that they wanted to succeed so that they may pursue their aims in life. This is what the student participants said:

Participant D:

> *I aim to find a job so that I can be financially independent. Reach prosperity. I want to be on my own, not to depend on parents and siblings.*

Participant E:

> *Uma uthola ipportunity enje, ufunda ukuzimela. It opends amathuba amaningi as an individual ukuthi ngithole umsebenzi odecent. [If you get such opportunities, you get to learn to be independent. It opens up doors for an individual to get a decent job.]*

> *The campus might not be the best, but it is giving us an opportunity to improve our lives, and hopefully go out there and make something out of ourselves.*

Participant F, who is not doing his in-service training, said the following:

> *It was helpful because la engikhona [where I am] it's through my studies, course and experiences.*

SWLD have the same dreams and aspirations as all other students. It has already been mentioned in section 3.3.3 that access with success is a gateway to academic achievement that facilitates the opportunity to participate in professional employment opportunities, as declared by UNESCO (2016) and as found by Terblanche (2017). If these dreams and aims are realised, the chain of people with disabilities identified as NEET (not in education, employment, or training) could be broken.

5.2.2.3 A need to search for intrinsic motivation

The findings of this study showed that SWLD need to possess intrinsic motivation in order to successfully navigate through daily life at the TVET college. As has been mentioned in

section 3.6, SWLD are extremely emotionally vulnerable as they grapple with themselves and others during the period of decision making and transition to higher education. It is for this reason that the student participants advocated for the importance of every SWLD having the opportunity to access further education through TVET colleges, since this particular college has demonstrated that post-school education is indeed accessible to SWLD. Participant E commented on the future opportunities that his TVET programme affords:

> *Coming to the college has really helped me. I have learned a lot in Transport and Logistics. I believe that it will help open doors for me to seek for employment.*

Participant F focused on the impact on his self-esteem:

> *Learning in this college izoshintsha impilo yami ibe kenye ilevel. Ufunda ikwakha ifriendship, nokukhuluma nabanye abantu abaningi. Isusa ukuzenyeza. Indawo enje ikunikeza ipatform ukushintsha imiqondo yabantu abaniningi ukufindisa I communinity ukuthi nawe udisabled uyafana nabanye abantu. Ingi empowerisha kakhulu.*

> *[Learning in this college will change my life to a better level. You learn to build friendships, to associate with people. It removes low-self-esteem. Such places give you a platform to change people's thinking. You get to teach people that people with disabilities are just the same as others. It's really empowering.]*

Participant D highlighted the positive shift in attitude and mindset that TVET education has brought about:

> *The challenges angenze ngaba nexperience ehambisana ne confidence ngokwempilo, in this college amenza umuntu wayibuka ngenye indlela idability.*

> *[The challenges (in the college) gave me experience and confidence regarding life, in this college, I have learned a different view about being disabled.]*

They further express their determination as follows:

Participant E:

We are all doing well academically. Nothing can stop us from being successful. Not that we are competing, but we're using the opportunity that the college has given to us.

Participant F:

Uma ngiphasa angiphasi ngokuthi ngingenzelwa ifavour,kumele ngisebenza hard ukuthi ngitho into youkuti name ngiziqhenye ngayo ngithi ngayisebenzea. Abantu asibashiye nementality that we can also do it.

[When I pass it shouldn't be as if someone did me a favour, I must work hard so that I will be proud of what I have worked for. We need to leave people with this mentality that we can also do it.]

He further encouraged:

Mhla uphuma la kulegate phuma nalento owayizela la ekhampasini.

[When you leave the campus, leave with what you came for.]

During the focus group interview, Participant D said:

You need to know why you are here. Kfanele ube [you have to be] motivated. However challenges will be there, but akfanele ube [you cannot be] demotivated.

To confirm their self-determination, the SWLD participants were asked to share their success stories, and the highlights of their time at the TVET college. Participant E confidently articulated the following:

Since I came to this campus, kyaqala ukuthi iSRC ibe nomuntu odisabled, nokuthola amadivices on time, that was our success. ... Kwafika people from BCC News bezobuza izitori Zethu with my friend, he's was a martial arts champion. Two, eclassini im one of the best students in class. Ngathola 5 As out of 7 subjects. 5

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distinctions and 2 Bs. Okunye, ngisevile kuSRC last year, and this year I was selected as a deputy president of this campus.

[Since I came to this campus, it is the first time to have a person with a disability in the SRC, even to receive devices on time: that was our success. […] We were also interviewed by BBC News to get my story and a martial arts champion friend of mine. Secondly, I am the best student in class. I got 5 A's out of 7 subjects. 5 distinctions and 2 B's. Moreover, I was a member of the SRC last year, and this year I was selected as a deputy president of this campus.]

Participant D then mentioned that he's now doing his N6 and has passed all the modules since joining the college.

Participant F, who is now doing his in-service training, said:

Istory asaba esimnandi empilweni yam ngabona ukuthi [The most exciting news in my life] was when I was told that the gate is open for my success, when the TVET approve our request to have access. Wonke ama [all] my certificates ami from N4 to N6 are all distinctions, even though there were so many challenges…and when I received call to go do my in-service training….And I am currently studying the political science, studying my first year modules.

Participant E further stated the following:

I did well in L2. I passed 6 subjects out of 7… And the day we received our devices.

The findings certainly validate the significance of intrinsic motivation as a primary tier asset, which builds up a positive attitude and a sense of self-determination in the lives of SWLD. It is self-determination that enables SWLD to work towards their intended goals. This finding is confirmed by Maciver et al. (2018), who found that intrinsic motivation is indeed essential for any SWLD's success. The participants seemed to understand their learning disability and how it affects their learning, and were thus able to flip the tables through employing self-confidence and optimism, which are critical assets for SWLD and are major contributing factors to SWLD's problem-solving capabilities and ultimate success. Students are well

aware of what they need to do to beat the odds they face in their learning due to their learning disabilities; as a result, they mobilise their internal strengths. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a need for TVET colleges to permit access to SWLD so that they may learn to independently grow these internal strengths, which will in turn push them to academic success.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Unearthed assets as an impediment to access with success of SWLD at a TVET college

At the heart of this section is the recognition of the TVET college's existing and potential assets that may be or are currently being mobilised to improve access with success of SWLD. Notwithstanding the challenges that are potential impediments to access with success of SWLD, both the SWLD and staff member participants interestingly alluded to various assets that are currently being considered to enhance SWLD's access with success. Theme 3 and Theme 4 attempt to respond to the last two critical questions of the study

5.2.3.1 Underutilised assets

Amongst the impediments to access and success that were identified by the participants was a lack of knowledge on how to utilise available assets. As mentioned in section 5.2.1.1, SWLD were of the view that staff members at the TVET college seem to lack knowledge on how to address SWLD's educational needs — how to conducting an appropriate orientation for them, how to ensure their safe mobility, how to convert textbooks to student's preferred methods of engagement, how to teach computer-related subjects, how to capacitate students to use their assistive devices, and how to communicate with some of the SWLD. In other words, the resources are available, but are not being fully utilised to address the abovementioned SWLD's educational needs. These findings are similar to those mentioned by Nel (2018). Below are statements expressed by the SWLD participants:

Participant E:

We find our own way to convert text books… Project office said converting is not allowed, it's copy right even if we tell them it's doable.

The participants claimed that devices are available, but they are not what the SWLD wanted or expected, and even lecturers do not possess the skills to use them correctly:

Participant D:

Nobody asked us what kind [devices] we need.

Participant E:

Lecturers need to be trained on how these devices work.

Participant F:

We don't have the software to convert or scan incwadi [book]. That should have come with the package we were given. We ask for help from outside to convert books for us. Kunalomfethu esasifunda naye owaye joyine isociety [There is this guy who joined the society] for the Blind in Durban. We convert and share with other students.

Participant D:

Le method abayisebenzisayo yokuskena izincwadi ayisebenzi futhi isidlela isikhath. [This method of scanning they use doesn't work, it consumes time.] Luckily for me ngyakwazi ukuwasebenzisa wonke amadevices [Luckily for me I know how to use these devices].

Participant C:

We don't know how to use them [devices].

These statements suggest that resources are at the college's disposal, but are being underutilised. For an example, SWLD on this particular campus are well aware of possible resources that may be mobilised by the college to convert textbooks to their preferred methods of engagement, which could be considered part of the primary tier of assets within

the college (Mourad & Ways, 1998). It was noticeable that students already have relationships with 'outside' tiers (Mourad & Ways, 1998) that are beyond the college. These are external people or organisations who have the resources to convert textbooks, and who the SWLD are connected with and have good relations with. Interestingly, one student claimed to have experience in how to convert textbooks, and knowledge of the kind of software to be utilised.

Mapping of assets includes motivating and empowering people to offer their capabilities (Khanare, 2018). In light of this, the college needs to map, mobilise and harness these available primary tiers as resources to address the issue of curriculum access for SWLD. Considering that assets in the 'outside' tier are not easily accessible, perhaps the first step would be to harness the primary tier, which in this case would refer to students' software knowledge and experience, to guide the college in resolving the challenge of textbook conversion. This will enable SWLD to timeously access the relevant study material in order to confidently access information just like their counterparts.

5.2.3.2 Untapped SWLD potential

When Participant E, who is the SRC Deputy President, was asked about his motivation to study, he firstly narrated his background before joining the TVET college as a student.

> *[Ukuba around abantu aba educated. Kwabakhona ukuthi sengibasizile abantu, njengamanje it's high time ukuthi name ngizame ukuzisiza. Ukusebenza ungafundile, kukunikeza imali engangokungafundi kwakho.]*

> *To be around educated people. I reached a point where I realised that I had done enough with assisting others, so it was high time I focused on myself. I realised that having a job without a proper education pays you a salary similar to your level of education.*

It was interesting to learn that Participant E had worked on a voluntary basis as a braille instructor until he was fully employed as a supervisor by an institution for people with

disabilities. Part of his work was to conduct disability awareness campaigns and provide counselling. He worked closely with social workers and other health practitioners, and was responsible for the placement of people with disabilities in schools. He was proud to mention that one of his previous students is now reading towards a Master's degree. Over and above that, he is an orientation and mobility instructor, and a national cricket player, who is also very skilled in using different computer programs for students with visual impairments.

It is worth noting that Participant E seemed to possess all the skills, talents and capacities that may be required by the TVET college to address the deficiencies and impediments experienced by SWLD on the campus. However, looking at the impediments that were previously mentioned by the participants, it is clear that the college is not aware of this participant's potential, hence SWLD are still experiencing challenges that could have been addressed temporarily while awaiting formal processes. Figure 5.1 illustrates Participant E's untapped assets:

Figure 0.1 Participant E's untapped assets

Participant D with learning disabilities also disclosed the following during the focus group interview:

> *I am computer literate. I'm very good with computers. It's just that I was never given a chance. I know almost all the programs. They [college] are fully aware that I'm capable of using the computer but never.*

In light of the above, it could be concluded that there might be more SWLD with untapped potential that could be mobilised to support access and success of SWLD. Perhaps the question is, who should map those assets, and what approach should be used to mobilise them without increasing the load of students in possession of those assets?

5.2.3.3 Lack of availability of an internal inclusion policy document

The findings suggest that the college does not yet have an internal inclusion policy document, but a draft. When staff members were asked about the availability of an inclusion policy document, the responses were as follows:

Participant B:

> *There is an inclusive education policy, but it is still a draft. And it is not fully implemented.*

Participant C:

> *Not yet.*

These findings demonstrate that the college's educational inclusion policy has not yet been put into practice, hence the impediments alluded to earlier. It must be highlighted that the availability of a draft document is an indication that the college is aware of the main missing reference for successful implementation of inclusive education. This document should be the college's primary asset, from where all guidance regarding issues of inclusion is drawn. The

availability of this finalised policy would be a way forward towards resolving the impediments faced by SWLD at the college.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Towards the enhancement of access with success of SWLD at a TVET college

5.2.4.1 Lecturers as assets

Parker and Folkman (2015) describe a lecturer as an adult figure who is knowledgeable, reliable and companionate, as an academic educator, an advocate and as a liaison to community resources. This is supported by Venter (2013), who emphasises that teaching should not be limited to academic skills, but should include intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that can be further used to develop students' assets, and that can be incorporated into the curriculum to support students' learning. In light of this, it can be suggested that lecturers play extremely important roles in their students' lives. These roles are critical for lecturers who work with students with special educational needs.

Findings have indicated that TVET lecturers are the main role players in the college lives of SWLD. This was said about the HoD (Participant A):

We have more lecturers that are hands on with these students [SWLD].

Lecturers are the ones that are always with the students.

Lecturers are the first ones to assist the students whenever they have problems.

Lecturers are the ones who inform them [SWLD] about changes in the campus.

Students are free to consult with their lecturers at any time.

As much as the issue of lack of staff development in relation to access to inclusive education has emerged from the abovementioned findings of the current study, TVET lecturers still utilise capabilities or assets that they have mapped within themselves to develop or build their self-esteem, confidence and courage, in order to mentor and support SWLD who may

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be experiencing learning challenges. These findings are not too far from those of Myende and Chikoko (2014), who sought to investigate possibilities for the ABA to achieve school-community partnerships. As with the current study, educators were found to be the assets of the school.

That being said, TVET lecturers can use their collective expertise by drawing from each other as resources and assets, in order to support SWLD and parents, as opposed to lamenting the shortages of resources and physical conditions of their workplace (Khanare & de Lange, 2017). Moreover, the ABA can assist TVET lecturers further by encouraging them to perceive diversity in their classrooms as a positive asset to be used as "an opportunity to learn and share knowledge" (Khanare, 2018, p. 231).

Participant A:

> *Just their [SWLD] presence makes us to understand, shining campus from all the campuses. They make us to be aware on how to live with people with disabilities, how to treat them, how to teach them…. not to underestimate them. We learn a lot from them. They assist us in understanding and knowing how to live with their kind.*

This articulation shows that when SWLD and lecturers alike value each other for what they bring to the classroom, rather than branding each other for their challenges and deficiencies, SWLD and lecturers can draw from each other's capabilities and assemble resources to provide and obtain more understanding on how to work with SWLD.

5.2.4.2 Community involvement

As discussed in the previous section, TVET lecturers are liaisons with the community. It is thus imperative that lecturers establish and maintain good relationships, communication channels and collaborative partnerships with communities from which SWLD come. In that way lecturers will learn more about the students they work with, especially the students' life circumstances, interests, strengths and prior academic knowledge (Parker & Folkman, 2015). By so doing, lecturers would be mapping and mobilising their students' assets to enhance

students' learning. Consequently, this could unlock students' potential by focusing on their talents and strengths, thus creating a positive learning atmosphere that may lead to students' experiencing academic success (Venter, 2013).

The ABA is centered on the conviction that community assets are developed by people who themselves have previously been beneficiaries of such supportive relationships (Nene, 2017). Parker and Folkman (2015) argue that local educational institutions and agencies can also play an important role in nurturing local expertise, for example by encouraging young people to return to their previous learning institutions to assist others. For example, a TVET college could invite a former SWLD to be a guest speaker during the TVET disability awareness campaigns, open days or inductions, as was explained by Participant B, the inclusive support coordinator:

> *During our inductions we always have a slot whereby we talk about disability [as an awareness]. Previously we would have someone who would come in and do a motivation.*

Participant D:

> *There was a former student that was the one who went to the local high school, to do a presentation there on people with albinism.*

By so doing, the college mobilises the community asset, which is, in this case, the former SWLD, who is able to share narratives, experiences, words of encouragement and success stories. Consequently, the current SWLD who might be facing adversity may regain their courage in a positive manner. Furthermore, this kind of connection with the community may give SWLD a sense of inclusion, which could produce feelings of empowerment as contributors to their immediate community.

At the same time, the lecturers or college cannot work in isolation, but require involvement with secondary tier assets outside the college. That is why the participants suggested that the college work collaboratively with other external stakeholders, such as local health institutions and industries, to improve access with success of SWLD:

Participant B:

> *There should be continuous engagements between the college and in-service training*
> *supervisors.*

The focus-group discussions with the SWLD participants suggested:

Participant F:

> *With the issue of industries, we should have a committee formed by exiting SWLD*
> *from different courses that is responsible for in-service trainings or internships and*
> *to do company visits, such as Department of Agriculture, Department of Education,*
> *Department of Health, The Municipality, etc.*

Forming such relationships with communities builds confidence in the rest of the community in aiming to be active contributors to the development of the community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2013; Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016). In addition, this is a way to recognise and appreciate the assets that the community has, thus building morale in the community (Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016).

5.2.4.3 Coordinated efforts

Maximising access with success of SWLD in a TVET college requires a team effort in order to map and mobilise every college's capacities and resources in order to create enabling and supportive spaces for access with success of students. Drawing from the findings of the current study, lecturers, campus management, students and student support services need to work in collaboration to identify and mobilise each department and each individual who possesses assets, in order to improve access with success of the SWLD on the campus. This aligns with Hedegaard-Soerensen, Jensen and Tofteng's (2018) article, "Interdisciplinary collaboration as a prerequisite for inclusive education", which outlines how various groups of professionals with different perspectives took joint responsibility to improve the implementation of inclusive education through coordinated efforts. Nel et al. (2014) finds that educators feel differently about collaborative practices in inclusive education due to not

being adequately skilled to work with students with special needs, and they prefer to refer students to other support structures. In the researcher's opinion that still constitutes a collaborative partnership with other school stakeholders, thus their study is found to be in line with this study's findings.

Participants were mindful of a pool of assets within and beyond the college that could be used towards the improvement of access with success — an inside-out approach. When participants were asked for their views on whose responsibility it was to facilitate access on the campus, they mentioned the campus inclusive support coordinator, the campus manager, the SWLD, the campus student support services, the students' representation committee, the campus disability committee, external disability organizations, social workers and the DHET. To this effect Participant C said:

> *It's the campus management. I think they should go out and do research from students with learning disabilities so that they implement in this campus.*

This suggests that even SWLD might be valuable and potential assets to address gaps where staff members are not so confident. In fact, this is more accurate and in line with the main topic: ***Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a TVET college***. Students may be considered the primary tiers within the college, as they are the first recipients and experiencers of access and success, if any, at this particular TVET college. This is supported by the SWLD's slogan, which is *"Nothing about us, without us"*.

It also resonates with the statement made by the inclusive support coordinator, when asked if there was any structure that represents SWLD at the college. He pointed out that the SRC chairperson of the campus, who is a student with a learning disability, would attend the academic board meetings. These meetings are considered to be the highest forum for where the college's decisions are made. This shows that the SRC chairperson's potential is valued not only by the entire student body on the campus, but also by the senior management of the whole college. It was claimed:

Participant B:

> *The chairperson of the SRC is a disabled student, he absorbs the information directly*
> *from the senior management, which simply means that he sits in the academic board*
> *meeting.*

It was also clear that Participant C, who has a psychology qualification, realises her potential
and capacity, which she draws from to partner with the student support services. She is
another example of a primary tier asset.

> *I would end up providing counselling when there is a need without waiting for student*
> *support services.*

Participant D argued that:

> *There should be a link between the institution and our [people with disabilities]*
> *organization so that there is more access. In that way we can be looked after*
> *academically, socially and emotionally. There should be a carer who looks after the*
> *students in the residents.*

Participant E:

> *It's the higher education and training. They need to assist the colleges or campuses*
> *that have already implemented inclusive education to ensure that they do meet the*
> *requirements.*

Participant B:

> *I will say it is the campus manager, from there, the central office, then the college*
> *principal. Most of everything starts at the student support, thereafter it's the*
> *lecturers' involvement. ... And in the SRC, the chairperson of the SCR who is a*
> *disabled student.*

These statements reveal that because the college opens itself up as a primary resource for
SWLD access to education in just a small-scale way, strong coordination and links with

different stakeholders, whether from inside or outside the college, are necessary to improve access and success.

Figure 5.2 below depicts a pool of the college's potential assets that are in and around the college, which may be or are utilised to respond to the enhancement of access with access of SWLD at a TVET college:

OUTSIDE TIERS
External disability organisations, DHET inclusive education policy, local industries

SECONDARY TIERS
Assets beyond the campus
Parents, college's communication unit, other higher institutions of learning

PRIMARY TIERS
Assets within the campus
Lecturers, campus psychologist, inclusive support coordinator, SWLD, orientation and mobility instructor, students' devices, college inclusive education policy

Figure 0.2 Assets mapping at the TVET college

5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has focused on gaining insights and perspectives regarding issues of access with success of SWLD at a TVET college. The research questions, themes and sub-themes were used to present the data and analyse the findings. The discussion of the findings was informed by the theoretical framework (ABA) and was also presented in relation to the reviewed literature. It was found that ABA is useful in supporting improvements to access with success

of SWLD, and addresses the existing impediments to such access with success. The following chapter presents of a summary of the study summary, the overall conclusions and the recommendations.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This research set out to gather insights on issues concerning access with success of SWLD at a TVET college, thus the main topic of the study was Access with success: A case of SWLD at a TVET college.

The previous chapter presented the analysis of the findings, which were verified and supported by the participants. This concluding chapter intends to integrate the findings and discussions that emerged from this study. Therefore it presents a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations. The study summary offers a rough idea of the areas covered from Chapter 1 to Chapter 5, while the conclusions are derived from interpreting, evaluating and analysing the findings from the previous chapter. Additionally, relevant insights are drawn from the research, and significant recommendations are made. The limitations of the study are then acknowledged, and finally, areas of possible future research are presented.

6.2 STUDY SUMMARY

Chapter 1, the introduction to the study, stated the problem and the background on issues of access to TVET colleges by SWLD. Critical questions, which were in line with the objectives of the study, were formulated. The chapter further defined the four basic concepts of the study — access, success, SWLD and TVET colleges — as a way of linking them to the study, before discussing the significance of the research. An overview of the research design and

methodology, the methods of data generation and data analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, and the ethical considerations taken into account by the researcher were also presented.

Chapter 2 presented the assets-based approach (ABA) as the theoretical framework that formed the basis of the study. The chapter firstly explored the origins and evolution of the ABA, and then after that presented its main tenets, focusing particularly on Mourad and Ways' (1998) tiered framework. The aims and objectives of the ABA were presented, followed by discussions on assets mapping, mobilising of assets, and the management of assets in a TVET college. The relevance and applicability of ABA in the context of this study, and how other scholars have used this approach in different fields, was shown.

Chapter 3, the review of related literature, outlined in detail how inclusive education is conceptualised in South Africa and internationally. It stressed the relevance of inclusive education within the TVET sector, as well as the advantages and challenges related to academic broadening of access with success of SWLD, particular at TVET colleges. The chapter further illustrated the factors influencing the success of SWLD, and those that inhibited access and success of SWLD at schools and higher institutions of learning, as demonstrated by other scholars who have already conducted research around these concepts.

Chapter 4 began with an exploration of the interpretive paradigm employed and its significance to the study. It discussed the qualitative nature of the study, the case study research design, and the research setting, before moving on to a discussion of the sampling methods, the data-generation methods and approach, and the thematic analysis used to analyse the data. Furthermore, the chapter observed ethical issues regarding the employment of documents and the interviews. Additionally, issues of trustworthiness were discussed. Finally, the chapter concluded by stating the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 concentrated on the data presentation and analysis of the findings of the study in relation to the study's research questions that were set in Chapter 1. The data was presented according to the themes that emerged through analysis of the data content. Thereafter, the findings were evaluated through the lens of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3, and the chosen methodology for the study.

Chapter Six concludes the study with an overall study summary, conclusions, the implications of the study, recommendations for future possible research, and the limitations of the study.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

After a broad consideration of the findings, the following four conclusions have been drawn in relation to the themes that emerged in relation to each research question in the previous chapter.

6.3.1 Manageable difficulties regarding access with success of SWLD at a TVET college

As much as TVET lecturers at this college have not been professionally developed to teach SWLD, they have goodwill, and hence there is evidence of success in relation to SWLD within the college. It is that same willingness that has encouraged the campus to open the doors of access to education for SWLD. Discriminatory attitudes are still prevalent but SWLD have learned to look beyond those existing negative attitudes. However, the staff members argued that SWLD are accepted by the lecturers, who are always willing to work with SWLD. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that there is a need for staff development, and for more awareness on the part of students without learning disabilities, in order to improve interaction with SWLD. It was very clear that due to their lack of skills and special pedagogical knowledge, lecturers were not aware of flexible practices and could only apply one method of accommodation only, during assessments. Reasonable accommodations for inclusive education include not only flexible practices, but physical access to infrastructure as well. It was a common finding amongst all participants that there is a need for improvements to the physical infrastructure. Even though there is basic physical access for SWLD to education, and there is evidence of their success at this particular TVET college, SWLD do experience difficulties. However, they have learnt to find ways to manage and look beyond these existing difficulties. There are still adjustments that need to be made so that SWLD may not be disadvantaged when utilising the TVET college's services.

6.3.2 The need for access with success of SWLD at a TVET college is justified

It was revealed that there is a need for the proper implementation of inclusive education by TVET colleges. SWLD reported concerns over the poor implementation of inclusive education, as it was found that in certain programmes, SWLD are still taught separately from their non-disabled counterparts. The staff members argued that this was done for the benefit of the students, but the SWLD revealed a need for proper integration. They also wished to be able to choose the field they desired, as it was found that there are limited fields of study for SWLD within the college. Furthermore, SWLD have a need for economic independence, since SWLD strive for similar opportunities as students without learning disabilities. It was found that every SWLD relied heavily on their intrinsic motivation to generate the enthusiasm, self-determination and positive attitude required to face the various challenges on a daily basis on campus. It was clear that even though SWLD experience many challenges with issues of access at this TVET college, they have embraced the necessity of learning to continually shape and adapt themselves to achieve their goal and become successful, in spite of the difficulties. SWLD expressed an appreciation of the educational opportunities provided to them at this institution, and also of the difficulties and lessons learnt within the institution that have motivated them to strive for success. This is a confirmation that TVET colleges are not only there to offer education, but also to build students holistically (Munyaradzi & Addae, 2019).

6.3.3 Some impediments to access with success must be borne in mind

According to the findings, access to education is available to SWLD at the TVET college in this study, and SWLD have been declared academically successful by all stakeholders and the participants involved in the study. However, it cannot be ignored that the findings of the exploration of the current situation regarding access with success revealed that SWLD still experience impediments that prevent them from fully accessing the services of the college. The study has shown that some resources are available, but they are underutilised.

Underutilised resources are a confirmation of a lack of appropriate knowledge, which is, as mentioned previously, created by a lack of training. It was revealed that most SWLD do not know how to use the devices that were given to them, because no one trained them in how to do so. Similarly, lecturers could not impart knowledge and skills on the usage of these devices because they were also not trained in how to use them. Instead, SWLD relied on the few peers who had knowledge and experience of using the devices. These are students who already have the know-how as primary assets to address most of the students' educational needs, but these skills have not been mapped. Lastly, there is a lack of availability of an internal inclusion policy document, which is the main reference for the successful practice of inclusive education. The participants at the college and on the campus in this study, in particular, disclosed that there is no inclusive education policy. This is considered to be a major impediment, as this policy is expected to be the referral document that guides the college's implementation of the inclusion of SWLD.

6.3.4 There are various ways in which access with success for SWLD may be enhanced

The participants' responses indicated that they were well aware of potential assets in and around the college that may contribute to the enhancement of access with success for SWLD. In this study, the potential and the capacity of the college to respond to the enhancement of access with success lie with these assets, which were identified as follows: lecturers as assets, community involvement, and coordinated efforts.

Lecturers were found to be at the heart of not only the academic lives, but also the holistic lives, of SWLD within the college. This was based on the assumption that SWLD spend most of their days with lecturers. Therefore, it is imperative that lecturers uncover internal assets that will shape and support SWLD holistically.

Moreover, lecturers were identified as potential liaisons with the community from which SWLD come, and as people who could form relationships with that community in order to become more familiar with the students' backgrounds. This is a strategy to map students' possible assets, which may be mobilised as the students' strengths rather than focusing on

their deficiencies. Additionally, it was suggested that community involvement may go as far as working in collaboration with industries and local institutions. This is the strategy suggested by the participants, in order to build and strengthen relationships between the college and potential community assets, as a way to enhance access with success of SWLD.

Lastly, the study established the importance of recognising and mobilising everybody's assets, both within and outside the college, as a coordinated effort. The findings demonstrated that expanding access with success requires a TVET college's team effort. Participants were mindful of the inside-out approach, and thus indicated that attempts to maximise access with access should start with the leader of the campus, then lecturers and internal staff members, and then external stakeholders such as the DHET. This is in line with the ABA, which focuses on the resources available from the primary tier before seeking support from the secondary, and then the outside tiers.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS

The study showed that the following could be done to maximise access with access at a TVET college:

- The willingness of TVET lecturers to confidently support and accommodate SWLD needs to be supported with training on inclusive education in general. More emphasis needs to be placed on equipping lecturers with special pedagogical skills to develop the confidence and the range of flexible practices to accommodate SWLD.

- There should me more awareness within the college to educate the college's community about diversity in order to minimise the discriminatory attitudes that still exist, especially on the part of students.

- The college should learn to map, mobilise and negotiate SWLD's capacities, and draw from their experiences, strengths and skills, in order to address existing gaps and oversights while waiting for external support.

- The college should fast-pace the finalisation of the internal inclusion policy, which is the primary resource for enhancing the already partially implemented inclusion of SWLD.

- The employment of people with disabilities as staff members is recommended for the college to establish a better understanding of issues of inclusion.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following are recommended for further research:

The researcher acknowledges that this was a case study of a distinct institution, and as a result, the findings are specific to that institution and cannot be generalised. Furthermore, these findings could have been different if the focus had been on one specific learning disability. Therefore, I recommend that a similar study be conducted that will focus on one type of learning disability, and that the study be extended to other TVET colleges. Perhaps the focus could be on enhancement of access with success, but using different data collection methods.

6.6 LIMITATIONS

- The study was limited to one small sample size, which is a single TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, the findings could not be generalised to other TVET colleges.
- The research was conducted on a campus where I was employed two years ago. As a result, my position and involvement may have influenced the manner in which participants responded to the interviews and focus-group discussions.
- One participant, a SWLD, reported an emergency and therefore could not be available during a focus-group discussion. It was too late to find a replacement.
- One participant requested not to be recorded. So his responses were transcribed as per his wshes.

- The interviews were conducted during exam time; therefore, it was difficult to get hold of SWLD participants.
- Cleaning and analysing the data was laborious due to lots of long questions that were later identified as irrelevant.

6.7 CONCLUSION

In this study, it was revealed that access with success of SWLD at a TVET college is possible and achievable regardless of the challenges experienced within the college. The SWLD draw capacities from within themselves as well as from in and around the college to independently achieve access and to achieve their intended goals regarding their learning. The views, perceptions, and suggestions presented by the study regarding issues of access with success hopefully provided insightful information on the improvement of TVET practices for SWLD. In conclusion, this research has revealed the need for TVET colleges to improve access with success of SWLD.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

19 December 2018

Ms Lihle M Ndlovu 217078620
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Ndlovu

Reference number: HSS/1685/018M
Project title: Access with success: a case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Eduction and Training (TVET) college.

Full Approval - Full Committee Reviewed Application
With regards to your response received 18 Dece ber 2018 to our letter of 05 November 2018, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr S Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof D Hlalele
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc School Administrator: Ms S Jeenarain, Mr SN Mthembu and Ms M Ngcobo

APPENDIX B: GATE KEEPER'S PERMISSION

higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Let the future be known

17 July 2018

<u>TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:</u>

The purpose of this letter is to grant permission to **Lihle Mbalenhle Ndlovu (217078620)**

As per the request to conduct the research project :

<u>Research Project Title</u>:   Access with success: a case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college

<u>Aim of the Research:</u>   To propose more access with success for students with learning disabilities in the TVET sector.

<u>Tertiary Insitution</u> :   UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

<u>Faculty or School</u> :   School of Education (Humanities)

<u>Qualification</u>:   Master of Educational Psychology

<u>Name of Supervisor</u> :   Professor Dipane Hlalele

<u>Study Site Location:</u>   Umfolozi College, Esikhawini Campus

<u>Consent of participants</u> :   All participants must be given consent forms to sign before commencement of the study.

<u>Confidentiality</u> :   All participants must be guaranteed confidentiality.

Permission granted by:

SZ ZUNGU
PRINCIPAL

UMF - LETTERHEAD R003 - FEB 2015

APPENDIX C.1: NCV STUDENT CONSENT DOCUMENT

Information and consent form

PO Box 77835
EMPANGENI
3880

21 August 2018

Dear Participant

RE: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I would like you to participate in the research study entitled: **Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college**.

The study is about proposing more access and success of students with learning disabilities in TVET colleges. It will focus more on practices and processes of the TVET sector in terms of the accommodation of students with learning disabilities. The study aims at assisting the TVET sector in identifying a need for more access for students with learning disabilities. This study will enlighten the sector on the associated factors influencing access and success of students with learning disabilities, and later suggest possible strategies to promote more access with success. Your participation in this research project enables you to contribute to the improvement of access in TVET colleges and on how the sector can successfully accommodating students with learning disabilities.

The reason I request for your participation is because you are of the students enrolled for NCV programme which comprises of 25% of the syllabus as theory, and 75 % as practical. Your ideas, perception, experiences about issues or concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities registered for the NCV programmes will add great value in this study.

The research will be carried out in two parts. A first session will involve the one-to one semi-structured interviews with students with learning disabilities in order to gather first-hand information about their ideas about issues or concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities in a TVET college. The second session, will be focus group discussions to complement the semi-structured interviews. The focus group interview will take place immediately after the semi-structured interviews with students with learning disabilities. It will comprise only of students with learning disabilities. The estimated time for such interviews will be 1 hour.

Our discussions will be audio recorded. However, this will be upon your agreement. If so, you are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and that the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept with the university after 5 years. The campus name, students' and staff members' names will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Your participation will be purely voluntary therefore you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and no harm will befall you.

For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors. Please complete the consent form attached should you decide to participate in the study.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Lihle Ndlovu   Professor D. Hlalele
MED-EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT   **SUPERVISOR:**

Cell No: 083 373 5971   **Tel No:**   031 2603858

E-mail: lihlendlovu955@gmail.com   **E-mail:**HlaleleD@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHIC ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH OFFICE

Contact number: 031 2604557

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX C.2: CONSENT DOCUMENT

DECLARATION

(To be completed by the participant)

I …………………………………………………. (**full name of the participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate to this research project entitled **Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college**.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

I give you permission to:

Tape record our semi-structured interviews   YES/NO
Tape record our focus group interview   YES/NO

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date

APPENDIX D.1: R191 BUSINESS STUDENT CONSENT DOCUMENT

Information and consent form

PO Box 77835
EMPANGENI
3880

21 August 2018

Dear Participant

RE: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I would like you to participate in the research study entitled: **Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college**.

The study is about proposing more access and success of students with learning disabilities in TVET colleges. It will focus more on practices and processes of the TVET sector in terms of the accommodation of students with learning disabilities. The study aims at assisting the TVET sector in identifying a need for more access for students with learning disabilities. This study will enlighten the sector on the associated factors influencing access and success of students with learning disabilities, and later suggest possible strategies to promote more access with success. Your participation in this research project enables you to contribute to the improvement of access in TVET colleges and on how the sector can successfully accommodating students with learning disabilities.

The reason I request for your participation is because you are one of the students who registered for R191 programmes which take only 6 months (business studies) and 3 months (engineering studies) to complete a level considering the vast amount of loads of reading that needs to be done in quite a short period before the end of a semester or trimester. Your ideas, perception, experiences about issues or concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities in TVET colleges will add great value in this study.

The research will be carried out in two parts. A first session will involve the one-to one semi-structured interviews with students with learning disabilities in order to gather first-hand information about their ideas about issues or concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities in a TVET college. The second session, will be focus group discussions to complement the semi-structured interviews. The focus group interview will take place immediately after the semi-structured interviews with students with learning disabilities. It will comprise only of students with learning disabilities. The estimated time for such interviews will be 1 hour.

Our discussions will be audio recorded. However, this will be upon your agreement. If so, you are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and that the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept with the university after 5 years. The campus

name, students' and staff members' names will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Your participation will be purely voluntary therefore you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and no harm will befall you.

For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors. Please complete the consent form attached should you decide to participate in the study.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Lihle Ndlovu   Professor D. Hlalele
MED-EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT   **SUPERVISOR:**

Cell No: 083 373 5971   **Tel No:**   031 2603858

E-mail: lihlendlovu955@gmail.com   **E-mail:**HlaleleD@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHIC ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH OFFICE

Contact number: 031 2604557

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX D.2: CONSENT DOCUMENT

DECLARATION

(To be completed by the participant)

I ……………………………………………. (**full name of the participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate to this research project entitled **Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college**.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.
I give you permission to:

Tape record our semi-structured interviews   YES/NO
Tape record our focus group interview   YES/NO

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date

APPENDIX E.1: INSERVICE-TRAINING STUDENT CONSENT DOCUMENT

Information and consent form

PO Box 77835
EMPANGENI
3880

21 August 2018

Dear Participant

RE: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I would like you to participate in the research study entitled: **Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college**.

The study is about proposing more access and success of students with students with learning disabilities in TVET colleges. It will focus more on practices and processes of the TVET sector in terms of the accommodation of students with students with learning disabilities. The study aims at assisting the TVET sector in identifying a need for more access for students with learning disabilities. This study will enlighten the sector on the associated factors influencing access and success of with students with learning disabilities, and later suggest possible strategies to promote more access with success. Your participation in this research project enables you to contribute to the improvement of access in TVET colleges and on how the sector can successfully accommodating with students with learning disabilities.

The reason I request for your participation is because you were among the first group of students with learning disabilities that enrolled with the institution in 2014. That was at the time when the institution had no clue on where to begin in terms of accommodating students with learning disabilities. Most, importantly you have completed your studies and now doing an internship programme. Your ideas, perception, experiences about issues or concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities while you were a student in a TVET college will add great value in this study.

The research will be carried out in two parts. A first session will involve the one-to one semi-structured interviews with students with learning disabilities in order to gather first-hand information about their ideas about issues or concerns of access and success of students with learning disabilities in a TVET college. The second session, will be focus group discussions to complement the semi-structured interviews. The focus group interview will take place immediately after the semi-structured interviews with students with learning disabilities. It

will comprise only of students with learning disabilities. The estimated time for such interviews will be 1 hour.

Our discussions will be audio recorded. However, this will be upon your agreement. If so, you are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and that the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept with the university after 5 years. The campus name, students' and staff members' names will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Your participation will be purely voluntary therefore you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and no harm will befall you.

For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors. Please complete the consent form attached should you decide to participate in the study.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Lihle Ndlovu   Professor D. Hlalele
MED-EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT   **SUPERVISOR:**

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HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHIC ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH OFFICE

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APPENDIX E.2: CONSENT DOCUMENT

DECLARATION

(To be completed by the participant)

I ……………………………………………. (**full name of the participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate to this research project entitled **Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college**.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.
I give you permission to:

Tape record our semi-structured interviews   YES/NO
Tape record our focus group interview   YES/NO
_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date

APPENDIX F: STUDENTS SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The purpose of this interview is firstly, to understand the current situations of this campus sector regarding access of students with learning disabilities, secondly to find out from you if there are any factors that that you think may impede access and success of students with learning disabilities at this college, and lastly, perhaps, hear your views on how you think the college may improve access and success of students with learning disabilities at this college context.

The information that is gathered will be used to write a report and to publish.

1. **CURRENT SITUATIONS AT A TVET COLLEGE REGARDING ACCESS AND SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES?**
- Tell me about the day you came for registration, did you know which venues and directions to go to?
- Were you given adequate guidance and information before you got registered?
- How clear were you regarding the course you wished to register for?
- How did the college influence your transition decision-making from high school to higher education? In other words, what made you to choose to register in this particular campus?
- How accessible are the campus buildings to you?
  In other words, are you able to get to your classrooms, bathrooms, offices on your own?
- What support do you get so that you may write the assessments just like all other students?
- What services do you use to convert text to your preferred need
- Are there available venues that you use for study purposes? Please explain
- How do you receive everyday messages about day-to-day activities of the college?
- Tell me about your views regarding the inclusion of all students, especially those with learning disabilities?

2. **A NEED FOR ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AT A TVET COLLEGE**
- In your view, how is your learning in this college helpful to you?

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- Please express your understanding of success, particularly for students with learning disabilities at this college.
- What support do you get from your family in terms of learning? Please explain.
- What support do you get from your lecturers at this college? Please explain.
- What support do you get from the campus management regarding your learning or any concerns you have?
- How is the local community involved in your learning? By local community, I mean health institutions, industries and the society in general.
- Please describe your relationship with your fellow classmates?
- What motivates you to attend at this campus?
- How do you get extra assistance if you get left behind during a class lesson?
- Would you have any success stories to share?

3. POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS OF ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN A TVET COLLEGE

- What barriers to learning do you face in this college?
- What do you think should be done to address barriers to learning that you encounter?
- How free are you to communicate and interact with staff and other students?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable answering questions in lectures?
- Is the staff approachable and helpful to students?
- How available are staff members if you need to consult about anything at all?
- Is there anything in the way things are done by the college that prevents you from doing well?

4. WIDENING OF ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN A TEVET COLLEGE

- What do you think can be done to make your learning much better at this college?
- Whose responsibility do you think it is to make this college more accessible?
- How do you deal with the problems that you encounter in this college?
- What structures are in place to represent students with learning at the college?
- What extramural activities or sports do you do on campus?
- Is there an on-campus and off-campus transportation services?
- What is that you wish could be done to improve access of students with learning disabilities at this college?
- What is that you wish could be done to improve success of students with learning disabilities at this college?

APPENDIX G: STAFF MEMBERS SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH STAFF MEMBERS

The purpose of this interview is firstly, to understand the current situations of this campus sector regarding access of students with learning disabilities, secondly to find out from you if there are any factors that that you think may impede access and success of students with learning disabilities at this college, and lastly, perhaps, hear your views on how you think the college may improve access and success of students with learning disabilities at this college context.

The information that is gathered will be used to write a report and to publish.

1. **CURRENT SITUATIONS AT A TVET COLLEGE REGARDING ACCESS AND SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**
   - Tell me about the registration process, do students with disabilities usually know which directions to go to for registrations?
   - What is done to ensure that students with learning disabilities are clear regarding the courses they wish to register for?
   - So, drawing from your experience working at this college, what would you say is done by the college to influence students' transition decision-making from high school to higher education?
   - How accessible are the campus buildings to students with learning disabilities?
     In other words, are students with learning disabilities able to get to your classrooms, bathrooms, offices on their own?
   - How do students with learning disabilities get accommodated for during assessment?
   - Are there available venues that you use for study purposes? Please explain
   - How do students with learning disabilities receive everyday messages about day-to-day activities of the college?
   - Tell me about your views regarding the inclusion of all students, especially those with learning disabilities at this campus?

2. **A NEED FOR ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AT A TVET COLLEGE**

- Please express your understanding of success, particularly for students with learning disabilities at this college
- Please share your impression about the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in the campus
- What is the role of the college in ensuring that family members are available to support the learning of students with learning disabilities?
- Tell me about the lecturers' involvement in supporting students with learning disabilities?
- Tell me about the campus management involvement in supporting students with learning disabilities?
- How is the local community involved in students' with learning disabilities learning? By local community, I mean health institutions, industries and the society in general.
- What has been your observation of relationships that students with learning disabilities have with their fellow classmates?
- What does the college do to keep students with learning disabilities motivated to attend at this campus?
- Would you have any success stories to share about your students with learning disabilities at this college?

3. **POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS OF ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN A TVET COLLEGE**
- What barriers to learning do students with learning disabilities face in this college?
- What do you think should be done to address barriers to learning that they encounter?
- Is the staff approachable and helpful to students?
- How available are staff members if you need to consult about anything at all?
- Is there anything in the way things are done by the college that prevents students with learning disabilities from doing well?
- What would you say is the staff members'' attitudes towards inclusive education?
- Is there a college policy on inclusive education?
- If there is one, would you say the college is fully implementing it?

4. **WIDENING OF ACCESS WITH SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN A TEVET COLLEGE**
- What do you think can be done to make students' learning much better at this college?
- Whose responsibility do you think it is to make this college more accessible?
- What structures are in place to represent students with learning at the college?
- Is there an on-campus and off-campus transportation services?

- How accessible are the sports ground and extramural programs to students with learning disabilities?
- Is there an on-campus and off-campus transportation services for students with learning disabilities?
- What is that you wish could be done to improve access of students with learning disabilities at this college?
- What is that you wish could be done to improve success of students with learning disabilities at this college?

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH STUDENTS

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW STUDENTS
WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

The below questions only served as a guideline in the interview process. The responses of the participants and the probes of the researcher served to initiate additional questions, thereby enriching the quality of data obtained.

1. Would you say the college is ready to accommodate students with learning disabilities? Why?

2. What advice would you recommend the college to person with learning disabilities who wishes to further their studies at a this college?

3. I would like to ask you about whether you are affected by any policies of the college. When we talk about policies, think about the rules of the college.

    3.1   Are there any policies/rules implemented by the institution that you feel are having a **negative** impact on your studies? E.g. policy on academic exclusion, policy on award of year mark, policy on absenteeism, policy punctuality in class, policy on financial aid (number of subjects to enrol).

            If **yes**, please state how it impacts on your studies.

    3.2 Are there any policies / rules that you think are helping students to do well (having a **positive** impact) in their studies?

            If **yes**, please mention those, and comment on how it impacts on your studies.

    3.3 Can you think of any ways in which policies / rules can be improved to help students?
    3.4 Is there anything in the way things are done by the college that prevents students from doing well?

    3.5 Is there anything in the way things are done by the college that helps students to do well?

    3.6 Do you have any ideas on how the college can improve on the way things are done?

3.7 Are there any comments you would like to make about how the college can improve generally, so that students are helped to perform better?

4. How is the college's relationship with external stakeholders e.g. health institutions, companies, communities, local high schools?

5. So tell me about the community (local schools, companies, health organisations) engagements and awareness activities that the college has or do regarding the education of students with learning disabilities?

6. How are students with learning disabilities involved in disability awareness campaigns that are done by the college?

7. Access refers to accessible institution's buildings, flexible teaching methods, course materials, knowledge access and curricular access as some of components for necessary inclusion. Please share your impression about current situations regarding the way the college provides access with success to students with learning disabilities.

8. Please share your views about strategies that are necessary for promoting more access with success for students with learning disabilities in this campus in particular.

9. Certain conditions in a college can block successful learning access and success of students with learning disabilities, what factors do you think obstruct this campus to provide access with success of students with learning disabilities. How do you think these factors can be avoided?

10. In your view, how would you define success of any student with learning disability who has had access to study in a TVET college?

11. Do you think your lecturers accommodate or cater for students with learning disabilities in their classes? How so?

12. If you have difficulty understanding (grasping) content, what is it that lecturers do to support you?

13. How are assessment techniques adapted for these you?

14. Tell me about your impressions regarding the campus staff members 'attitudes towards you?

15. What is your view about peer support for students with learning disabilities in and outside classrooms?

16. What major challenges do you face in your everyday learning on campus?

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF MEMBERS

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH STAFF MEMBERS

The below questions only served as a guideline in the interview process. The responses of the participants and the probes of the researcher served to initiate additional questions, thereby enriching the quality of data obtained.

17. How ready is the college in terms of accommodating students with learning disabilities?

18. Please share your views about the need for any TVET sector or this campus in particular to enrol students with learning disabilities?

19. How do you ensure that the programmes offered by the campus cater for the career needs of students with learning disabilities?

20. What advice would you give a person with learning disabilities who wants to further their studies at a TVET college?

21. Is there a college policy on inclusive education?

22. If there is one, would you say the college is fully implementing it?

23. I would like to ask you about whether students with learning disabilities are affected by any policies of the college. When we talk about policies, think about the rules of the college.

7.1   Are there any policies/rules implemented by the institution that you feel are having a **<u>negative</u>** impact on students' studies? E.g. policy on academic exclusion, policy on award of year mark, policy on absenteeism, policy punctuality in class, policy on financial aid (number of subjects to enrol).

If **<u>yes</u>**, please state how it impacts on students' studies.

7.2 Are there any policies / rules that you think are helping students to do well (having a **<u>positive</u>** impact) in their studies?

If **<u>yes</u>**, please mention those, and comment on how it impacts on students' studies.

7.3 Can you think of any ways in which policies / rules can be improved to help students?

24. Please share your impression on the retention of students with learning disabilities after their first year or semester.

25. Are you happy with the pass rate of students with learning disabilities? If not, how do you think the campus can improve?

26. Are there any students with learning disabilities who have graduated in the last few years?

11. Tell me about the tracking of students who have used your services after certification?

12. Does the college organise in-service training or internship placement of students with learning disabilities?

13. How are students with learning disabilities involved in disability awareness campaigns that are done by the college?

14. How is the college's relationship with external stakeholders e.g. health institutions, companies, communities, local high schools?

15. So tell me about the community (local schools, companies, health organisations) engagements the college has regarding the education of students with learning disabilities?

15. Drawing from your experience working in this institution, what influence does the college has on the transition decision-making of students with learning disabilities in terms of applying for access to enrol with a TVET college?

16. Access refers to accessible institution's buildings, flexible teaching methods, course materials, knowledge access and curricular access as some of components for necessary inclusion. Please share your impression about current situations regarding the way the college provides access with success to students with learning disabilities.

17. Please share your views about strategies that are necessary for promoting more access with success for students with learning disabilities in this campus in particular.

18. Certain conditions in a college can block successful learning access and success of students with learning disabilities, what factors do you think obstruct this campus to provide access with success of students with learning disabilities. How do you think these factors can be avoided?

19. From your point of view, what do you think can be indicators of success in enhancement of issues of access and success of students with learning disabilities in a TVET college?

20. In your view, how would you define success of any student with learning disability who has had access to study in a TVET college?

These Questions Will Be Directed To Lecturers.

21. Do you think you accommodate or cater for students with learning disabilities in your class? How so?

22. If students have difficulty understanding (grasping) content, do you try different techniques? Which techniques?

23. How are assessment techniques adapted for these students?

24. Do you think that your training prepared you to teach students with learning disabilities? How? Why do you say so?

25. What training have you received regarding inclusive education while teaching students with learning disabilities?

26. What college/staff support have you received as a lecturer of students with learning disabilities?

27. How important would you say is the staff community's attitude when engaging with students with learning disabilities?

28. What challenges do you face in your everyday teaching of students with learning disabilities?

APPENDIX J: TURNITIN REPORT

ACCESS WITH SUCCESS: A CASE OF SWLD AT A TVET COLLEGE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13%	**7%**	**3%**	**11%**
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	2%
2	Submitted to University of Stellenbosch, South Africa Student Paper	2%
3	Submitted to University of Cape Town Student Paper	<1%
4	docplayer.net Internet Source	<1%
5	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	<1%
6	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	<1%
7	Submitted to University of Witwatersrand Student Paper	<1%

APPENDIX K: EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

P.O. Box 100715

Scottsville

3209

10 November, 2019

To whom it may concern,

I have edited the following thesis for language errors, and in the process have checked the referencing and layout:

Title: *Access with success: A case of students with learning disabilities at a TVET college.*

Author: Lihle Mbalenhle Ndlovu

**Degree:** Master of Education (Educational Psychology)

Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Student number: 217078620

Supervisors: Professor D.J. Hlalele

Please feel free to contact me should you have any queries.

Kind regards,
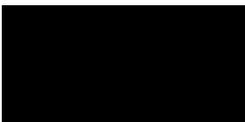
Debbie Turrell

totalnightowl@gmail.com