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CHAPTER 10

Assessing the preparedness of NCV Tourism graduates: a case study on the alignment of curriculum and industry demands

Bianca N Mkhize-Simelane

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to report on the findings of a qualitative study that sought to assess the responsiveness of the National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) tourism curriculum to industry demands. The study was motivated by evidence of shortcomings in translating curriculum guidelines into effective classroom practices, including discrepancies in time allocation for workplace-based experiences and inadequate utilisation of recommended teaching resources. There appears to be an overemphasis on theoretical instruction at the expense of practical skills development.

Keywords: National Certificate (Vocational) Tourism curriculum, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, practical skills development.

10.1 Introduction

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system has been extensively examined within various educational and socio-economic contexts. A notable discussion by Nkomo *et al.* (2016) contrasts the perceived value of universities and TVET colleges, shedding light on the persistent negative attitude towards TVET among certain segments of students and parents. This perception often stems from the belief that TVET represents a lesser educational path, primarily reserved for those who have not met academic benchmarks in more traditional educational settings. Despite this widespread sentiment, the government has consistently invested significant resources into the TVET system, recognizing its critical role within the broader post-school education and training landscape.

The pervasive negative perception of TVET raises a crucial question: What underlies this societal bias? Is it a reflection of the perceived inadequacies in the quality of education offered by TVET institutions, or does it point to a broader need for a paradigm shift in how South Africans perceive vocational education? Ngcwangu (2015) suggests that a deep-seated societal belief equating university education with middle-class career success perpetuates the notion that a university degree is the only viable path to upward mobility for South African youth.

Drawing from my extensive experience in teaching tourism across both university and TVET settings, I am particularly motivated to explore the responsiveness of tourism programs to the ever-evolving needs of the industry. Through this exploration, I am convinced that a detailed analysis of industry-specific requirements can lead to the development of tailored TVET programs that prepare students better for the workforce. This chapter aims to critically assess the effectiveness of South African TVET colleges in producing graduates who are not only equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge but are also ready to

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make meaningful contributions to their chosen fields in a society grappling with high unemployment rates.

The findings of this study hold the potential to inform improvements in the TVET system's capacity to meet industry demands. It is conceivable that some programs within the TVET system are already effectively addressing these demands, challenging the prevailing generalizations concerning the perceived inferiority of vocational education. Vally and Motala (2014) underscore South Africa's ongoing efforts to align the TVET system with national economic objectives, highlighting its strategic role in serving the interests of business and industry within an evolving labour market.

In this context, the tourism sector presents a pertinent example for examining the responsiveness of TVET programs to industry needs. Despite the annual graduation of numerous tourism students from TVET institutions, formal employment opportunities remain elusive for many. This disparity is especially concerning given that a significant proportion of TVET students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, a reality emphasized by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2018.

The success of vocational programs, including those within the tourism sector, hinges on their ability to respond to a complex interplay of factors: industry needs, technological advancements, student aspirations, and broader societal dynamics. In an era characterized by rapid technological change, vocational curricula must be agile enough to adapt to the shifting demands of the labour market. Failure to do so risks not only the employability of graduates but also the erosion of the credibility of both the programs and the institutions that offer them. Hence a pressing need exists for TVET systems to ensure that graduates possess the contemporary and transferable skills essential for employment and economic contribution.

In this chapter, I endeavour to interrogate the intersection of TVET education, industry demands, and societal expectations, with particular emphasis on the tourism sector. The core question driving this investigation is whether the tourism studies curriculum National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) offered in South African TVET colleges is meeting the industry's requirements to a satisfactory extent.

The findings and recommendations in this chapter are intended to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role and relevance of vocational education in addressing socio-economic challenges such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment in South Africa. By closely examining the responsiveness of TVET programs to industry needs, this chapter aims to highlight the critical role of vocational education in shaping the future of South Africa's workforce.

10.2 Literature review

In the realm of education, particularly within the context of TVET, the concept of curriculum responsiveness has garnered significant attention. As societies evolve and industries become increasingly dynamic, the necessity for educational programs to adapt and align with these changes has never been more critical. This chapter explores the multifaceted dimensions of curriculum responsiveness, with a specific focus on tourism education within South Africa's TVET system. Drawing upon the insights of various scholars, this discussion aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how curriculum development can serve the needs of students and the broader economy alike better.

10.2.1. Understanding Curriculum Responsiveness

The notion of curriculum responsiveness, as articulated by Moll (2004), encompasses the capacity of educational programs to adapt to the shifting demands of employers, thereby producing graduates equipped

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to enhance economic competitiveness. This concept serves as a vital metric for assessing the relevance and effectiveness of educational curricula in a rapidly changing society. Moll (2004) identifies four primary dimensions of responsiveness: economic, cultural, disciplinary, and pedagogical.

Economic responsiveness is rooted in the idea of equipping professionals across various economic sectors with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the job market. This involves not only preparing students for current industry demands but also fostering their ability to innovate and address future challenges within their fields.

Cultural responsiveness, on the other hand, underscores the importance of recognizing and embracing cultural diversity within the classroom. This approach promotes an inclusive learning environment that supports effective teaching and learning, as highlighted by Laakso and Hallberg (2024).

Disciplinary responsiveness focuses on ensuring that curricula remain aligned with the latest advancements and research within a given field, both locally and globally. This alignment is crucial for nurturing students' global perspectives and preparing them for an interconnected world, as discussed by Nuraeni, Zulela and Boeriswati (2020). Finally, pedagogical responsiveness emphasizes the need for instructional strategies, assessment methods, and student support mechanisms that are tailored to the specific characteristics and needs of the student body. By enhancing the overall learning experience, pedagogical responsiveness contributes to the development of well-rounded, capable graduates.

10.2.2. Curriculum Responsiveness in the South African Context

In the context of South Africa, Fomunyam and Teferra (2017) argue that curriculum responsiveness needs to address the unique needs of students and the socio-economic realities of the post-colonial era. The failure to adapt curricula to the evolving dynamics of society, as noted by Wedekind and Mutereko (2016), poses a significant risk of rendering graduates unemployable and diminishing the relevance of vocational programs. This concern is particularly pertinent within the TVET system, where the student demographic predominantly comprises individuals from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (DHET, 2018).

Wedekind (2016) advocates for a responsive TVET curriculum that considers the needs of students, employers, and society at large. He emphasizes the importance of decentralization in curriculum development, which allows for localized adaptations that are better suited to the specific contexts in which education occurs. This perspective is mirrored by Dang (2016), who cites the Australian TVET system as a model of industry-driven curriculum development. In Australia, competency-based training and the creation of industry-specific training packages have been instrumental in ensuring that education aligns with labour market demands. South Africa's equivalent structures, such as SAQA, QCTO, Umalusi, and CHE are similarly tasked with quality assurance and capacity development within the education sector.

Although Ensor's (2004) study focused on universities, his findings regarding the alignment of degree programs with workplace relevance raise an important question for the TVET sector: Is the curriculum taught in the NC(V) Tourism program truly consistent with the skills and knowledge required in the workplace?

10.2.3. Foundations of Curriculum Development

Defining a curriculum is a complex task, as there is no universally accepted definition. Different interpretations emphasize various aspects of teaching and learning. Pinar *et al.* (1995) note that while a clear definition is essential for productive discourse, achieving consensus has proven elusive, leading to a diversity of perspectives.

Stenhouse (1975) categorizes the curriculum into two components: the intended or prescribed curriculum, which delineates what should be taught, and the enacted curriculum, which reflects what is being taught. This distinction is crucial for understanding the potential gaps between curriculum design and implementation, particularly within the context of TVET education.

This chapter focuses on the tourism curriculum within the NC(V) program, which includes subjects such as Tourism Operations, Client Service and Human Relations, Science of Tourism, and Sustainable Tourism. These subjects provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the various aspects of the tourism industry. They define the skills and knowledge students are expected to acquire and are integral to the planning of both classroom and extracurricular activities. The curriculum also incorporates assessment guidelines, with the Internal Continuous Assessment (ICASS) accounting for 40% of the final grade. The tourism program under study is guided by the DHET.

Curriculum Development: The Didaktik Tradition and Curriculum Theory

The delivery of learning content in the tourism program can be examined through two distinct lenses: the Didaktik tradition and curriculum theory. Westbury *et al.* (2000) describe the Didaktik tradition as an approach that grants educators the autonomy to teach without rigid adherence to a prescribed curriculum. This flexibility allows

teachers to adapt their methods and content to the unique needs and cultural contexts of their students. This approach is particularly relevant in a diverse society such as South Africa, where students from rural areas and affluent suburbs may have vastly different educational needs.

In contrast, curriculum theory provides a more structured approach, outlining specific learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessment criteria. This framework ensures that the educational process is systematic and goal-oriented, with clearly defined outcomes guiding teaching and learning activities. Despite their differences, both the Didaktik tradition and curriculum theory share a common focus on achieving educational goals, delivering relevant content, employing effective methodologies, and assessing student capabilities.

South Africa's curriculum policies, including the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS), are rooted in the principles of curriculum theory. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) plays a critical role in implementing curricula that clearly define learning objectives and evaluation criteria.

The program requires lecturers to adhere to syllabi with clearly defined aims, objectives, and outcomes, ensuring that assessment tasks align with these standards. However, concerns have been raised concerning the relevance and currency of the syllabi content, particularly in the light of contemporary socio-economic challenges and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

10.2.4. Evolution of the Tourism Curriculum

The tourism industry is in a state of constant evolution, necessitating regular updates and enhancements to the tourism curriculum to keep pace with industry trends. The origins of tourism education can be traced back to technical and vocational schools, which responded to the

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growing demand within the industry (Wattanacharoensil, 2014). The evolution of tourism education has retained its emphasis on technical and vocational skills development while also adapting to new industry requirements.

The development of the tourism curriculum can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase, pre-1990, was characterized by limited academic attention to the tourism industry, with only a few universities offering programs in this field. The second phase, spanning from 1990 to 2000, saw a significant expansion in the number of institutions offering tourism-related programs, reflecting the industry's growing importance as a global economic driver. The post-2000 era marks the third phase, during which the tourism curriculum has continued to evolve, incorporating new trends and challenges such as sustainable tourism, cultural heritage preservation, and digital marketing.

These changes in the tourism curriculum have been well-documented by scholars and researchers, including Airey (2004), Lo (2005), Inui, Wheeler and Lankford (2006), and Wattanacharoensil (2014). This chapter will now delve deeper into these developments, tracing the evolution of the tourism curriculum and its implications for the future of TVET education in South Africa.

Tourism Education Curriculum Pre-1990: A Global Context

The origins of tourism education can be traced back to technical and vocational schools, where it was first introduced as part of a broader effort to address the practical needs of the growing tourism industry (Ring, Dickinger & Wober, 2009; Wattanacharoensil, 2014). By the mid-1960s, significant strides were made in tourism education, particularly in Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom. During this period, a pragmatic approach taken by academics in North America and the UK allowed the vocational sector to play a crucial role in shaping the direction of tourism education (Jafari, 1977; Lashley, 2004).

In the 1970s, tourism was primarily associated with recreational activities, and it was commonly taught within the context of recreational studies. Business travel, however, was not yet considered a substantial component of the tourism industry. Studies conducted during this time, including those by Bodewes (1981) and Airey and Middleton (1984), underscored the focus on leisure activities within tourism education, with little attention given to the corporate travel sector.

While scholars such as Jafari and Ritchie grappled with defining the educational scope of tourism, they recognized the need to establish clear contextual boundaries and issues within the field. This led to the conceptualization of tourism as "a study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he (man) and the industry have on the host socio-cultural, economic, and physical environments" (Wattanacharoensil, 2014). This broad definition catalysed further investigations into the unique characteristics of travellers, their motivations for travel, and the factors contributing to a satisfactory tourism experience.

However, as Bodewes observed, the complexity of tourism posed significant challenges to curriculum development. The field was often seen as an application of established disciplines rather than a fully autonomous academic discipline. This lack of disciplinary clarity created difficulties in integrating multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary approaches within tourism education a challenge that persists to this day.

Wattanacharoensil (2014) identifies three primary approaches to tourism studies: multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary. Multi-disciplinary studies draw upon multiple disciplines to address a single issue, while inter-disciplinary studies merge essential ideas and concepts from various fields to inform teaching approaches. Trans-disciplinary studies, the most comprehensive of the three, involve

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the integration of knowledge across different disciplines to tackle complex issues. However, implementing inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches in tourism education requires highly qualified academics and capable students, making it a challenging endeavour.

Before 1990, tourism education in the United Kingdom placed stronger emphasis on academic disciplines than on the industry itself. Courses such as tourism marketing and tourism economics often prioritized core concepts from marketing and economics over content specific to tourism. This led to perceptions that tourism education lacked the academic rigour of fields like science and economics due to its limited multi-disciplinary depth. Nevertheless, the landscape of tourism education began to change significantly after 1990, leading to innovative advancements in the curriculum.

Tourism Education Curriculum from 1990 to 2000

Between 1990 and 2000, scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom made concerted efforts to expand tourism education, driven by the growing recognition of tourism as a vital economic sector. During this period, research indicated that tourism curricula primarily emphasized the hospitality industry, with a strong focus on business-related aspects.

A pivotal study conducted by Koh in 1995 sought to identify the key competencies required in undergraduate tourism management degrees. By surveying 150 tourism scholars and 18 national organizations in the United States, the study aimed to determine the essential skills that tourism management students needed to succeed in their careers. The findings highlighted several critical competencies, including human resource management, marketing, entrepreneurship, communication, interpersonal relations, computer literacy, and hotel-restaurant operations. These competencies were deemed essential for

success in the tourism industry and became integral components of tourism management programs.

Similar findings were reported in the United Kingdom by Airey and Johnson in 1999, underscoring the global relevance of these competencies. The results of the study provided valuable insights into the skills and knowledge required for a successful career in tourism, guiding the development of undergraduate tourism management curricula both in the United States and the UK.

In the early 1990s, the Council for National Academic Awards in the UK expressed concern over the lack of a definitive and holistic definition of tourism as an academic subject. This issue was thoroughly examined by Powell and McGrath (2014) in their scholarly work, which highlighted the need for a more structured approach to curriculum development in tourism education.

During this period, scholars increasingly used the tourism industry as a benchmark for curriculum development, prioritizing industry-relevant skills over philosophical considerations. Koh (1995) suggested that greater industry involvement in curriculum development would complement academic efforts, a sentiment echoed by Middleton and Ladkin (1996). They cautioned against allowing tourism to be defined solely by academic preferences, as this could lead to confusion among prospective students and employers.

By the end of this era, the tourism curriculum remained predominantly content-centric, focusing on specific subject matter rather than adopting a more comprehensive approach to teaching and learning processes (Airey & Johnstone, 1999). Gunn (1998) maintains that the field of tourism began to move towards a multi-disciplinary approach as universities increasingly integrated tourism studies into specialized faculties such as business or social sciences. Furthermore, efforts were

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made in the UK to establish a standardized approach to tourism education, including a proposed new definition of tourism by Tribe (1999). This definition expanded the scope of tourism to encompass interactions among tourists, businesses, economies, governments, communities, and environments, paving the way for the inclusion of non-business aspects of tourism, such as community involvement and environmental considerations, into the curriculum.

Tourism Education Curriculum from 2000 to Present

The 21st century has seen significant advancements in tourism education, driven by the adoption of various methodological paradigms. Tribe (2005) identified three key paradigms in curriculum design: scientific positivist, interpretive, and critical approaches. He emphasized the importance of carefully considering methodology in curriculum design, rather than hastily adopting a preferred method. This approach addresses the challenge of defining the purpose of tourism education.

The scientific positivist paradigm advocates for basing curriculum content on verifiable data and testing it through hypothesis formulation. However, this approach may overlook critical societal perspectives, which are increasingly important in a complex and interconnected world.

Interpretive and critical approaches offer alternative methodologies that allow for the inclusion of diverse opinions and perspectives, which may be excluded by the scientific positivist perspective. Inui *et al.* (2006) argue for the integration of sociology and the philosophy of tourism into the curriculum, providing students with a foundation for addressing epistemological issues and developing critical thinking skills within the context of tourism.

By embracing diverse perspectives and methodologies, the tourism curriculum can prepare students better for the complexities of the

industry. The integration of these approaches has led to a more nuanced and holistic understanding of tourism, which is essential for addressing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. As tourism continues to evolve, so too must the educational frameworks that support it, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities necessary to succeed in this dynamic field.

10.2.5. Approaches and Models for Constructing a Tourism Curriculum

Smith and Cooper's (2000) research highlights the necessity for a flexible curriculum that can be adapted to the teaching context in which it is used, rather than being rigidly bound to a specific set of conditions. This flexibility allows for the curriculum to evolve alongside the educational system and the industry it serves, ensuring its continued relevance.

Building on this idea, Lawton (1989) proposed a comprehensive model for developing a tourism curriculum that integrates various philosophical and sociological considerations. According to Lawton, the curriculum development process should begin with a thorough examination of the fundamental principles and values that underpin the tourism industry. This includes an understanding of the social and cultural implications of tourism, as well as the ethical and moral considerations that need to be addressed. Lawton's model, alongside the findings of Smith and Cooper, provides valuable insights into creating a curriculum that aligns with the needs of both the education system and industry stakeholders.

Philosophical inquiries within this context focus on the educational goals of tourism and the skills that should be embedded within tourism knowledge. Sociological inquiries, on the other hand, address the needs

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of contemporary society, considering the perspectives of all stakeholders, not only businesses.

The concept of a curriculum has been the subject of extensive debate. While some scholars view it as a collection of taught material, others see it as encompassing the entire educational experience. Regardless of the definition, the purpose of a curriculum is to equip students with specific skills and abilities through various subjects or units. In tourism education, experts have identified seven core areas of study, including tourism marketing, industry structure, and policy and management, to create a shared body of knowledge for both the tourism industry and academia.

10.2.6. Influence of Ideology on the Tourism Curriculum

The development of a tourism curriculum in South Africa is deeply influenced by the country's political and social history, particularly the legacy of apartheid. From 1948 until the early 1990s, South Africa was governed by policies of institutionalized racial segregation, leading to profound inequalities among its population groups. Today, educational policies reflect ongoing efforts to address these historical injustices and promote social cohesion, although significant challenges do remain.

To understand the impact of political and social ideology on the tourism curriculum in South African TVET colleges, this chapter explores how these factors shape and inform the curriculum. Apple (2012) claims that education need to be contextualized within the framework of a complex and unequal society, where social dynamics heavily influence learning. Apple argues that mechanisms of cultural and economic preservation and distribution play a significant role in educational systems, often reflecting the broader social order.

Apple's analysis points to the "hegemonic alliance of the New Right," comprising four predominant social, political, and ideological

movements: neoliberalism, neoconservatism, authoritarian populism, and the new middle class. These movements maintain their influence by asserting ideological dominance and leveraging concepts such as religion, inequality, markets, and standards.

In South Africa, the national curriculum is designed to cultivate democratic citizens who transcend racial and tribal divides, promoting liberal democratic values. For example, the history curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of human activities in the past, helping students connect historical events to present-day social evolution. The curriculum is governed by sixteen principles for democratic transformation, covering areas such as communication culture, arts and culture, human rights promotion, multilingualism, sports and nation-building, anti-racism, gender equality, HIV/AIDS education, equal access, ethical behaviour, adherence to the rule of law, environmental consciousness, and fostering patriotism and common citizenship.

These principles align with Hirst's (1974) seven forms of knowledge, which include mathematics, physical sciences, history, human sciences, religious studies, literature, fine arts, and philosophy. In South Africa, certain subjects are deemed more critical than others, as evidenced by varying pass marks. For example, tourism subjects typically require a pass mark of 50%, while marketing and financial management subjects may require only 40%. In some cases, the tourism program under examination may even stipulate a pass mark of 70%, reflecting different interpretations of the subject's simplicity or complexity.

10.2.7. Approaches to Tourism Curriculum Design

Research by Smith and Cooper (2000) underscores the importance of designing a curriculum that is flexible and adaptable to the specific teaching contexts in which it is used. Rather than being rigidly bound to

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a particular framework, a well-constructed curriculum should allow for modifications and adjustments that reflect the changing needs of students as well as those of the broader education system. This flexibility ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and effective, even as the tourism industry and educational environments continue to evolve.

Complementing this perspective, Lawton (1989) offers a comprehensive model for developing a tourism curriculum that integrates various philosophical and sociological considerations. Lawton claims that the process of curriculum development should begin with a deep exploration of the fundamental principles and values that underpin the tourism industry. This includes understanding the social and cultural implications of tourism, as well as the ethical and moral considerations that have to be considered. Lawton's model provides a holistic approach to curriculum design, ensuring that the resulting educational programs are not only aligned with industry needs but also grounded in broader societal values.

These insights from Smith and Cooper (2000) and Lawton (1989) highlight the importance of a curriculum development process that is both efficient and flexible, catering to the needs of the education system as well as to the industry it serves. By incorporating philosophical inquiries that focus on the educational goals of tourism and the skills essential for students, alongside sociological inquiries that address the needs of contemporary society, curriculum developers can create programs that are comprehensive and responsive to a wide range of stakeholders.

10.2.8. Defining the Curriculum in Tourism Education

The definition of a curriculum has been the subject of extensive debate, with different scholars offering varying interpretations. Some view the

curriculum as simply the material that is taught, while others see it as encompassing the entire educational experience. Regardless of the definition, the primary purpose of a curriculum remains consistent: to equip students with specific skills and abilities through structured subjects or units of study.

In the context of tourism education, a group of experts has identified seven core areas of study that form the foundation of the discipline. These include tourism marketing, industry structure, and policy and management. Together, these areas create a shared body of knowledge that is essential for both the tourism industry and academic inquiry. This comprehensive approach to curriculum design ensures that students are well-prepared to meet the demands of the industry while also contributing to the academic discourse on tourism.

10.2.9. The Influence of Ideology on Tourism Curriculum

The development and implementation of a curriculum are deeply influenced by the broader political and social context in which it operates. In South Africa, the country's history of institutionalized racial segregation under apartheid has left a lasting impact on the education system. From 1948 until the early 1990s, apartheid policies created profound inequalities among different population groups. Today, educational policies are aimed at addressing these historical injustices and promoting social cohesion, although significant challenges remain.

Apple (2012) contends that the education system in public schools is heavily influenced by government actions and decisions. He argues that education must be contextualized within the framework of a complex and unequal society, where social dynamics play a critical role in shaping the mechanisms of cultural and economic preservation and distribution. Apple's analysis highlights the "hegemonic alliance of the New Right," which comprises four predominant social, political, and ideological

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movements: neoliberalism, neoconservatism, authoritarian populism, and the new middle class. These movements maintain their influence by asserting ideological dominance and leveraging concepts such as religion, inequality, markets, and standards.

In South Africa, the national curriculum is designed to cultivate democratic citizens who transcend racial and tribal divides and embrace liberal democratic values. For example, the history curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of human activities in the past, helping students make connections between historical events and the present. The curriculum is governed by sixteen principles for democratic transformation, covering areas such as communication culture, arts and culture, human rights promotion, multilingualism, sports and nation-building, anti-racism, gender equality, HIV/AIDS education, equal access, ethical behaviour, adherence to the rule of law, environmental consciousness, and fostering patriotism and common citizenship.

These principles align with Hirst's (1974) seven forms of knowledge, which include mathematics, physical sciences, history, human sciences, religious studies, literature, the fine arts, and philosophy. In South Africa, certain subjects are deemed more critical than others, as evidenced by varying pass marks. For example, tourism subjects typically require a pass mark of 50%, while marketing and financial management subjects accept a pass mark of 40%. In some instances, within the tourism program under examination, a pass mark of 70% is required, which may reflect different interpretations, such as the perceived simplicity of the subject necessitating a higher standard for passing.

The following section will explore the theoretical framework applied in this study, providing a deeper understanding of the underlying principles that guide curriculum development in tourism education.

10.2.10.Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations that guided the research, focused on the capabilities approach and Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device. These frameworks were selected to explore the formulation of a tourism curriculum that is not only adaptable but also aligned with the broader goals of higher education – equipping students with practical, transferable skills.

The Capabilities Approach

The capabilities approach was chosen as the theoretical backbone of this research, primarily due to its departure from the traditional human capital theory. The human capital perspective often reduces education to a mere tool for economic growth, placing minimal emphasis on the unique backgrounds and learning environments of individual students (Barrett, 2009). In contrast, the capabilities approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between education and development.

As described by Robeyns (2005) as a normative framework for assessing individual well-being and societal arrangements, the capabilities approach considers a broader range of factors that influence well-being, including inequality and poverty. This approach shifts the focus from economic output to the opportunities available for individuals to achieve valued functions, emphasizing personal agency and social justice (Sen, 2005). It prioritizes human flourishing over mere economic expansion – a viewpoint echoed by Powell and McGrath (2014). For instance, employability is not merely about accessing any job but about having the freedom to choose meaningful employment (Bonvin & Galster, 2010).

Institutions and educational structures are evaluated based on their impact on individuals' well-being, with the curriculum's effectiveness

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judged by its contribution to students' capabilities and freedoms (Walker & Unterhalter, 2010). However, the capabilities approach has faced criticism for its perceived focus on the individual, with some arguing that it does not address the role of groups and social structures sufficiently (Robeyns, 2005). Tikly (2013) cautions against expecting the capabilities approach to provide ready-made solutions to policy challenges, emphasizing instead its utility in framing issues and guiding policy evaluation.

Bonvin and Farvaque (2006) raise critical questions regarding the evaluation of TVET colleges through the lens of the capabilities approach. They ask whether TVET institutions genuinely enhance students' capabilities or whether they inadvertently constrain them. These questions depart from conventional evaluation methods, highlighting the importance of considering the broader impact of TVET on students' well-being.

Bonvin and Farvaque's (2010) work underscores the need for a holistic approach to evaluating TVET institutions – one that extends beyond traditional success metrics to consider the socio – economic context and the impact of vocational education on students' capabilities, well-being, and societal development.

To explore these issues further and assess the tourism curriculum's impact on students' capabilities and functioning, this study also employs Bernstein's pedagogic device. This framework examines the relationship between teaching and learning processes and students' opportunities to succeed, aiming to provide insights into how the tourism curriculum can better promote students' well-being and agency.

10.2.11. The Transmission of Tourism Knowledge: Bernstein's Pedagogic Device

Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how knowledge is transmitted within educational settings. This framework emphasizes not only the content of education but also the processes by means of which teaching and learning occur. It provides criteria, rules, and components that help us understand how knowledge is structured within a curriculum and how it is conveyed through pedagogical practices.

At its core, the pedagogic device addresses knowledge-related issues at multiple levels, from national policies to classroom implementation. According to Bernstein, this device functions as a set of guidelines or approaches that facilitate the transfer of knowledge through pedagogical methods. As Ashwin *et al.* (2012) explain, the pedagogic device helps us understand how knowledge is distributed across society, including the rules governing its production, who can access it, and the various pathways through which different groups acquire knowledge.

10.2.12. Tourism Curriculum and the Rules of the Pedagogic Device

Bernstein (2000) outlines three essential rules within the pedagogic device: distributive rules, recontextualizing rules, and evaluative rules. Each of these rules plays a distinct role in structuring the educational process and influencing the distribution, adaptation, and assessment of knowledge. In the context of tourism education, these rules are crucial in shaping how the curriculum is developed, delivered, and evaluated.

10.2.13. Distributive Rules

Distributive rules determine who is permitted to share knowledge, with whom, and under what circumstances. These rules define the legitimacy

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of teaching roles, the content taught, and the context in which teaching and learning occur. In the tourism curriculum at TVET colleges, the competence of lecturers is a significant concern. A study conducted by the DHET (2016) revealed that a considerable percentage of lecturers did not possess the necessary academic or professional qualifications, raising questions about their ability to effectively shape the competencies of tourism graduates.

Bernstein (2000) explains that distributive rules regulate the power dynamics and social groups involved in the distribution of specialized knowledge. The classification of knowledge is tied to power, with access to certain types of knowledge often determined by one's background or social status. Teese and Polesel (2003) further highlight that students from culturally rich families tend to have greater access to disciplinary knowledge, reflecting Bourdieu's theory of social capital, which links economic class to accumulated cultural assets.

In South Africa, educators undergo defined training programs and are licensed by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). In addition, governing bodies in the tourism industry, such as the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Education and Training Authority (CATHSETA), oversee skills development and accreditation of training providers. These distributive rules play a significant role in determining the skills and knowledge that tourism graduates possess, shaping the tourism curriculum and the learning outcomes.

10.2.14. Implications of Distributive Rules on the TVET Tourism Curriculum

Bernstein's distributive rules influence the structure of the tourism curriculum significantly, particularly in TVET programs such as the NC(V) offered by South African colleges. These rules dictate how the curriculum is structured and presented to students. For instance, the

NC(V) curriculum is designed for students who have completed Grade Nine and are interested in vocational training in areas such as Tourism, Marketing, and Hospitality. The curriculum's content and structure are shaped by the broader socio-political context in which it operates, guided by distributive rules.

The Department of Education regularly evaluates the syllabi for NC(V) programs to ensure that they align with current industry needs and educational standards. As the tourism industry evolves, the curriculum needs to be recontextualized to meet these changing demands. This process involves integrating new technologies, updating course content, and incorporating practical training opportunities to prepare students better for the workforce.

The Recontextualizing Rules and the Tourism Curriculum

Once the type of knowledge has been identified through distributive rules, it must be contextualized within specific educational settings. Recontextualizing rules, which stem from distributive rules, play a crucial role in this process, creating a power dynamic between the two.

Before delving into recontextualizing rules, it is essential to define pedagogic discourse. Bernstein (2000) elucidates that pedagogic discourse comprises two fundamental discourses: one dealing with various skills and their interrelationships, and another focusing on social order. This discourse incorporates regulations that govern the development of skills and their interactions, as well as those that establish social order.

In TVET colleges, tourism knowledge and skills are derived from various disciplines, such as Tourism Operations. These disciplines encompass multiple topics, concepts, and principles that are significant and relevant to the industry. The content selected for students is based on their learning requirements and the level of expertise they aim to achieve.

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This carefully curated knowledge and skills are then integrated into the curriculum, with subjects covered across different modules, from Level 2 to Level 4, each time with increasing complexity and comprehensiveness.

10.2.15.Recontextualizing Rules and the Curriculum Design Process

The curriculum design process involves recontextualizing rules, which determine the content and methodology of knowledge transmission. These rules serve as guiding principles for outlining course objectives and establishing boundaries for subject outcomes, learning objectives, and assessment criteria. Curriculum designers ensure that the knowledge being conveyed aligns with the country's needs and expectations. In the Tourism curriculum under study, the syllabi specify what is to be taught and how it should be delivered.

Bernstein (1990) notes that the educational landscape can be influenced by various factors, including family, community, and peer relations, which can impact its practices. Governments and authorities are particularly concerned with the level of consciousness instilled by the knowledge disseminated in educational institutions. In some cases, excessive enlightenment among the populace may be viewed unfavourably by those in power, as it could potentially threaten their control.

The Evaluative Rules

The final component of the pedagogic device, evaluative rules, plays a critical role in shaping students' consciousness by transmitting criteria for success. These rules are derived from the recontextualization of existing rules, creating a power dynamic between them.

Muller *et al.* (2004) suggest that students are primarily motivated by recognition and realization rules, while Singh (2001) argues that students respond to evaluative rules by identifying the necessary knowledge and achieving desired outcomes. The process of acquiring knowledge is heavily influenced by the classification and framing of knowledge, as well as by the interaction between official and pedagogic recontextualizing fields.

Students often grapple with their responsibilities and the methods they have to employ to meet academic demands. This ongoing interaction with teachers, knowledge domains, and even societal structures shapes their identities and their understanding of their roles within society.

The pedagogic device functions as a regulator, influencing the levels of consciousness among knowledge seekers. These levels of consciousness are crucial for the production, reproduction, and transformation of cultural norms and values. According to Bernstein, states and authorities exert control over knowledge distribution and the recontextualization process, thereby shaping qualifications, prerequisites, and assessment criteria. Social inequalities are intricately linked to differential access to knowledge, while social stability depends on controlled access to that knowledge.

In the context of tourism education, the pedagogic device offers a framework for evaluating how the curriculum is delivered to students in TVET colleges. It provides insights into the structure of tourism knowledge and the pedagogical practices employed in TVET colleges, helping to ensure that the curriculum prepares students effectively for the challenges of the tourism industry.

The integration of the capabilities approach and Bernstein's pedagogic device in this research offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of curriculum development in tourism

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education. By focusing on both the individual well-being of students and the broader socio-economic context in which education occurs, this approach allows for a nuanced evaluation of the effectiveness of the tourism curriculum.

The primary aim of this research was to assess whether the skills and knowledge imparted through the NC(V) tourism curriculum align with the expectations and requirements of employers within the tourism sector. This alignment is crucial for determining the readiness of graduates for employment in the industry. Given the complexity of this objective, a qualitative research approach was selected, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the dynamics within TVET institutions and the curriculum-related challenges they face.

Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for studies that seek to understand how individuals interpret and interact with specific phenomena. As Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow and Ponterotto (2017) suggest, qualitative methods focus on uncovering the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences, while Mahajan (2018) emphasizes the exploration of participants' beliefs and perspectives. In this study, the qualitative approach was chosen to facilitate an interactive and dynamic engagement between the researcher and participants. This methodology was instrumental in gathering rich, detailed accounts of participants' experiences with the NC(V) tourism curriculum, thereby enhancing the depth and quality of the research findings.

As discussed in the literature review, achieving a balance between vocational and academic components is vital for the effectiveness of tourism programs. To explore how well this balance is realized in practice, the research employed customized interview schedules designed to uncover the methods and techniques used in developing

tourism curricula. In the South African context, the tourism planning model must reflect the interests of all stakeholders, not merely those of the commercial sector. This research methodology was therefore crafted to ensure a comprehensive understanding of these complex interactions.

Sampling and Research Population

Purposive sampling was employed; a method particularly useful when the research aims to explore specific characteristics or functions within a population. To ensure the collection of relevant and focused data, the researcher purposefully selected participants who were directly involved in the NC(V) tourism program. These included employers who had hired NC(V) tourism graduates, the graduates themselves who were currently employed, and lecturers who taught the NC(V) tourism curriculum. The rationale for this selection assumed that these respondents would provide data that were both rich and directly relevant to the research questions.

Purposive sampling was also chosen due to the study's focus on a small subset of a larger population. While many members of the subset were identifiable, it was nearly impossible to enumerate all potential participants. Given the qualitative nature of the study, it was important to keep the number of participants manageable, allowing for detailed data collection and keeping costs within reasonable limits.

The final sample consisted of twenty participants: four employers from the tourism industry, twelve employed NC(V) graduates, and four NC(V) tourism lecturers, with each lecturer representing one of the NC(V) tourism subjects. This sample size was deemed sufficient to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and to address the research questions effectively.

10.2.16.Data Collection Methods

The research aimed to address critical questions raised by Powell and McGrath (2014) concerning the functioning of institutions and their impact on individual capabilities. Specifically, the study sought to understand which capabilities and functions are prioritized by students, how well these are supported by existing institutional frameworks and pedagogic approaches, and how the development of these skills benefits students, their families, and communities. Moreover, the author deemed it necessary to investigate whether equal opportunities exist for all students within the TVET sector, particularly in the context of the tourism curriculum.

To ensure the reliability and credibility of the data collected, the researcher employed a triangulation of data collection methods, a strategy recommended by Maxwell (2013) to enhance the robustness of qualitative research findings. The two primary methods used in this study were in-depth interviews and document analysis.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected for their ability to facilitate rich, detailed data collection. This method allows for direct interaction between the researcher and participants, enabling probing and clarification of responses. Semi-structured interviews are highly valued in qualitative research for their capacity to uncover deep insights into individual and group experiences (Welman & Kruger, 2003).

Interviews were conducted at the participants' respective workplaces, allowing for contextually relevant discussions. While an interview schedule served as a guide, the researcher maintained a flexible approach to ensure that the interviews provided comprehensive answers to the research questions. Open-ended questions were used to

encourage discussion and in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives.

The interviews focused on the responsiveness of the NC(V) tourism curriculum to the needs of the South African tourism industry, with each session lasting up to 45 minutes. The interview questions were grounded in Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device, which, as outlined in the theoretical framework, emphasizes the development of students' abilities and functions.

10.2.17. Document Analysis

To complement and validate the findings from the interviews, document analysis was conducted, further enhancing the comprehensiveness of the qualitative research. The analysis included a thorough review of the NC(V) tourism syllabi from Levels 2 to 4, as well as assessment guidelines. Document analysis is a valuable method in qualitative research, as it often reveals implicit information that may not surface in interviews. This approach provided additional insights that supported and confirmed the findings from the interviews, particularly concerning the alignment of the curriculum with industry needs.

The document analysis focused on several key areas: identifying the theoretical and practical components of the curriculum, assessing the types of skills prescribed, and evaluating the adequacy of coverage. These aspects were derived from the interview data and the literature review, with particular attention to the balance between theoretical and practical instruction, alignment with industry expectations, and the effectiveness of syllabi interpretation and implementation by lecturers.

The careful analysis of these documents assisted in ensuring that the research was grounded in relevant and current data, avoiding common pitfalls associated with secondary data reliance. This thorough approach was essential for constructing a comprehensive understanding of the

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curriculum's strengths and weaknesses in preparing students for careers in the tourism industry.

10.2.18.Data Analysis

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, an inductive methodology was employed for data analysis. This approach, based on Creswell's (1998) framework, focuses on identifying emerging patterns and themes within the data, guided by the study's objectives and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the capabilities approach and Bernstein's pedagogic device.

The analysis began with coding, a process that involves breaking down and categorizing the data according to relevant themes and patterns. Following the method proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the researcher analysed statements from interviews and documents, identifying information pertinent to the research questions and objectives.

Thematic analysis was then conducted, organizing the data into codes that reflected common issues emerging from the literature review, interview data, previous research findings, and the researcher's expertise in the tourism industry. This methodical approach ensured that the research findings were robust, scholarly, and reflective of the complex dynamics at play within the NC(V) tourism curriculum and its alignment with industry needs.

Data presentation

The data collected was meticulously analysed using an inductive approach, allowing for the identification of patterns and themes that directly address the research questions and objectives. This thematic analysis, informed by existing literature and previous studies, provides meaningful insights into the adequacy of the NC(V) tourism curriculum

in meeting the demands of the South African tourism sector. The analysis was conducted within the theoretical framework of the capabilities approach, supported by Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device and the concept of curriculum responsiveness. This section presents the key themes identified by means of interviews and document analysis, offering a comprehensive discussion of the primary findings.

The key themes identified for data analysis include:

- Accessibility of Resources within TVET Institutions
- Implementation of Syllabi in Classroom Practices
- Collaboration between TVET Institutions and Industry
- Significance of Work-Based Education in Vocational Training
- Support Systems for TVET Graduates
- Insufficiency of TVET Training in Furnishing Students with Requisite Tourism Industry Skills

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, unique codes were assigned to each interviewee. The four NC(V) tourism lecturers were identified as Tourism Lecturers (TL1–TL4), the tourism graduates as Tourism Graduates (TG1–TG12), and the managers of tourism companies as Tourism Managers (TM1–TM4). The following sections provide an in-depth analysis of each identified theme.

Accessibility of Resources within TVET Institutions

Interviews with lecturers revealed a significant shortfall in the resources required for effectively implementing the tourism curriculum and cultivating the skills demanded by the industry. A particularly critical shortage highlighted was the lack of computers, which are essential for research and project-based learning. Internet connectivity, especially Wi-Fi, was also noted as a crucial resource, particularly for subjects like Sustainable Tourism that necessitate extensive research capabilities. The absence of such fundamental resources was identified by Powell

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and McGrath (2014) as a major constraint on expanding students' capabilities and functioning.

Moreover, recent studies have underscored the impact of inadequate computer literacy among tourism graduates on their readiness for employment. Tourism industry managers have specifically pointed to deficiencies in graduates' research skills, a gap that becomes evident when they enter the workforce. One manager expressed frustration over this gap:

As a company, we expect students to have at least the basic knowledge of how to search for things. It is always unfortunate that the students we get, we have to train them in basic things that we believe should be taught at school (TM3).

This deficiency in research skills not only hampers graduates' performance but also leads to poor decision-making and unsatisfactory outcomes in their professional roles. The need for TVET institutions to provide students with essential computer and research skills is therefore paramount.

Lecturers also pointed out the lack of platforms for addressing curriculum-related challenges. While support structures such as program managers, Heads of Departments (HODs), and deputy campus managers exist, their effectiveness is limited, particularly if the HOD lacks expertise in the relevant program area. This highlights the necessity for regular conferences, meetings, and workshops between the education and industry sectors. Such initiatives could bridge the gap between classroom practices and industry needs, as suggested by one lecturer:

We need to have regular conferences, meetings, and workshops between us in the education sector and those in the industry. The meetings can allow us to find common ground on how we can

bridge the gap between what we do in the classrooms while we still wait for the syllabi to be updated. This would need people to be hands-on because the industry is dynamic, and it is ever-changing, so we need to have those conferences and workshops (TL2).

Furthermore, lecturers proposed provincial meetings among tourism educators as a platform to address academic concerns collectively:

Another limitation is the lack of platforms where stakeholders can engage and evaluate the tourism curriculum and make recommendations on what themes or topics can be taken out or introduced. The platform can also allow lecturers to challenge the curriculum. There is a general feeling that at times, policies are borrowed from other countries without considering our context (TL4).

Such collaborative efforts would be instrumental in facilitating curriculum development that is responsive to the dynamic needs of the tourism industry.

Implementation of Syllabi in Classroom Practices

The analysis revealed a discrepancy between lecturers' perceptions of the curriculum and its actual content. While lecturers often claimed that the syllabi were lacking in relevant material, the analysis of the NC(V) tourism syllabi suggested otherwise. The syllabi, in fact, prescribe many of the essential skills that employers seek, aligning well with industry demands. However, the challenge lies in the student's ability to acquire these skills, which is hindered not only by syllabi inadequacies but also by the interpretation and delivery of content in the classroom.

Bernstein's pedagogic device provides valuable insights into this issue, emphasizing the importance of effectively translating syllabi into classroom activities. Unfortunately, the qualifications and pedagogical

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training of lecturers often fall short, impeding the successful implementation of the curriculum. The data indicated that a significant percentage of TVET lecturers lack the necessary academic and professional qualifications, which negatively impacts students' learning experiences.

To address these challenges, it is crucial to invest in the professional development of lecturers, ensuring that they are equipped to translate syllabi into meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, there needs to be a shift away from assessment-centred teaching towards a focus on skills development. The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) plays a vital role in overseeing the implementation of the curriculum and ensuring that it meets industry standards.

Adopting the Didaktik traditional approach could further enhance curriculum delivery, allowing teachers greater flexibility and creativity in their teaching methods. This approach aligns with the capabilities approach by accommodating the diverse economic, social, and cultural contexts of students.

Collaboration between TVET Institutions and Industry

The significance of collaboration between TVET colleges and the tourism industry cannot be overstated. Gamble (2013) emphasized that a successful TVET system depends on strong partnerships with the industry to ensure that training remains relevant and up-to-date. However, feedback from industry managers during the interviews indicated a perceived divide between the educational institutions and the tourism sector. Rather than viewing training as a shared responsibility, managers saw it as the sole duty of TVET colleges. To train students effectively, it is imperative that the industry takes an active role in the educational process, rather than simply receiving students as finished products.

Young and Gamble (2006) argue that employers should have a say in shaping vocational curricula to bridge the gap between industry needs and TVET colleges. While the industry should not have total control over educational activities, its involvement as a partner is essential. Strengthening collaboration between the tourism industry and TVET colleges would enhance the competency of tourism graduates, as mandated by the syllabi, which often recommend engaging industry practitioners as guest lecturers.

For instance, the Tourism Operation syllabus suggests inviting a Standard Division staff member from South African Tourism to lecture on specific themes, while the Science of Tourism syllabus encourages inviting a corporate consultant as a guest speaker. Formalizing these collaborations through mandatory partnerships between TVET colleges and the industry would ensure that the curriculum remains aligned with industry standards and better prepares students for their careers in tourism.

Significance of Work-Based Education in Vocational Training

WBE is a critical component of vocational training, particularly in the final year of study for TVET students. The ten-day placement in a tourism company provides students with practical, hands-on experience, essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. However, concerns were raised about the short duration of these placements. One placement officer noted:

Through our monitoring, I have picked up that the one challenge raised by employers in the industry is the duration of the placement, which is ten days. This is a challenge because the duration is not enough for the students to be fully exposed to all functions within an establishment (Placement Officer).

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Research by Busby (2003) supports the notion that extended placements allow students to acquire a broader range of skills, including technical knowledge, communication, interpersonal skills, and an understanding of work culture. The value of practical knowledge gained through prolonged exposure to real-world situations has been emphasized by Webster and Leger (1992), who advocate for the integration of WBE into educational programs.

Despite its inclusion in the South African TVET tourism curriculum, the implementation of WBE has been inadequate. SAQA (2000) highlights the importance of practical competence gained in real-world contexts, yet some lecturers appear unfamiliar with the syllabus contents that guide their duties. To enhance the effectiveness of WBE, lecturers must engage with the syllabus and advocate for the recommended duration of placements.

Maintaining close links with employers, as outlined in the syllabus, is essential for lecturers to stay informed and ensure that students receive adequate WBE opportunities. Although some lecturers may view WBE as adding to their workload, integrating stakeholder engagement into their performance evaluations can mitigate this perception. Ultimately, ensuring sufficient WBE is not just a syllabus requirement but a critical aspect of preparing students for the tourism industry.

Support Systems for TVET Graduates

The interviews revealed a lack of support systems for TVET graduates once they complete their studies. One graduate remarked:

If only there was some sort of group of all graduates so that we can support each other. As it is, once we graduate, no one cares what happens to us. It's difficult because the companies where we train don't even offer us permanent jobs (TG1).

Another lecturer highlighted the absence of mechanisms to track graduates' employment status after they finish their studies. Establishing a support system for TVET graduates could provide them with a platform to share their professional experiences, which would be invaluable for both current students and lecturers. Such a system could also facilitate feedback loops, where graduates return to share their experiences with current students, offering practical insights that complement lecturers' theoretical knowledge:

It would have been nice to have those students come back and give a talk to other students, telling them about their own experience instead of just lecturers telling students what to expect in the workplace (TL3).

These platforms could help identify the most relevant capabilities for students as they progress through their studies, allowing them to focus on the skills that will be most beneficial in their careers. This approach aligns with the capabilities framework, which emphasizes the importance of enabling students to make informed choices about their education and future careers.

Insufficiency of TVET Training in Furnishing Students with Requisite Tourism Industry Skills

One of the major concerns raised in the study was the identification of outdated components within the syllabi. While it is expected that professional teaching staff can bridge the gap between syllabus content and current industry practices, this is not always the case. For example, traditional syllabi may emphasize manual ticketing processes, whereas the industry now predominantly uses electronic systems such as Amadeus or Galileo. However, the foundational knowledge provided by manual ticketing is still valuable as it offers a basis for learning these electronic systems, a point confirmed by both lecturers and employers.

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Despite some lecturers expressing concerns about students' preparedness for the industry, there was a consensus among employers that graduates possess the basic skills and knowledge required in the workplace. This suggests that, to some extent, the TVET Tourism program is achieving its objectives by equipping students with essential capabilities. One graduate noted:

The work we did in college, especially in areas like car rental, travel insurance, and cruises, is the same as what we are doing in the industry (TG7).

Similarly, a lecturer observed alignment between syllabus content and industry needs based on feedback from employed graduates:

I lecture modules that include foreign exchange, car rental, tour planning and budgeting, hotel reservation, international cruises, and international rail [...]. Based on feedback from former students who are employed by car rental companies, I know that what we teach in class matches the skills required in the industry, except for the digital part and the computerized systems (TL4).

However, there remains a disconnect between the practical skills emphasized by managers and their implementation in the classroom. For instance, the importance of compiling a practical experience portfolio, as mandated by the syllabi, is often overlooked by lecturers. This highlights the need for accurate interpretation and implementation of syllabi, which is crucial for producing truly industry-ready graduates.

Moreover, both managers and lecturers noted a deficiency in interpersonal skills among graduates, a critical competence in the tourism industry. One manager commented:

They cannot communicate effectively, they are shy, and their interpersonal skills are not so good. So, we have to help them to open up a bit and not be so anxious (TM1).

Despite regular classroom attendance, opportunities to develop these interpersonal skills are not being fully utilized. Encouraging more interaction and communication exercises in the classroom could help students build the confidence and interpersonal skills necessary for success in the tourism industry.

Wheelehan *et al.* (2015) have emphasized that the capabilities perspective is about equipping individuals with a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for various occupations within an industry. Given the diverse sectors within the tourism industry, the TVET system must prepare its students with the relevant capabilities required for employment. Ensuring that lecturers possess the necessary academic and professional capabilities is essential for delivering quality education. These capabilities, which include a strong educational background, teaching experience, and a passion for learning, are vital for effectively imparting knowledge and guiding students towards academic and professional success.

The next section will delve into the conclusions drawn from these findings, offering recommendations for improving the NC(V) tourism curriculum and better aligning it with the evolving needs of the tourism sector.

10.3 Key Findings

Three critical insights into the effectiveness of the NC(V) tourism curriculum were revealed. First, while the curriculum is well-suited in certain areas, it requires significant improvements in others to better prepare students for the tourism industry. Second, students pursuing tourism studies in TVET colleges were found to lack the essential skills needed for success in the South African tourism sector. Third, there is a

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pressing need to align the NC(V) tourism curriculum more closely with industry standards.

The discussion on curriculum responsiveness and skills acquisition is divided into two main sections: areas where the curriculum is effective and areas where it falls short.

Curriculum Responsiveness

The study found that the NC(V) tourism syllabi cover most of the relevant areas identified by the industry, even though some content is considered outdated. The Science of Tourism syllabus, in particular, was highlighted for its responsiveness, covering critical modules such as foreign currency, car rental, and hotel accommodation. However, the curriculum's responsiveness varies across different sectors within the tourism industry, indicating a need for more tailored training programs that address the diverse demands of these sectors.

Skills Gaps and Industry Readiness

Despite the curriculum's coverage of relevant topics, data from tourism managers underscored significant deficiencies in the practical skills of graduates. These gaps include ineffective communication, inadequate research abilities, and poor problem-solving skills—competencies that are crucial in the dynamic tourism environment. The overemphasis on theoretical learning within TVET colleges has been identified as a contributing factor to these deficiencies, leading to gaps in work readiness. Additionally, graduates were found to lack basic computer literacy and practical knowledge, which are indispensable in today's tourism industry. The mismatch between industry expectations and student capabilities highlights the need for comprehensive curriculum reform and stronger collaboration between TVET colleges and industry stakeholders.

Implementation and Interpretation of the Curriculum

The study also examined how effectively the NC(V) tourism curriculum is interpreted and implemented to ensure that students acquire the skills necessary for the industry. The role of lecturers as mediators between the syllabi and students is crucial in this process. However, challenges such as insufficient qualifications among lecturers impede the effective delivery of the curriculum. The gap between the intended curriculum and its actual implementation further diminishes the curriculum's responsiveness. Moreover, the disconnect between TVET colleges and the tourism industry exacerbates the challenges in developing competent graduates. Strengthening collaboration between these entities is essential to bridge this gap and ensure that the curriculum aligns with industry needs.

Efforts to incentivize industry participation and coordinate various stakeholders can significantly enhance the curriculum's responsiveness. There is a critical need to strike a balance between theoretical instruction and practical skills development, as evidenced by the inadequate emphasis on work-based experience. Prioritizing practical experiences will better prepare students for the demands of the tourism industry and foster a more responsive and relevant curriculum.

10.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the gap between the NC(V) tourism curriculum and the requirements of the tourism industry. These measures aim to enhance graduates' competencies and skills, thereby increasing their employability and success within and beyond the tourism sector.

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Adherence to Syllabus Instructions:

TVET colleges should strictly adhere to the DHET guidelines to avoid misinterpretation or neglect of critical areas such as WBE, practical training, industry involvement, resource utilization, lecturer-industry links, and portfolio compilation.

Strengthening Lecturer-Industry Relationships:

Establishing strong partnerships between TVET institutions and the tourism industry is crucial for aligning the curriculum with industry needs. Regularly inviting industry officials as guest speakers can provide students with up-to-date insights into industry demands.

Conduct Regular Workshops:

Regular workshops should be organized to facilitate dialogue between TVET institutions and industry stakeholders. These workshops would serve as platforms for sharing best practices, addressing challenges, and enhancing collaboration.

Regular Curriculum Review:

The NC(V) tourism syllabi should be reviewed every five years to update content, remove obsolete topics, and ensure alignment with current industry requirements. This review process should involve stakeholders from DHET, TVET management, lecturers, industry representatives, and professional bodies.

Prioritize WBE:

Stronger emphasis should be placed on WBE, with adequate time allocated for practical, hands-on learning experiences. Additionally, lecturers' Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) should be prioritized to improve teaching quality.

Provide Computer and Internet Access:

TVET colleges should ensure that learners have access to essential resources such as computer labs and Wi-Fi to develop critical research skills and digital literacy, which are increasingly important in the tourism industry.

Implement an Introductory Program and Specialization:

An orientation phase should be introduced to provide students with an overview of the tourism industry, allowing them to make informed decisions about their career paths. Specialization options should be offered at later stages to align students' education with their interests and industry demands.

Compile Practical Portfolios:

Students should be encouraged to create practical portfolios in line with syllabus guidelines. These portfolios will help them develop the practical skills needed to succeed in their respective fields.

Ensure Lecturer Qualifications:

Lecturers should possess the necessary teaching qualifications, and ongoing professional development should be supported through in-service training programs.

Organize Educational Tours:

Educational tours to tourism establishments should be arranged to expose students to real-world industry practices, motivating them to develop the competencies required for success in the tourism sector.

10.5 Conclusion and Limitations

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights, several limitations should be noted. The study was conducted at only four sites

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within the Gauteng province of South Africa, which limits the ability to generalize the findings to all TVET colleges offering the NC(V) tourism qualification. Hence the results may not fully represent the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing graduates with the necessary skills and competencies across the broader context of South Africa. However, the recommendations derived from this study are highly relevant to the TVET colleges examined and lay a strong foundation for future research.

The study also faced challenges related to the scheduling and availability of participants, particularly due to the busy schedules of the stakeholders involved. Follow-up interviews with full-time TVET staff were difficult to arrange, which may have impacted the depth of the data collected. Furthermore, the study would have benefited from the inclusion of additional participants from the research and curriculum development divisions of CATHSSETA, as well as curriculum developers and policymakers from DHET. These additional perspectives could have provided further insights into the curriculum redesign process.

Despite these limitations, the study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of curriculum responsiveness within South African TVET colleges and offers practical recommendations for improving the alignment of the NC(V) tourism curriculum with industry needs.

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