

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK  
INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF ITS KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

A CASE STUDY OF A TVET COLLEGE

of

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme from the perspective of its key stakeholders, using stakeholder theory as the framework. Stakeholder theory suggests that organisations should consider the interests and needs of various stakeholders who have a vested interest in or are affected by the organisation's activities (Freeman 1963;1984). In the context of WIL, stakeholders include students, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training College, and host employers. The study uncovers the experiences, perceptions, and recommendations of students, educators, employers, and institutions involved in the WIL programme by collecting data through interviews, focus groups, and documents. Through evaluation research, valuable insights emerge regarding the success and potential areas for improvement of WIL within TVET Colleges. The findings indicate issues like inadequate resources and uneven student readiness, and they offer helpful suggestions for better communication, resource distribution, and support systems. Additionally, this calls for more research on curriculum integration, industry collaborations, and long-term career outcomes evaluation.

**KEYWORDS:** Technical Vocational Education and Training College, Work-Integrated Learning; Stakeholder; Stakeholder Theory.

## ***Declaration***

I declare that the Dissertation/Thesis entitled, Evaluating the Effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the Perspective of its Key Stakeholders: A Case Study of a TVET College, which I hereby submit for the degree, Master of Business Administration, at Rhodes University, is my work. I further affirm that I have never before submitted this thesis/dissertation for credit toward a degree at this or any other postsecondary institution and that I have properly cited and indicated all of the sources I cited.

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Sandisiwe Madabane

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## *Table of Contents*

<b><i>CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Project Overview</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction and Background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.2 TVET in South Africa</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.3 Definition of key terms</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.4 Research problem</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.5 Research aim and objectives</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.6 Overview of the methodological approach</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.7 Thesis structure</b>	<b>10</b>
<b><i>CHAPTER 2: Review of Literature</i></b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 Stakeholder Theory</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.3 Work-Integrated Learning</b>	<b>14</b>
2.3.1 WIL Definition and Character	14
2.3.2 Importance and Outcome Work Integrated Learning	15
2.3.3 The effectiveness of work-integrated learning.	17
<b>2.4 Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Implementation</b>	<b>19</b>
2.4 .1 Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement	19
2.4.2 Employability	20
<b>2.4.3 Policy and Procedure</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.5 Chapter Summary</b>	<b>22</b>
<b><i>CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology</i></b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.2 Research aim and objectives</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.3 Research Approach and Paradigm</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.4 Research Method</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>3.5 Data Collection Techniques</b>	<b>25</b>

<b>3.6</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>3.7</b>	<b>Quality Considerations</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.7.1</b>	<b>Dependability</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.7.2</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>28</b>
3.7.3	Transferability	28
3.7.4	Confirmability	28
<b>3.9</b>	<b>Chapter Summary</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b><i>CHAPTER 4: Findings</i></b>	<b><i>30</i></b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Findings from Host College Officials</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Theme 1: Appropriateness of the WIL Policy</b>	<b>31</b>
4.3.1	Subtheme 1: Expectations of WIL	31
4.3.2	Subtheme 2: Criteria for selecting industry partners	32
4.3.3	Subtheme 3: Facilitating matching students to placements	32
4.3.4	Subtheme 4: Support services for students	33
4.3.5	Summary analysis of Theme 1	34
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Theme 2: Effectiveness of the WIL Programme</b>	<b>34</b>
4.4.1	Subtheme 1: Evaluating Intended Learning Outcomes	34
4.4.2	Subtheme 2: Evaluating student performance	35
4.4.3	Subtheme 3: Best practices in supporting students	35
4.4.4	Subtheme 4: Challenges in implementing the WIL programme	35
4.4.5	Summary analysis of Theme 2	36
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Theme 3: Recommendations for Improvement</b>	<b>36</b>
4.5.1	Subtheme 1: Improving policy and procedures	37
4.5.2	Subtheme 2: Engaging with employers and industry partners	37
4.5.3	Subtheme 3: Bridging skills gap and improving employability	38
4.5.4	Summary analysis of Theme 3	38
<b>4.6</b>	<b>Findings from Students</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.7</b>	<b>Theme 1: Appropriateness of the WIL Policy</b>	<b>40</b>
4.7.1	Subtheme 1: Expectations of WIL	40
4.7.2	Subtheme 2: Experience with WIL and its Impact	40
4.7.3	Subtheme 3: Benefits of WIL for Students	41

4.7.4 Subtheme 4: Best Practices during WIL Placement	41
4.7.5 Summary Analysis of Theme 1	42
<b>4.8 Theme 2: Effectiveness of the WIL Programme</b>	<b>42</b>
4.8.1 Subtheme 1: Evaluating Performance during WIL	42
4.8.2 Subtheme 2: Critical Skills and Knowledge Gained	43
4.8.3 Subtheme 3: Challenges Faced during WIL	44
4.8.4 Summary Analysis of Theme 2	44
<b>4.9 Theme 3: Recommendations for Improvement</b>	<b>44</b>
4.9.1 Subtheme 1: Preparing Students for WIL	45
4.9.2 Subtheme 2: Supporting Students during WIL	45
4.9.3 Subtheme 3: Integrating WIL into Curriculum	46
4.9.4 Summary Analysis of Theme 3	46
<b>4.10 Findings from WIL Mentors/Host Employers</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.11 Theme 1: Appropriateness of the WIL Policy</b>	<b>48</b>
4.11.1 Subtheme 1: Expectations of WIL	48
4.11.2 Subtheme 2: Experience with hosting WIL Students	49
4.11.3 Summary Analysis of Theme 1	49
<b>4.12 Theme 2: Effectiveness of the WIL Programme</b>	<b>50</b>
4.12.1 Subtheme 1: Evaluating Performance during WIL	50
4.12.2 Subtheme 2: Critical Skills and Knowledge Gained	50
4.12.3 Summary Analysis of Theme 2	51
<b>4.13 Theme 3: Recommendations for Improvement</b>	<b>51</b>
4.13.1 Subtheme 1: Best Practices for Hosting WIL Students	51
4.13.2 Subtheme 2: Contributing to Industry Skills Development	52
4.13.3 Summary Analysis of Theme 3	52
<b>4.14 Chapter Summary</b>	<b>53</b>
<b><i>CHAPTER 5: Discussions</i></b>	<b>54</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>5.2 Appropriateness of the WIL Policy</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>5.3 Effectiveness of the WIL Programmes</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>5.4 Recommendations for Improvement</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>5.5 Summary of Findings and Implications</b>	<b>57</b>

<b><i>CHAPTER 6: Conclusions and Contributions</i></b>	<b>58</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>6.2 Summary of the Thesis</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>6.3 How the Research Questions Were Answered</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>6.4 Recommendations</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>6.5 Limitations</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>6.6 Key Contributions</b>	<b>62</b>
6.6.1 Theoretical Contributions	62
6.6.2 Practical Contributions	64
6.6.3 Policy Implications	64
<b><i>References</i></b>	<b>65</b>
<b><i>Appendices</i></b>	<b>74</b>
<b><i>PART TWO</i></b>	<b>79</b>

## *List of Tables*

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Table 4.1: Demographic Information of College Officials	30
Table 4.2: Themes for College Officials	31
Table 4.3: Demographic information of Students	39
Table 4.4: Themes for Student Participants	39
Table 4.5: Demographic information of WIL Mentors//Host Employers	47
Table 4.6: Themes for Host Employers/Mentors	48
Table 6.1: Main Expectations of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)	63

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# CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Project Overview

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## **1.1 Introduction and Background**

This study employs stakeholder theory as the conceptual framework to assess Work Integrated Learning's (WIL) efficacy from the viewpoints of essential stakeholders. According to Freeman's (1963, 1984) formulation of the stakeholder theory, organisations must consider the needs and interests of all parties directly or indirectly impacted by the organization's operations. Students, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and host employers are relevant stakeholders in the context of WIL. By means of a systematic data collection process that includes focus groups, interviews, and document analysis, this study clarifies the viewpoints, experiences, and suggestions of students, teachers, employers, and institutional representatives.

In this chapter, the context of TVET colleges in South Africa is first considered. After defining key terms, the research question, aim, and objectives are presented, and the study's methodological approach is briefly described. Finally, the thesis structure is outlined.

## **1.2 TVET in South Africa**

This study is premised from the perspective of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, since it seeks to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of WIL from the perspective of key stakeholders. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) took over responsibility for all post-secondary education and training in 2009, including public and private further and higher education institutions, levy-grant institutions, and related regulatory institutions (Ward, 2018). This restructuring aimed to strengthen education and training of pro-industry-related skills while at the same time addressing the question of unemployment in South Africa (Leibbrandt et al., 2010).

South African TVET colleges provide further education and training, as mentioned above, that promotes quality training and experience, investing in the youth by combining education and training to assist in securing the future of out-of-school youth (Wals, 2012). In this study,

the focus is on the WIL programme of a TVET College. In this sense, students exiting college not only obtain technical and professional information but are also developed to be active citizens in the country's economy through WIL (UNESCO, 2012). The aim is to strengthen education and training to produce industry-related skills, simultaneously addressing South Africa's unemployment question. However, Martin (2010) alludes to numerous studies that have demonstrated that work-based education has the potential to effectively produce graduates with skills. Despite the widespread agreement on the suitability of WIL programmes, there are still substantial gaps. WIL could either be effective or ineffective, depending on several variables. According to Atkinson (2016), these factors may include employer involvement in the process, teacher capability and engagement, and student involvement in the process. Venville et al. (2018), on the other hand, highlight the inability of institutions to record student experiences during work placements. This study's primary focus is to address both gaps simultaneously by assessing the appropriateness of the WIL policy and the effectiveness of its implementation. According to the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) Policy on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), all students who are enrolled in NATED Programmes (National Accredited Technical Education Diploma) programme are required to complete a total of eighteen months, equivalent to 2000 hours, of practical work experience in a workplace setting before they can graduate (DHET, 2011). By gathering feedback from stakeholders and evaluating the policy, the study aims to pinpoint specific areas of misalignment, inefficiency, or inadequacy within the policy and its execution.

WIL is a critical framework and part of the programme within TVET Colleges and is becoming a topic of interest in South Africa's higher education sector (Batholmeus and Pop, 2019). Implementing a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme arose because of policy development in the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector known then as FET College (Further Education and Training Colleges). Rossi (2010) emphasised that collaboration between industry and the education sector in this programme could contribute meaningfully to human capital development in South Africa. Its role is to ensure that students gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for future professional work and obtain qualifications (Kraak and Paterson, 2016).

WIL programmes are particularly included in the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma engineering programme. The DHET developed and reviewed the NATED programme nationally and was made available for N1 to N6 (DHET, 2013b:14). The NQF

level 6 is the cutoff point for theory courses taken before the WIL curricula, and all departments' curricula for the NATED programme include 18 months of theory on campus and 18 to 24 months of WIL in the industry (DHET, 2011a). This has been required in every department across every TVET College in South Africa. NATED programmes are also known as Report 191 programmes. They are expected to follow the policy document and DHET guidelines, which outline the programme requirements for the TVET Colleges of SA. According to the White Paper for PSET (2013), TVET Colleges must establish curriculum modalities that involve employers in enhancing students' aptitudes and employability.

According to Wait (2014), WIL's effectiveness may not be fully realised if its only goal is for students to gain work experience. Since students are the only stakeholder group who have a direct, ongoing, and intimate involvement with all facets of the teaching and learning situation, Ralph et al. (2007) stressed the importance of evaluating and analysing students' post-placement WIL results to improve current practises. According to Karlsson (2010), industry mentors' capacity to integrate theory and practise is crucial to WIL students' success because it ensures exposure and makes it easier for them to engage in first-hand experiences. Without mentors and a fully trained team in the college, the WIL experience, according to Rayner and Papakonstantinou (2015), is just an experience rather than an education.

### **1.3 Definition of key terms**

**Work-integrated learning (WIL)** is described as "a structured strategy for incorporating classroom studies with learning through productive work experiences in a field connected to the student's field of study or profession" (Groenewald, 2012, pp 297)

A **stakeholder** is defined as an individual, group, or organisation that has an interest in or is affected by the actions, decisions, or outcomes of a business, project, or endeavour (Aaltonen, and Kujala, 2010). Stakeholders such as the TVET, Host Employers, and Students can have varying degrees of influence, importance, and involvement in the entity or activity under consideration (Freeman, 2010).

A Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College is a further education and training institution that promotes quality training and experience, investing in the youth by combining education and training to assist in securing the future of out-of-school youth (Wals, 2012).

## **1.4 Research problem**

Despite the increasing adoption of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in TVET colleges, there is a lack of comprehensive evaluation regarding its effectiveness from the perspectives of key stakeholders. This raises questions about whether the WIL programme in TVET colleges achieves its intended goals and meets the needs and expectations of students, educators, industry partners, and the institutions themselves. In essence, the research problem revolves around the need to assess and understand the effectiveness of WIL in TVET colleges through the lens of key stakeholders, considering their diverse interests, expectations, and contributions to the programme.

South Africa is currently confronted by a prominent national crisis that commands significant attention and concern— the fast-tracking of development that will match the supply of skills with the demand for human capital, which is the output of higher education institutions (Brink, 2014). Yet, a national skills development strategy is a determining action — with, of course, the fundamental aim of increasing the skills levels in the labour force (NSDS III, 2011). In addition, South Africa is confronted with challenges such as unemployment, inequality, and poverty. According to McGrath (2012), the South African Technical Vocational Education and Training method needs to be supported to facilitate access to high-quality technical vocational education. Therefore, the WIL programme serves as an integral industry-based education instrument aligned with stakeholders' needs for the benefit of the students (Fannon et al., 2018). However, a valid criticism of this advancement pertains to the continuous nature of the skills supply and demand model (Waxenberger & Spence, 2003; Wolfe & Putler, 2002).

This study is concerned with the inadequate connection between the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme implementation and its outcome or output in the TVET College setup. This relates to WIL's effectiveness and appropriateness in relation to policy, its implementation, and the expectations of its various stakeholders. Therefore, the research seeks to address the gap in research related to WIL programme implementation and its outcomes. According to Govender and Taylor (2014), work-integrated learning (WIL) is under-researched, even though it is embedded in the Higher Education Qualifications Framework of South Africa. Furthermore, there is limited research on the process of implementing WIL under the TVET structure (Ferns, Campbell, and Zegwaard, 2014).

Researchers such as Barkhuizen and Schutte (2014) recommended that further rigorous research needs to be undertaken to understand the impact of WIL.

### **1.5 Research aim and objectives**

The aim of the proposed study is to evaluate the effectiveness of a TVET College Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the standpoint of its key stakeholders. To this end, the research objectives are to:

1. Assess the appropriateness of the TVET College's Work Integrated Learning policy, given the current legislative framework and the feedback obtained from stakeholders.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the WIL from the viewpoints of three key stakeholder groups (i.e., the TVET, Host Employers, and Students) and
3. Make recommendations to improve the WIL policy and its implementation.

### **1.6 Overview of the methodological approach used**

This study was carried out by applying an interpretive, qualitative research approach, and its results analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Groenewald, 2004). Furthermore, it adopted an evaluation research method to investigate the effectiveness of WIL at a TVET College from the perspectives of its key stakeholders.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students, employers, administrators, and lecturers. Available document to analyse were also be incorporated as data, such as the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2016, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training 2013, the NSF Annual Report, and other available reports.

Thomas (2006) describes the inductive approach as a method for analysing qualitative data likely to be informed by specific evaluation goals. The inductive approach (or the bottom-up process) begins with a particular phenomenon and progresses to a general conclusion or theory (Khaldi, 2017). Thematic analysis was also be used to examine patterns in the social or personal meaning associated with a subject and to consider the implications of these patterns (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

### **1.7 Thesis structure**

**Chapter 1:** This chapter introduced the research topic and its relevance. It presented an overview of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in South Africa to provide the contextual backdrop for Work-Integrated Learning. This chapter introduced the concept of WIL and the study's research problem. Moreover, it outlined the research aim and objectives and the methodology to be employed. Lastly, policies and procedures governing WIL were discussed.

**Chapter 2:** The next chapter provides the theoretical foundation for this research, and explores the origins and principles of stakeholder theory, and explains its relevance to WIL. The concept of WIL will be defined, and its main characteristics will be described. Furthermore, the chapter will review the intricacies of WIL implementation, focusing on collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

**Chapter 3:** The methodology used to conduct the research for this study is described in detail in this chapter. Information on data collection and analysis is provided. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis will be used to gather information. The research paradigm, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations are all covered in this chapter.

**Chapter 4:** This chapter presents the findings, describing and evaluating the WIL from different stakeholder perspectives.

**Chapter 5:** The findings from the previous chapter are discussed in the light of the literature.

**Chapter 6:** Draws the thesis to a close, and this chapter provides a succinct summary of key findings, discusses their implications considering the research objectives, and concludes by making recommendations to the TVET and identifying further research that should be done.

# CHAPTER 2: Review of Literature

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## 1.1 Introduction

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is an educational strategy that combines classroom theory with real-world skills (Patrick et al., 2008; Smith, 2012). Work Integrated Learning (WIL) encompasses various strategies that bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world work experience, such as internships, excursions/ on-course placement (WE: Workplace exposure), work-based experience, and more (Orrell, 2011; Smith, 2012). This study focuses on work-based experience for the Nated engineering programme to obtain a N4 to N6 National N Diploma. According to the literature, there are only a few studies on WIL and in areas of study other than TVET education (Batholmeus and Pop, 2019). What seems to be lacking is a unified evaluation of WIL that encapsulates the crucial teaching of WIL-relevant features in all WIL-type curricula (Smith, 2012). Furthermore, little has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of stakeholder relations and the management processes of WIL programme, particularly in the South African context. Therefore, this study shall contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in a TVET college from the standpoint of its key stakeholders.

## 1.8 Stakeholder Theory

The term "stakeholder," as we use it today, first appeared in a 1963 internal memo at Stanford Research Institute (Freeman, 1984, p. 31). The phrase was created to refute the idea that management should only be accountable to stockholders (Freeman and Reed, 1983, p. 91). Practitioners and academics attempted to create management theories by the late 1970s and early 1980s to help explain management issues that involved high levels of uncertainty and change (Parmar *et al.*, 2010). Riahi (2017) alludes to stakeholders, including internal or external players and a company's business and social partners. These players are impacted by

the company's activity directly or indirectly and significantly impact the company; as a result, the organisation is responsible to all parties and must consider their opinions (Riahi, 2017).

In the 1980s, stakeholder theory emerged in response to increasing environmental change and the management of organisations becoming more fluid and complicated (Langrafe *et al.*, 2020). This method of stakeholder management helps the organisation generate worth for customers, suppliers, owners, employees, and any other relevant stakeholders. All the people or groups are interested in the organisation are considered in the organisation and are considered during the strategic planning process (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). This demonstrates that stakeholder theory has grown in recognition and relevance in strategic management research and business practices. Nonetheless, its intricacies still need to be investigated at a more comprehensive level and in less studied contexts like higher education institutions (HEIs), specifically Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. An HEI's stakeholder relations can be used to justify institutional existence and skills development (Langrafe *et al.*, 2020). Higher education goals, like the standard of instruction and the creation of collaborative projects, can be influenced by a wide range of internal and external stakeholders (Kettunen, 2015).

As argued above, stakeholder theory has evolved into raising a variety of issues for organizational strategic management, including how to recognise and prioritise stakeholders, comprehend their needs and requirements, strike a balance in relations between different stakeholders, and involve stakeholders in organisational operations (Freeman *et al.*, 2010; Harrison *et al.*, 2010; Sulkowski *et al.*, 2018). According to Stoner and Freeman (1999), stakeholders can be classified into two categories: internal and external. Stakeholders for this study of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at a TVET College can be in two main categories: students, lecturers, and college administrators are examples of internal stakeholders who all contribute significantly to the development and implementation of the WIL programme. Employers, business associations, governmental organisations, and local businesses can be viewed as external stakeholders who impact and support WIL initiatives by facilitating real-world work experiences, establishing industry standards, offering regulatory guidance, and monitoring. The success of the WIL programme depends on recognising and working with these internal and external stakeholders because it ensures alignment with the educational institution's goals, the goals of the educational institution, and the practical requirements of the nearby job market and industry (Du Plessis, 2019).

Stakeholder partnerships for the WIL programme will assist in pioneering the implementation of a WIL programme, identifying the roles and commitment of stakeholders, including the outcomes of the partnerships (Mayombe, 2022). Ferns et al. (2016) and Rowe et al. (2023) advise that relationships between pertinent stakeholders are essential when developing and overseeing a WIL programme. Furthermore, according to the Council on Higher Education (2011), WIL custodians must maintain contact with key stakeholders and secure their support from the designing to the closing phases of Work Integrated Learning. Strong partnerships are needed to create efficient and practical capability. Yilmaz and Gunel (2009) assert that organisations have stakeholder groups that both influence and are affected by them and that these interactions affect stakeholders. These interactions affect stakeholders' significant roles as supporters, sponsors, and partners. Stakeholder management is now recognised as an essential component of an organisation's capacity building (Nwajiuba *et al.*, 2020).

From a stakeholder perspective, an organisation can be understood as a set of relationships among groups that have a stake in the activities that make up the organisation (Freeman, 1984; Jones, 1995; Walsh, 2005). Therefore, Freeman's (1963;1984) stakeholder theory suggests that one has a greater chance of navigating the interactions between an organisation and those who can affect or are affected by it if the relations between an organisation and its stakeholders are adopted as a unit of analysis. When it comes to WIL and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), stakeholder theory emphasises collaboration between relevant partners, including students, educational institutions, corporations, governments, and trade associations. Freeman (1984) states that more effective decision-making occurs when the interests of all stakeholders are taken into consideration. This approach ensures that WIL and TVET curricula are current, meet the demands of the labor market, and improve students' employability (Dwenisin, 2017). Governments provide legislative and financial support, while partnerships with businesses help close the gap between education and employment (Billett, 2009; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012).

### **2.3.1 WIL Definition and Character**

Work-integrated learning (WIL) policy serves as a compass, overseeing and standardising every aspect of the WIL journey, from initial planning and negotiations to full-scale implementation and meticulous monitoring (Majiya, 2023). According to Von Treuer et al. (2010), work-integrated learning combines formal academic instruction and traditional knowledge with student experience of the working world in their chosen field. The main goal

of this programme is to encourage students to participate in authentic work experiences where they can use their classroom-based skills and knowledge and obtain a full qualification (Abeysekera, 2006). Furthermore, the term "work-integrated learning" (WIL) was created as a result of the growing diversity in vocational learning methods (Reeders, 2000).

According to a review of the literature, WIL is referred to by various names, such as experience-based learning, work-based learning, practice-based learning, work placements, internships, fieldwork, and job shadowing (Groenewald, 2004; CHE, 2011). As the term suggests, work-integrated learning occurs through the work medium. In technical and vocational education and training, WIL is used as an umbrella term for any purposefully designed learning programme that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical work. The primary purpose of WIL in the TVET colleges is to develop the learner's occupational competence (i.e., the ability to apply knowledge and skills to the demands of a job and workplace), which is the outcome of obtaining a qualification.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a programme that includes more activities related to the industry world and involves greater industry participation and collaborations (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011). Graduates from programmes with integrated workplace learning gain knowledge and demonstrate more workplace readiness. Work-integrated learning is also known as a planned sequence of educational activities that include industry placement and expansion of practical workshops (Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden, 2010). Work-integrated learning activities include the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), teaching practice, internships, job shadowing, school-based businesses, youth apprenticeships, and cooperative work programme (Bahl and Dietzen, 2019).

WIL has two primary qualities. Firstly, it includes collaborating between the student, institution, and host employer, assigning roles to each party (Abeysekera, 2006). This collaboration combines knowledge and abilities to enhance professional practice and teaching (CHE, 2011). Secondly, it must include some reflection and review of what was learned during the WIL programme (Katula and Threnhauser, 1999). In this process, the viewpoint of the host employer and other stakeholders is crucial to successfully integrating WIL activities into academic qualifications (Ramukumba, 2021). Consequently, students' evaluation of their WIL experiences can help to improve the WIL programme (O'Connor and Cianciotta, 2021).

### **2.3.2 Importance and Outcome Work Integrated Learning**

WIL assists learners in learning concrete knowledge and skills by collaborating with employers and gaining practical experience (Aničić and Divjak, 2022). This causes individuals to see the connection between theory and practice and motivates them to gain new experience and work habits through a given project or work on real projects, that is, to see how the theoretical knowledge we have acquired works in practice (Aničić and Divjak, 2022). Additionally, Fleming and Hickey (2013) discovered that WIL helps with career definition, industry experience, industry understanding, skill development (particularly interpersonal skills), and employability enhancement. According to Lehlakola (2023), providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for WIL engineering (work suit, safety, hard hats, gloves, and high visibility vest boot) is critical, and failing to do so will impede WIL's successful deployment. Students cannot access workshops or undertake practical work because they lack PPE. The OHS (South Africa, 1993) requires that all personnel entering workshops for work wear safety gear.

Barkhuizen and Schutte (2014) identify and highlight the importance of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme in enhancing the employability of college graduates and their occupational adjustment. The African Union (2012) states that the most significant element of TVET colleges is their approach toward the workplace and the curriculum's focus on employability skills. TVET programmes are well-positioned to prepare students for the needs of the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce economy. Ugwoke, Ezeji, Edeh, and Etonyeaku (2016) describe employability as a means of ensuring that graduates are job-ready, including those related to interpersonal relations such as teamwork, problem-solving, inquiry, preparation, and organisation, as well as technology and continuous learning.

According to Knight and Yorke (2003), WIL should instil employability skills that not only improve graduates' ability to find jobs and perform well in their place of work but also add value to their lifelong occupational success. Work Integrated Learning should provide the opportunity to gain work skills, develop general work readiness after graduation, and build a foundation for their future. Research reveals that a thorough conceptual perspective on WIL and its input in improving student employability is required (Jacobs and Dzansi, 2015). As mentioned above, work-integrated learning (WIL) aims to improve graduates' employability. Jackson and Rowe (2023) emphasize that WIL assists students in obtaining a qualification. Furthermore, WIL's employment outcomes are when students interact with businesses as part of their formal education, assessment, and co-curricular activities (such as volunteer work, leadership opportunities, and mentoring programme) supported by the institution (Jackson

and Rowe, 2023). However, curricular measures frequently focus on developing capabilities that are thought to be essential by industry and professions in new graduates and are in line with the prevalent skills-based approach to employability (Jackson 2016).

To prepare students for future employment, this may take the form of a supplemental skill-programme or information integrated into a discipline's curriculum (see Cranmer 2006). These factors will help students get ready for their future careers. TVET has also become one of the poverty reduction strategies governments have created through partnerships with the World Bank, reflecting African countries' growing importance (African Union, 2007). The African Union (2007) asserts that the focus on employability skills in the curriculum and TVET's orientation towards the workplace are its two most essential characteristics.

### **2.3.3 The effectiveness of work-integrated learning.**

Fleming et al. (2018) highlight that one of the most critical aspects of effectiveness for WIL is that all stakeholders must understand the role of learning as the centre of the student experience. This means that the institution must provide students with adequate preparation and support. It entails providing a learning environment for the students in the partner organisations. This requires monitoring expectations, investigating knowledge acquired, and general evaluations of students' real-world interactions in the individual yearlong work placements, which form part of a qualification (Freestone *et al.*, 2006). WIL is predominantly concerned with improving students' knowledge acquisition and curriculum content (Coopasami, 2022).

Although Martin (1997) and Jackson (2018) note that numerous studies have demonstrated that work-based education effectively produces graduates with skills, there are still significant gaps despite the general agreement on the effectiveness of WIL programme. Hu et al. (2009) make the critical point that insufficient studies exist considering how these programmes enable these outcomes and the flaws in evaluation methods. Work-integrated learning (WIL) is firmly ingrained in the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) (South Africa 2007), even though it is understudied. According to Ernest *et al.* (2016a), there is a substantial vacuum in the research that exists on the establishment and implementation of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) activities in tertiary institutions. This disparity suggests a lack of research or comprehension of how these universities include WIL in their curricula and carry out associated on-campus activities. Consequently, more research is required to

comprehend the methods, difficulties, and results connected with applying WIL, particularly in TVET educational settings.

Despite this scarcity of research, it is evident that WIL poses challenges while motivating students to gain skills and earn academic credits through engagement in professional work placements, practicums, internships, or project-based learning initiatives (Ernest et al., 2016a). This underscores the need for further investigation and documentation of strategies employed by institutions in navigating these challenges and optimising the benefits of WIL for student skill acquisition and academic advancement. Young people must also work before graduation, along with the usual lectures, tests, assignments, and exams. To evaluate their work experience, students must also compile and submit a portfolio of evidence (POE). WIL programme relies on strong collaboration among academics, students, and host employers, and each stakeholder plays a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of the programme (Govender and Taylor, 2015).

According to Wait (2014), WIL's effectiveness may not be fully realised if its only goal is for students to gain work experience. As explained earlier, since students are the only stakeholder group who have a direct, ongoing, and intimate involvement with all facets of the teaching and learning situation, Ralph et al. (2007) stressed the importance of evaluating and analysing students' post-placement WIL results to improve current practises. According to Karlsson (2010), industry mentors' capacity to integrate theory and practise is crucial to WIL students' success because it ensures exposure and makes it easier for them to engage in first-hand experiences. Without mentors, the WIL experience, according to Rayner and Papakonstantinou (2015), is just an experience rather than education. They oversee helping students put theory into practice while also facilitating reflection and giving them feedback. The mentor's job puts them in a position to assess the student's WIL experience and give feedback to institutions of higher learning so they can enhance, improve, and develop a comprehensive WIL programme.

Furthermore, Svensson, Randle, and Bennich (2009) state that alignment between industry and college programme offerings is important, noting that there will be mismatches between the supply and demand of skills if colleges and workplaces do not align their interests. These alignments are not easy to achieve. According to Winberg and Nomgauza (2023), obtaining a certification during a college programme can improve the employers' employability and the degree's compliance with industry norms. Enhancing the fit between the labor market's

"supply and demand... minimizing significant discrepancies between educational attainment and skill requirements, as well as inadequate infrastructure and quality at TVET institutions" (Lee 2009: 41).

## **1.9 Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Implementation**

### **2.4 .1 Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement**

The Department of Higher Education and Training (2013c) has highlighted the importance of integrating the TVET system with industry through partnerships between colleges and industry to identify opportunities for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), the Post-School Education and Training policy, among other policies, emphasis this.

As Smith (2000) eloquently expressed, this approach is a testament to the idea that success in WIL cannot be achieved without the consistent pillars of collaboration and stakeholder cooperation. These are the cornerstones upon which the entire framework is built. Furthermore, WIL unfolds as a series of processes that involve active participation, as outlined by Matos and Sarmanesh (2008). This includes a collaborative tapestry where diverse stakeholders seamlessly intertwine, sharing information, resources, and the weight of responsibilities. Collaboration is an essential component of work-integrated learning, which is why the success of WIL, as aptly summarised by Patrick et al. (2008), hinges upon ongoing collaboration with relevant stakeholders. It is not a fleeting interaction but a continuous relationship that must endure throughout the entire duration of the placement.

The WIL programme cannot be implemented in isolation. According to Downey et al. (2015), WIL requires collaboration between various stakeholders, such as the college and industries — where students alternate study cycles with work experience cycles and apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills. To garner support, education providers need to embark on an interactive and regular engagement with their stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Freeman, 2010). In any collaboration, managing stakeholder expectations is very important, because this will establish effective organisational procedures and clear communication, helping to explain realistic expectations from each stakeholder (Brown, 2010). Evaluating the effectiveness of a WIL programme is complex as it is often influenced by other factors such as good quality teaching and assessment practices in the course work, the availability of quality supervision

and mentoring of students in the workplace, as well as a continuous interaction between stakeholders (Du Plessis and Bezuidenhout, 2019).

Moreover, work-integrated learning (WIL) alone cannot ensure employability outcomes for students and graduates. According to Mafaralala (2020), learning assessments should incorporate specific purposes and learning outcomes. This means that in addition to measuring the attainment of learning goals, assessments should also consider the intended objectives or aims of the learning activities. In other words, assessments should be created to assess students' learning as well as their performance in achieving the intended educational purposes or intentions behind those learning outcomes. Students will gain an applied competence and a foundation for further learning in this way (SAUVCA, 1999). Work-integrated learning placements improve students' employability and knowledge by being incorporated into the curriculum.

#### **2.4.2 Employability**

Employability means that graduates are job-ready, which includes those related to interpersonal relations such as teamwork, problem-solving, inquiry, preparation, and organization, as well as technology and continuous learning (Ernest et al., 2016). The African Union (2007) states that the most significant element of TVET Colleges is its approach toward the workplace and the curriculum's focus on employability skills. Their programmes are well-positioned to prepare students for the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce economy. Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is primarily concerned with improving how students acquire knowledge and engage with curriculum content. This approach includes designing pedagogical methods and assessment frameworks that specifically aim to address concerns about students' post-graduation success, career development, and their roles in society (CHE, 2011). It intends to help graduates improve their employability skills through activity various forms of communication, such as collaborative problem-solving, feedback exchanges, and reflective conversations (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Research reveals that there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and its role in enhancing student employability (Jacobs and Dzansi, 2015). Moreover, WIL alone does not assure employability outcomes for students and graduates. To be truly effective, this training should be integrated into the curriculum and assisted by pedagogical strategies implemented throughout the programme to enhance learning opportunities (Bates and Hayes 2017). This means it is imperative to conduct WIL assessments to determine whether the

programme or students need to improve or grow for the readiness of work-integrated learning. Furthermore, Du Plessis and Bezuidenhout, (2019), believe that utilising skills in the context of creating and managing environmental settings of a high-quality WIL programme is regarded as an excellent tool for preparing students for employment in a growing and increasingly competitive economy. At the conceptual level, it became clear that WIL curricula will need to be developed with a vision to align the teaching/learning, assessment, and monitoring (Du Plessis, and Bezuidenhout, 2019). This programme for education and training influences the quality of graduates for employability (Batholmeus, Pop, 2019)

### **1.1.1 Policy and Procedure**

Ernest. et al. (2016) note in their research that effective implementation of WIL by TVET institutions working with departments and industries faces many challenges. This includes issues such as inadequate funding for TVET institutions and programmes, sub-par WIL-related teacher quality, and a lack of effective national policy and support for WIL implementation that is effective on the part of TVET institutions (Ernest *et al.*, 2016b). The 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training is a policy framework that acknowledges all post-school education and training as part of a combined system and notes that successful implementation of work-integrated learning experiences may necessitate cross-system collaboration, including close collaboration with Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs). A best practise document can identify potential models for such cross-system collaborations (DHET, 2013b). This policy framework is indeed significant for the country's education system. It emphasises the integration of various forms of post-school education and training into a cohesive and coordinated system. This includes universities, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, community education and training, and adult education.

So far, TVET has played an insignificant part in most Sub-Saharan African countries (Oketch 2015). The recurring policy measures are aimed at combatting unemployment and promoting skills development and economic growth as part of Work Integrated Learning to promote the expansion of TVET provisions (Eicker, Haseloff, and Lennartz, 2017). Furthermore, many TVET policies emphasise competency-based education and training approaches for TVET provision, workplace orientation for teachers and students, and teacher capacity-building interventions (Eicker, Haseloff and Lennartz, 2017). The National Skills Development

Strategy for 2011–2016, the 2011 National Skills Accord, and the 2014 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training are among the South African government policy documents that have recently emphasised the importance of workplace exposure for lecturers. The 2013 National Framework on Professional Qualifications for TVET Lecturers requires workplace experience in the industry for which the lecturer is training.

### **1.10 Chapter Summary**

Particularly in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, the presented discussion emphasises Work-Integrated Learning's (WIL) crucial role in fostering a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Through an emphasis on important stakeholders and their participation in the process, the study aims to contribute to the assessment of WIL effectiveness. Stakeholder theory is introduced as a lens to understand the complex relationships involved in WIL programme. It is acknowledged that the success of WIL initiatives dramatically depends on the involvement of internal stakeholders (students, instructors, college administrators) and external stakeholders (employers, business associations, and governmental organisations). The definition and features of WIL highlight how collaborative it is and how students, institutions, and host employers must all take an active part in it. The significance of contemplation and examination of learning experiences is highlighted, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in the WIL programme.

The researcher emphasises how important work-integrated learning (WIL) is for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, especially in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. To assess WIL effectiveness, the study places a strong emphasis on stakeholder participation, teamwork, and policy support. Important ideas include how crucial it is to identify both internal and external stakeholders, how collaborative WIL is, and how it affects employability skills. Comprehensive strategies are required to optimise the benefits of WIL in TVET institutions, as highlighted by the challenges associated with mentorship, research gaps, and policy considerations.

# CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

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## **3.1 Introduction**

In the methodology chapter, the researcher describes and substantiates the methods used to carry out the study. This section addresses the overarching research design, particulars about participants, complexities of data collection techniques, procedures involved, data analysis, ethical considerations governing the research process, acknowledgment of limitations, measures implemented to ensure validity and reliability, and data management protocols.

## **3.2 Research aim and objectives**

The research aim determines a research design, and an appropriate research design should be identified for a research objective (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The research aim in this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the TVET College Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the standpoint of its key stakeholders. To this end, the research objectives are to:

- Assess the appropriateness of the TVET College's Work Integrated Learning policy, given the current legislative framework and the feedback obtained from stakeholders.
- Assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the WIL from the viewpoints of three key stakeholder groups (i.e., the TVET, Host Employers, and Students).
- Make recommendations to improve the WIL policy and its implementation.

## **3.3 Research Approach and Paradigm**

Bryman and Bell (2011) assert that research paradigms are influenced by research philosophies. Ontology and epistemology are the two generally accepted schools of thought. Regarding the nature of reality in relation to a particular research phenomenon, Hallebone and Priest (2009) define ontology as follows. Epistemology, on the other hand, connects with the process by which society creates reality. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), there are

two research paradigms that align with epistemological perspectives: positivism and interpretivism.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), the positivist paradigm is an epistemological stance that suggests combining social and natural sciences in the study of reality as the correct perspective. The idea that the world is external and objective forms the basis of positivist interpretation. When interpreting research phenomena, it ignores pure science. Unity of methodologies is required by the positivist paradigm. In other words, social and natural sciences are combined to shed more light on objective reality than most would think is conceivable (Yeganeh et al., 2004). It makes it possible to project future events by looking at historical trends and using statistical models to forecast changes. The objective theory of positivism is criticised for its inability to account for the inherent ambiguities in research phenomena.

Interpretivism, as opposed to positivism, allows researchers to advance their understanding of research phenomena while maintaining alignment with their own viewpoint (Quinlan, 2011). Researchers can derive meaning from the surrounding environment using the interpretivist paradigm. Bryman and Bell (2011) state that the interpretivist paradigm is predicated on the idea that new meanings can be generated when social reality is applied to research phenomena. According to Deshpande (1983), knowledge is freely accessible to everyone and is not reliant on the researcher.

The interpretivist paradigm is subjective and process-oriented, whereas the positivist paradigm is objective (Quinlan, 2011). The interpretive paradigm was adopted in this study. When applying the interpretive paradigm, the research combines newly acquired knowledge with previously held beliefs (Creswell, 2013). A limitation of the study is that the findings from research using an interpretivist paradigm cannot be generalised.

This study adopts a qualitative research design in the form of an evaluation study. The current study used an evaluation method to evaluate the effectiveness of WIL for TVET College; a qualitative method is used to give a detailed evaluation of the factors affecting the implementation of WIL and the stakeholder viewpoint of the education industry. The data was sourced through semi-structured interviews with TVET staff and host employers and focus group discussions with students. The data used for analyses is inductive thematic analysis (Groenewald, 2004). According to Thomas (2006), the inductive approach is a strategy for analysing qualitative data likely to be informed by specific evaluation aims. The

inductive approach (or bottom-up process) starts with specific phenomena and moves to a broader conclusion or theory (Khaldi, 2017).

Qualitative research will generate knowledge about practice-based learning close to actual practice, allowing practitioners to readily apply the lessons learned to their own experiences and relevance (Eicker, Haseloff, and Lennartz, 2017). A qualitative approach enables the researcher to comprehend the participants' interactions with their contexts and provides an in-depth analysis of educational issues.

### **3.4 Research Method**

This study used an evaluative research method. Evaluation research can integrate data using qualitative methods and involve multiple stakeholders in a participatory evaluation process to obtain their insights (Trimble and Plummer, 2019). This approach can extract information from qualitative data (Phoenix, Osborne, Redshaw, Moran, Stahl-Timmins, Depledge, Fleming, and Wheeler, 2013). According to Powell (2006), data obtained through the qualitative method can help stakeholders make legitimate decisions and elicit meaningful and historically significant answers from participants (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, et al., Guest, and Namey, 2005). This methodology was deemed pertinent in examining stakeholders' knowledge, expertise, and background regarding the effectiveness of work-integrated implementation.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach is recognised for being exploratory in nature. Bradely (2013) states that it aims to obtain insights into the attitudes and opinions of the population under study. Instead of utilising numbers, it highlights the deep insights regarding the studied phenomenon using words, experience and documents (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). Using non-numeric data that includes facts related to the research questions, researchers can infer meaning and trends. The researcher successfully built a compelling rapport with the study participants by employing the qualitative analysis methodology.

### **3.5 Data Collection Techniques**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the TVET College Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the standpoint of its key stakeholders, firstly, the document analysis was used and interviews conducted, such as the TVET College's Work Integrated Learning policy, the current

legislative framework` and any written feedback obtained from stakeholders (i.e., the TVET, Host Employers, and Students).

Secondly, semi-structured interviews were used. Interviews were conducted with students, host employers, administrators, and lecturers. Interviews have the advantage of eliciting extensive and detailed data that can be used in the analysis (Bearman, 2019). They have also enabled an interviewer to explain or clarify questions, improving the possibility of valuable responses (Babbie & Mouton, 2004).

Each participant had a single interview session at the research site. Consent forms were signed before proceeding with an interview. Interviews lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. These interviews were conducted in person at the TVET college for college officials, and for mentors and students, it was conducted with the host employer. The interviews were mainly conducted in person, but some were online. The pre-approved list of interview questions was used during the interviews. Otter.ai software (Da Silva, 2021) was used to record the interview and transcribe the interview recording into text.

Thirdly, students were involved in a focus group discussion for about sixty minutes. The ideal number of participants for a focus group is six to eight (excluding researchers), but groups can function well with as few as three and as many as 15 people (Gill, Stewart, et al. Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008). The combination of interviews with a focus group provided an opportunity to explore the views of all key stakeholders in the specific context of the WIL programme (Preece and Manicom, 2015).

The focus group session with students took place at their host employer. The TVET college identified the students who were interviewed and provided details of their host employer. The researcher obtained written consent from the manager at the host employer before interacting with the students. The purpose of the focus group was explained, and each student participant signed a consent form agreeing to participate. The pre-approved list of focus group questions was used (see Appendix C). Short discussion points were written on a flipchart as the researcher facilitated the session.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was utilised in this study for analysing the data. Thematic analysis is defined as "a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into

patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun, Clarke, and Terry, 2014 9(1), p.26152.). Thematic analysis is a process that involves several phases, including data familiarisation, code generation, theme development, and report writing (Clarke and Braun, 2013). The study makes use of an inductive approach and an evaluation research methodology to investigate the efficacy of WIL in the TVET sector from the viewpoints of its major stakeholders. This strategy offers a chance to investigate partnerships and stakeholder engagement within the unique framework of the WIL programme (Preece and Manicom, 2015).

In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the thematic analysis method is recognised for its impartiality. The familiarisation phase, the creation of codes, and the identification and review of themes are crucial phases in thematic analysis. The researcher needs to become familiar with the data before using the primary data for additional analysis. Tasks like identifying anomalies in the gathered data are examples of familiarisation. In addition to carefully reviewing each completed questionnaire during familiarisation, the researcher must also be cleaning the data (Zikmund and Babin, 2010). To preserve the high calibre of responses, the gathered data went through a data cleaning procedure. To ensure that the research findings accurately reflect the underlying details, it is imperative that research quality be prioritised when conducting research.

### **3.7 Quality Considerations**

The qualitative research method is frequently criticised for its lack of generalizability and non-replicability. Because it is not a numerical value, it is typically ascribed to bias and unreliability in exploratory research findings. Nonetheless, "the terms that provide justification for qualitative studies are dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability" (Cooper and Schindler, 2014, pp104). The collected data underwent a process of data cleaning in order to retain high-quality responses. When carrying out research, ensuring the quality of the research is a priority; this is done so that the research outcomes accurately reflect the underlying details. Each of the elements was briefly discussed in the section below.

The development of themes associated with the study's goals guaranteed the accuracy and consistency of the data (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000). Otter.ai was used to capture the direct words of the respondents accurately during the audio interview transcription

process, without the interference of the researcher. This was required in order to reduce the possibility of bias in the study results. Throughout the study period, field data were maintained in accordance with the results' reflexivity (Olmos-Vega, Stalmeijer, Varpio, and Kahlke, 2022) and dependability and confirmability (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

### **3.7.1 Dependability**

According to Zikmund and Babin (2010), dependability in qualitative research refers to the consistency and dependability of results over an extended period. Following specific, currently in place procedures is how dependability is measured or evaluated. As per Yeganeh, Su, and Chrystome (2004), this involves providing an opportunity for the sample participants to assess the results and determine if the research objectives have been fulfilled. Sometimes, respondents are asked to review cleaned data to see if there have been any changes made to the transcription to determine the reliability of the research.

### **3.7.2 Credibility**

Credibility is regarded as an appropriate benchmark for qualitative studies in order to demonstrate the objectivity of the research (Zikmund and Babin, 2010). When performing qualitative research, it is essential to test or verify the research's quality. Creswell (2013) cites that qualitative researchers have at their disposal triangulation methods in data collection, and this helps with ensuring the credibility of research findings.

### **3.7.3 Transferability**

"Transferability relates to the ease with which results from a qualitative research could be transferrable to similar settings elsewhere as an interpretive equivalent of generalizability," state Zikmund and Babin (2010). In this study, transferability was attained through a satisfactory articulation of all pertinent descriptive processes within the study setting and the data collection procedures, thereby guaranteeing the study's reproducibility.

### **3.7.4 Confirmability**

Unverifiable research findings are regarded as unreliable. In order for a study's conclusions to be reliable, trustworthy, and believable, they need to be supported by the results of additional studies conducted along the same continuum (Wiid and Diggins, 2013). To enable validation

or confirmation, research findings are frequently compared and analysed with those of other relevant studies. Confirmability is a technique employed to eliminate biases in research; it ensures objectivity (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009).

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

The Rhodes University research ethics policies served as the study's guidelines, and following a thorough review process, formal ethical approval was requested. After reviewing the research application, the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee granted conditional and final approvals (approval number: 2023-7093-7816) on July 17, 2023, and September 27, 2023, respectively.

KSD TVET College assisted by enlisting volunteers who were willing to participate (college officials, host employers, and students). Everyone who took part was older than eighteen.

The participants' anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed by withholding their names. To preserve confidentiality, every participant's name was removed and coded according to their Focus Group number and then identified as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, etc. Bajramovic, Emmerton, and Tett (2004) state that a focus group allows people to discuss their opinions, experiences, and ideas on a broader range of topics. Furthermore, focus groups provide information about general views and the meanings underpinning those views. They also help thoroughly understand participants' experiences with Work Integrated Learning. However, the focus group compositions must be carefully considered (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008). In focus group research, group size is an important consideration. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2014), it is preferable to slightly over-recruit for a focus group and potentially manage a marginally larger group than to under-recruit and risk cancelling the session or having an unsatisfactory discussion.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

The methodology for assessing the effectiveness of TVET College Work Integrated Learning (WIL) uses a qualitative case study to investigate stakeholders' perspectives thoroughly. The research objectives centre on the WIL policy's appropriateness, implementation effectiveness, and the generation of recommendations. The detailed plan, which includes document analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus groups, indicates a thorough data collection process. Ethical considerations, data saturation awareness, and using Otter.ai to record and transcribe

interviews all contribute to the research's integrity. Overall, the study's well-structured methodology positions it to provide valuable insights into education and stakeholder engagement in the WIL programme.

## CHAPTER 4: Findings

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### 4.1 Introduction

The fourth chapter of this study analyses and presents findings from the views provided by the three interviewed participant groups. College officials, students, and host employer representatives were interviewed. The three different groups provided their perspectives on the benefits of the WIL programme, its effectiveness, and areas that require improvement. The layout of the chapter is such that it begins with presenting findings from college officials, followed by students and then host employers.

### 4.2 Findings from Host College Officials

The following table presents demographic information on the position and qualification of each of the college officials who were interviewed for this study. Among the college officials are the business skills manager and the project manager. The selected lecturers covered core engineering courses that are related to the WIL.

**Table 4.1: Demographic Information of College Officials**

Position of the College Official	Qualification	Years of experience
Business skills Manager	College Higher Education Diploma	13 years

Project Manager	Project Management	18 Years
Lecturer	B.Ed. Technical education	9 Years
Lecturer	B.Ed. Hons in curriculum design & development	8 years
DP Registration Secretary	B.Ed. in Education	5 years

The following table shows themes related to the College officials. The identified themes were guided by the research objectives set out in the first chapter of this study. The sub-themes highlighted under this section attempt to answer the question of whether the current WIL policy is comprehensive and functioning effectively.

**Table 4.2: Themes for College Officials**

Main Themes	Sub Themes
Appropriateness of the WIL Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations of WIL</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criteria for selecting industry partners</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitating matching students to placements</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support services for students</li> </ul>
Effectiveness of the WIL Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating intended learning outcomes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating student performance</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best practices in supporting students</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges in implementing the WIL programme</li> </ul>
Recommendations for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving policy and procedures, Department of Higher Education and Training to provide a guiding policy.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with employers and industry alignment not only for placement but also for the selection of the qualification for the institution.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bridging the skills gap and improving employability</li> </ul>

### **4.3 Theme 1: Appropriateness of the WIL Policy**

The first theme of this analysis is the appropriateness of the TVET College's Work Integrated Learning policy, given the current legislative framework and the feedback obtained from stakeholders. As reflected in Table 4.2, there are three sub-themes.

#### **4.3.1 Subtheme 1: Expectations of WIL**

The expectation expressed was to give students an opportunity for practical, real-world experience through the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme. The expectations desired in this WIL experience, as described by the Host College Officials, included work placements, experience, and competence. The overarching finding is that college officials expect students to receive appropriate workplace exposure.

*P1: "Department of Higher Education and Training's to enhancing policies and procedures in line with their guidelines to strengthen WIL process for TVET Colleges."*

*P2: "For me, the expectation of the WIL programme is to pace learners in work-based experience"*

*P3: "Expected to develop competence and professionalism of learners"*

*P4: "To place learners in relevant places which give them a representative picture of their work environment so obtain their qualification"*

#### **4.3.2 Subtheme 2: Criteria for selecting industry partners**

College Officials expect that industry partners and WIL placements are selected based on their relevance to the courses and programmes that students are studying, as well as providing valuable learning opportunities for students. This means WIL is industry-relevant, complements theoretical learning, has a good mentor-learner ratio, is in a suitable geographic location, and offers a safe working environment. The focus is to make placements that provide the required practical knowledge and opportunities.

*P1: "We select workplaces that are relevant to the qualifications that are done by the Learners"*

*P2: "The selection criteria involves a number of considerations: learner-mentor ratio, industry, relevant work exposure, employer reputation, geographic location, safety, and security"*

*P3: "Select the relevant Electrical workplace for placing the Learners."*

*P4: "We select the relevant workplaces that deal with engineering practical's"*

### **4.3.3 Subtheme 3: Facilitating matching students to placements**

This sub-theme is related to the expectations of College Officials in terms of the process through which placement candidates are selected and admitted. There is a multiple-step process that goes towards matching the students with placements. This includes induction days, as well interviews and workplace vetting. The idea is to secure the placement of students where their discipline is commensurate with the environment and aligned with their qualification objectives. At the same time, efforts are made to meet the needs for specific programmes. For example, sending electrical students out to firms that work with electric equipment/machinery.

*P3: "As the Host College officials, part of matching students involves inviting prospective mentors from organisations where the students will be absorbed."*

*P2: "The requirements of host employers are checked vs the learners we have on the database. The interview process is another way of finding and allocating learners appropriately"*

*P4: "After sourcing the workplaces, we match electrical students in electrical firms and Civil engineering in Construction Companies, all learners according to their speciality."*

### **4.3.4 Subtheme 4: Support services for students**

Mentoring visits, monthly stipends, logbooks, personal protective equipment, and regular evaluations are some of the support services that college official expect should be extended to students. The aim is to provide comprehensive support for students both in advance, during, and after their placements, with continuous monitoring to adjust their learning accordingly.

At every stage, from the inception of the placement, students should also be furnished with comprehensive information regarding the operations of their placements.

*P1: "The support that is provided is to conduct mentoring visits on their period of stay, provide monthly stipends, submission of monthly attendance registers, conducting quarterly meetings"*

*P2: "Learners are funded where possible; they are monitored during their placement and workplace preparedness training conducted."*

*P3: "Giving them logbooks, monitoring and evaluation. Give them personal protective equipment."*

*P4: "Before we start, we inform learners about their dates for placement (induction). During placement, they are given logbooks, and after, we do an evaluation of the effectiveness of placement."*

#### **4.3.5 Summary analysis of Theme 1**

The Host College officials, as key stakeholders of the WIL programme, want the WIL experiences to be professionally relevant, enhancing performance and linking back with their academic background. When placing students in WIL programmes, the types of businesses for which they are placed are carefully selected to align with the qualifications of students and offer a safe and appropriate job environment. Matching students to placements is critical, and various support services such as mentoring visits, stipends, and regular evaluations are also essential in ensuring the effectiveness of the WIL experience.

### **4.4 Theme 2: Effectiveness of the WIL Programme**

Beyond aiming at assessing the appropriateness of the WIL programme, this study also aimed at examining the effectiveness of the WIL program. This theme was developed based on interview responses provided by the Host College Officials. The emergent sub-themes are further discussed in the below section.

#### **4.4.1 Subtheme 1: Evaluating Intended Learning Outcomes**

Different ways are employed to know how successful the WIL programme is in attaining learning objectives. According to the interviewed participants, evaluation instruments include logbooks/placement files, performance scorecards, and student feedback. Defined learning objectives and evaluation forms track student progress and make sure the work experience is fulfilling its intended outcomes.

*P1: "The logbook is the checking document to see if they have done the relevant work and the provided evidence if it is relevant to the required outcomes."*

*P2: "We evaluate the performance of the learner, relevance of work experience and student feedback"*

*P4: "We have an evaluation form where learners are given those forms to fill after being placed."*

#### **4.4.2 Subtheme 2: Evaluating student performance**

Broadly defined, student performance is assessed by routine monitoring visits, employer feedback, and logbooks. Criteria relevant to professional experience, work performance, and evidence-based practical learning were suggested. This is a process that requires constant evaluation and where employers provide regular feedback.

*P2: "Employer feedback is solicited as a means of establishing the learner's performance in the workplace"*

*P5: "Visits the learners while they're in the workplace and also monitors their activities."*

*P4: "For evaluation, we do Monitoring and have logbooks that assist us to assess their learning of the practical work."*

#### **4.4.3 Subtheme 3: Best practices in supporting students**

Recommended practices for maintaining students during their placements include keeping in touch online through email, unexpected workplace check-ins, and frequent checks. Practical work as well as regular visits, and open lines of communication with advice agencies are vital ways to keep students engaged.

*P1: "...to have online contacts with the learners. Doing unexpected visits in workplaces."*

*P4: "The best support that can be given to learners is monitoring them and having regular visits in their workplaces."*

*P5: "The best supporting measure is regular monitoring visits and openness with learners on those visits."*

#### **4.4.4 Subtheme 4: Challenges in implementing the WIL programme**

Key issues in terms of operationalizing the WIL programme include learner ill-discipline, limited placement sites (or opportunities), the challenge of funding for stipends and logistical challenges. Additionally, the WIL programme has been affected by the absenteeism of the students, strained relations with mentors and the lack of sufficient placement places. Possible paths to mitigate these include might entail working with supervisors, regular reviews and making learners more visible.

*P1: "the ill-discipline of learners where they affect the relationship of the college and workplace, ..."*

*P2: "The challenges we face during placement are limited opportunities for placement, lack of funding for stipends of learners, quality of placement and logistical issues."*

*P3: "Unwillingly mentors, solve it by engaging with supervisors."*

*P4: "Late Coming and Absenteeism"*

*P5: "One of the popular challenges we have is workplaces that are not willing to accept our learners"*

#### **4.4.5 Summary analysis of Theme 2**

This theme includes questions such how to determine if the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, evaluating students' performance in their WIL placements, identifying best practices for support, and dealing with challenges to programme implementation. In terms of evaluating student's progress, students completed logbooks, and their performance was regularly evaluated during their work experience. They received feedback from not only staff but employers as well to ensure that the learning objectives associated with the work experience are being met. Another emergent method of evaluating students' progress was through site visits and employer engagement to assess student progress in terms of successful work-learning outcomes and overall industry integration. Recommended actions include keeping regular contact with students, conducting unannounced workplace checks, and ensuring consistent tracking and support. The suggestion was that a careful steering under supervisors, coupled with continued feedback reduces the challenges that emanate from limited placement, funding issues and logistical problems.

#### **4.5 Theme 3: Recommendations for Improvement**

One of the important research questions of this study is based on the need for improving the WIL program and the recommendations for improvement of the WIL emerged as a main theme. The third theme has three sub-themes which are discussed below.

##### **4.5.1 Subtheme 1: Improving policy and procedures**

The emergent recommendations for enhancing WIL policies and procedures include conducting regular policy reviews, consulting stakeholders, and improving student support services. The contribution to stakeholder engagement and policy reviews is also considered as a key area of relevance and impact for bringing the voice of employers, young people, and providers into discussions on the continued use of policies.

*P1: "we conduct policy reviews where we look if our policy is still relevant. If there is a need the section request a change that is needed in the Policy."*

*P3: "Stakeholder engagement will be one way of improving policies relating to WIL to solicit views from all different stakeholders. Improved Student Support services to provide comprehensive assistance to students participating in WIL programmes."*

*P5: "reviewing the policy and rectify those policy matters that might pose challenges to implement the work Integrated learning."*

#### **4.5.2 Subtheme 2: Engaging with employers and industry partners**

Networking events, annual meetings and workshops were also suggested as potential facilitators for employers' collaboration. These events are a means to promote collaboration, share information and strengthen the WIL placement quality. One clear strategy is regular communication and engaging with stakeholders.

*P2: "The college conducts host employer meetings annually where we invite them to a ceremony where we also invite students who have been successful."*

*P3: "Organise networking events, industry forums, and workshops that bring together employers, industry associations, and TVET college staff and students. These events provide opportunities for networking, information sharing, and collaboration on WIL initiatives."*

*P4: "Having regular annual meetings with all Host employers and expressing the needs of the college and Learners."*

*P5: "The best way is to have annual events where all workplaces are invited to explain how it is important to partner with them for our WIL."*

#### **4.5.3 Subtheme 3: Bridging skills gap and improving employability**

WIL programmes are vital in addressing the skills shortage and enhancing employability through practical experience that aligns with theoretical learning. Host employers need to provide a substantial pipeline for future employment campaigns. The programme should increase students' knowledge of their chosen areas and aid their education-to-employment transition.

*P2: "We do that by using host employers that promise to employ the intern if they have an opportunity available at the end of their work experiential training."*

*P4: "WIL plays a crucial role in bridging the skills gap and enhancing the employability of graduates. Graduates who have completed WIL placements are better prepared to transition from education to employment. They have a deeper understanding of their chosen field, clearer career goals, and a stronger foundation*

*of practical experience, making them more capable of contributing to their employers' success"*

*P5: "WIL contributes a lot in improving the skills gap between the theory students study at college and the practical's they do at work. In so doing, it increases their chances of being employed."*

#### **4.5.4 Summary analysis of Theme 3**

The implementation of WIL policies and procedures can be enhanced through regular policy reviews, strengthened stakeholder engagements, and enhanced student support services. The policies are reviewed regularly, and stakeholder feedback is used to ensure ongoing relevance in addressing industry partners and student demands. Networking events, annual meetings, and workshops build relationships with employers and industry partners, and support the creation of high-quality WIL placements. They serve as forums for disseminating information, discussing issues, and framing wider WIL initiatives. Moreover, the WIL programme works as a major bridge between graduate to employment by providing them with additional practical experience that supports and enhances their theoretical knowledge and prepares them for the workplace.

#### **4.6 Findings from Students**

The following section presents findings based on responses provided by the students, who are also the candidates for placement in the WIL programme. The interviewed students were studying different programmes, ranging from civil engineering and electrical engineering among other programmes. The demographic information of the students is in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Demographic information of Students**

<b>Field of Speciality</b>	<b>Student Gender</b>	<b>Duration of WIL internship</b>
Civil engineering	Female	24 Months
Electrical	Male	24 Months
Civil engineering	Female	24 Months
Electrical	Male	24 Months
Civil engineering	Male	24 Months

Table 4.4 presents the main themes and sub-themes relating to student participants. The themes developed below seek to answer all three main research questions but cover the perspectives of the TVET students who are placed in various organizations.

**Table 4.4: Themes for Student Participants**

Main Themes	Sub Themes
Appropriateness of the WIL Policy	• Expectations of WIL
	• Experience with WIL and its Impact
	• Benefits of WIL for Students
	• Best Practices during WIL Placement
Effectiveness of the WIL Programme	• Evaluating Performance during WIL
	• Critical Skills and Knowledge Gained
	• Challenges Faced during WIL
	• Preparing Students for WIL
Recommendations for Improvement	• Supporting Students during WIL
	• Integrating WIL into Curriculum

#### **4.7 Theme 1: Appropriateness of the WIL Policy**

The first theme explores whether the WIL policy is properly developed. This theme investigates the expectations of the students regarding the functionality of WIL, the experience, and impact of WIL, as well as the benefits of the WIL programme.

##### **4.7.1 Subtheme 1: Expectations of WIL**

The expectations of students of the WIL programme are that it should focus mostly on the completion and on sustained participation in relevant fieldwork opportunities. Students look forward to a hands-on experience that helps them to practically apply their learning and understand things holistically by the time they complete the training programme. Their idea is to get industry-specific experience related to their studies.

*P2: "My expectation is to get exactly the activities that I am supposed to do on-site as I have done my theory; now I need practical's and full understanding activities on-site"*

*P3: "I expect WIL not to terminate the contract during the training programme, until we finish the training programme."*

*P4: "To apply the gained theory from my college studies practically and to further gain more knowledge while working"*

#### **4.7.2 Subtheme 2: Experience with WIL and its Impact**

Most of the participants revealed that they had a good experience with the WIL programme, and found substantial learning over and above practical exposure. The hands-on nature of the programme helped students to connect theory and practice, giving them a more in-depth knowledge base and broader skill set. The common view among participants is that nearly all the learners have welcomed the WIL initiative and quickly settled in their placement stations.

*P1: "During my training period, I gained more experience because we are doing practicals, and if I don't understand, I ask someone questions about what I don't understand, and I get the full explanation of what I need to understand".*

*P3: "I gain more knowledge during the programme for now, and I found out that there is a big difference between theory and practical".*

*P4: "The experience has been good as I have gained a broader knowledge about my field and also different ways/techniques to do some of the work".*

*P5: "So far, I have been doing bricklaying and plastering, paving, tilling, and carpentry. This has improved my experience on a much broader scale, and it will be very helpful when applying for a job."*

#### **4.7.3 Subtheme 3: Benefits of WIL for Students**

For students, the essential advantages of the WIL programme are gaining actual knowledge, implementing theoretical aspects in real life, and acquiring experience which can lead to a job or better entrepreneurship opportunities. Some students mentioned the benefit of learning to work with people from all backgrounds and improving their ability to speak clearly.

Additionally, some students highlighted that the WIL experience enables them to gain knowledge that will enable them to start their own organizations.

*P2: "It enabled me to apply the theory that I learned in college in a practical environment."*

*P3: "My benefits are that I can be able to open my own company under civil engineering or to get a job with the experience I had".*

*P4: "I am benefiting from the experience and being able to see and do practical in what I was studying."*

*P5: "I get more experience, and I know how to work with different people."*

#### **4.7.4 Subtheme 4: Best Practices during WIL Placement**

Effective practices that were identified during WIL placements included demonstrations by mentors, adequate time for self-learning, and structured mentorship. Construction skills, bricklaying, and planning were highlighted. These skills can be shared with others via digital communication or hands-on workshops.

*P1: "Being told and shown how to do work practically by mentors and be given enough time to learn to do it all on your own."*

*P2: "Bricklaying is one of the best practices; I also learned how to use these skills for business; you are self-employed."*

*P3: "Practices that I observe mentors gave us knowledge and experience of how to train someone else."*

*P4: "Is that no matter how difficult it is on-site, choose the right thing to help you at the end of the day."*

*P5: "Planning and organised work, communicating with different people. They can be shared by communicating on a phone/internet."*

#### **4.7.5 Summary Analysis of Theme 1**

WIL meets student expectations as it offers meaningful experiences and produces tangible outcomes. The gap between academic theory and practical application is filled. WIL is a hands-on programme that has significantly impacted students, who benefit from gaining diverse field exposure and can also build a wide set of abilities. Other benefits include enhanced application skills, increased employability, and an enhanced ability to adapt work practices across diverse scenarios. Mentorship and hands-on practice with structured learning has truly mattered as best practices according to the students.

## **4.8 Theme 2: Effectiveness of the WIL Programme**

The second theme in relation to students relates to the effectiveness of the WIL programme. That is, how effective has the WIL programme been in attaining its intended objectives regarding the placed students. The theme comprises three subthemes, namely, evaluating performance during WIL, critical knowledge and skills, as well as the challenges faced during WIL.

### **4.8.1 Subtheme 1: Evaluating Performance during WIL**

Analysis of responses reveals that the evaluation of performance during WIL placements is a complex process that includes feedback from mentors, self-assessment against theoretical knowledge, and regular consultations. Examples include on-time task completion, following instructions, and general behaviour. These assessments make sure that students are achieving the learning outcomes and are equipped with the right skill set.

*P1: "By referring back to my tertiary knowledge/theory and I evaluate it by consulting about my work with my mentors."*

*P2: "I use my mentor to evaluate my performance and for assessing my learning and progress as well."*

*P3: "I think this performance I had can help me a lot because we have mentors that they also guide us to assess our learning programme."*

*P4: "I am able to do everything and the task I am given, willing to do it in time."*

*P5: "I behave well during my programme, and I do what is instructed to me to do; I work hard and take notes."*

#### **4.8.2 Subtheme 2: Critical Skills and Knowledge Gained**

Students highlighted that they learned valuable skills in teamwork, communication, how to work under pressure, and some technical know-how that was complementary to their field of study, such as bricklaying and carpentry. These are considered as advantages for the students for their future profession and that work in a diverse working field.

*P1: "Critical skills learned include learning to work differently as a team; working as a team, you gain more views"*

*P2: "To work as a team, and listen to different opinions of people, always ask questions to understand."*

*P3: "The skill to work under pressure and be thorough with my work and the knowledge that all work must be done properly and that will help me to put more effort into my work"*

*P4: "Bricklaying, plastering, paving, tilling and carpentry. These skills have been beneficial in improving my experience in the Civil Engineering industry."*

*P5: "To study the drawings and be able to lead people also able to work under pressure and be able to communicate."*

#### **4.8.3 Subtheme 3: Challenges Faced during WIL**

The emergent challenges of WIL placements include insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) and tools, as well as negative attitudes toward supervisors. Given the types of complaints and requests, more resources were needed, and the real need for institutional support was highlighted. These difficulties stress the need for proper resource deployment and assistance.

*P2: "During the beginning of my WIL placement, the mentors would prefer to do the complicated work by themselves and they thought they were helping us, so I complained about that, saying it's easier to learn when you're doing the work than watching someone do the work."*

*P4: "The Challenge is that on-site, the supervisors are calling us names and see us as useless students because we are coming from a college."*

*P3: "The challenges that I faced so far as a student are that we don't have any say most of the time, and in the early months, we go to school to report about the incidents that happen on-site so that they can visit, they promise that they will choose a day to visit so that they can listen to both sides, but that never happens."*

#### **4.8.4 Summary Analysis of Theme 2**

As part of the evaluation process, student performance, skill development, and challenges experienced in placements are assessed to measure whether the WIL programme is having an impact. They are continuously evaluated based on feedback from the mentor along with self-assessments, dealing with real skills use and completion. The interviewed students also highlighted that they are gaining important skills in teamwork, communication, and technical knowledge that are relevant to the fields they are in. However, challenges, including inadequate PPE, lack of equipment, and poor supervisory attitudes, have led to a call for better resources and institutional support. Overcoming these barriers has an impact on the success of the programme and ensures students fully benefit from their WIL experiences.

### **4.9 Theme 3: Recommendations for Improvement**

The third and last themes deduced in relation to the students covered the recommendations required for improvement of the WIL program. The theme comprises three other sub-themes outlined below: preparing students for WIL, supporting students during WIL, and integrating WIL into the TVET curriculum.

#### **4.9.1 Subtheme 1: Preparing Students for WIL**

Recommendations to better prepare students for WIL include proactive communication, site visits by TVET representatives, and ensuring adequate PPE. The purpose of these measures is to bring student expectations in line with reality and to provide them with the tools and information they need. The issues that could come up are expected to be addressed through regular preparation sessions and briefings.

*P1: "What I think when the TVET makes preparations must have two or more people that shall visit the site and get meetings with site management to tell him or her what the students are supposed to do on-site."*

*P3: "TVET College can only advise students about the challenges that they may face during their WIL programme; they need to choose one individual to visit the site once a month to know about the student's progress."*

*P4: "For engineering programmes, prior to the placement of a student, the TVET College must ensure that there's adequate PPEs."*

*P5: "I think TVET College should have a trade test because these days, some companies employ only those with trade test qualifications."*

#### **4.9.2 Subtheme 2: Supporting Students during WIL**

Mechanisms such as site visits, ongoing communication, and supply of PPEs and stipends can improve the continued support provided to students throughout WIL. Regular follow-ups and feedback sessions will help students to pace between self-learning and guided learning for better outcomes. Other interviewed students also highlighted that the availability of all the PPEs is an imperative kind of support.

*P1: "To come and visit students at their workplace so that they can see if the students get the experience they need. Maybe they can visit every 2/3 months, not telling them the date/day."*

*P2: "The TVET College can better support students by visiting the sites and more communication with the students."*

*P3: "I think if TVET College can visit the site during the WIL programme to know about the progress of the students and how they are treated on-site, they must communicate with the students to know if they get what they are there to learn."*

*P4: "By providing students with the right PPE's required for the different fields and also increasing some of the stipends as they are too little to help through the WIL period."*

*P5: "Regular check-ups on-site at least once every 6 months; PPEs must also be given at least once every 6 months."*

#### **4.9.3 Subtheme 3: Integrating WIL into Curriculum**

Better integration of WIL into the curriculum will involve making student stipends available, bringing in practical experience earlier, and ensuring that opportunities are continuous across students' programmes. Incorporating WIL into the curriculum will allow students to gain experiential experience throughout their studies, making graduates more job-ready.

*P1: "By continuing this opportunity to other students, giving stipends because companies do not want to take in students without stipends."*

*P2: "When you get this opportunity, make sure you do everything you are supposed to do on-site to get more experience."*

*P3: "It can continue to give students the opportunity to be part of their WIL programme because it's hard to find training; most of the companies do not take students if they don't have a stipend."*

*P4: "By introducing it into the curriculum earlier."*

#### **4.9.4 Summary Analysis of Theme 3**

Enhancements to the pedagogical design of CBE across all aspects, including WIL, are recommended, focusing on preparation, ongoing support, and embedding within the curriculum. Interviewed participants noted that preparing the students means communicating proactively, making site visits, and ensuring they have what they need. Maintaining continuous help required during placements in the form of regular check-ups and feedback sessions is indeed an enriching way to improve learning. Fitting WIL into the curriculum, performing practicals to get stipends, and starting hands-on modules early can ensure the students have real-time experience. Furthermore, a stipend provided to learners at least motivates them to complete the WIL practice, with the comfort of having basic expenses covered. These enhancements are designed to make the WIL programme not only more efficient but also empower students so they will learn better and come out career ready. The primary research findings complement the literature review, which highlights that work-integrated learning should add value to the lifelong occupational success of graduates.

#### **4.10 Findings from WIL Mentors/Host Employers**

The findings presented in the following section relate to the mentors under whom the students worked for the duration of their placement in their respective jobs. These are employees working in organisations that are hosting the students for their WIL training.

**Table 4.5: Demographic information of WIL Mentors//Host Employers**

Position of the Mentor	Qualification	Employee gender	Years of experience
Electrician	National Diploma in Electrical Engineering	Female	10 years
Senior Carpenter	Diploma in civil engineering	Male	17 years
Senior Plumber	National Diploma engineering	Female	10 years
Construction Technician	Diploma in Construction Management	Male	13 years
Plumber	Diploma in engineering	Male	16 years

Table 4.5 provides demographic information for a group of employees, detailing their gender, position, years of experience, and qualifications. Among the five employees listed, there are three males and two females. The positions held include Electrician, Senior Carpenter, Senior Plumber, Construction Technician, and Plumber, with years of experience ranging from 10 to 17 years. Their qualifications vary, including a National Diploma in Electrical Engineering, a Diploma in Civil Engineering, an N Diploma in Engineering, a Diploma in Construction Management, and a Diploma in Engineering. This summary reflects a diverse group of experienced professionals with various specialized qualifications.

The themes from the Host Employers/Mentors interviews are summarised in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Themes for Host Employers/Mentors**

Main Themes	Sub Themes
Appropriateness of the WIL Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations of WIL</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience with Hosting WIL Students</li> </ul>
Effectiveness of the WIL Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating Performance during WIL</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Skills and Knowledge Gained</li> </ul>

Recommendations for Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practices for Hosting WIL Students</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to Industry Skills Development</li> </ul>

#### **4.11 Theme 1: Appropriateness of the WIL Policy**

The appropriateness of the WIL policy from the perspective of mentors is concerned with whether the policy is structured correctly. The theme has two other constituent themes, namely, expectations of WIL and experience with hosting WIL students.

##### **4.11.1 Subtheme 1: Expectations of WIL**

Mentors are looking to the WIL programme to help address a pressing need for technical specialisation, experiential learning, and job readiness among students. Mentors expect the employer to provide required resources such as PPE, materials, and tools. Mentors recognise their role is to help students acquire practical/technical skills. The mentee selection criteria are based on motivated individuals who want to learn from experienced mentors. Furthermore, WIL is expected to be an employability intervention that would help address the employment shortages and skilled shortage crisis throughout the nation.

*P1: "Supply learners with PPE, material, and tools."*

*P2: "We expect that the learners will gain technical skills and practicals."*

*P3: "Students with sound background and willing to learn."*

*P4: "Employment issues to be solved"*

*P5: "To end the skills shortage in the country."*

##### **4.11.2 Subtheme 2: Experience with hosting WIL Students**

In general, hosting WIL students was perceived as a positive experience for both students and mentors, with several factors serving to alleviate stress or promote growth, such as increased organisational capacity and decreased workload. Departments also reported increased efficiency and improved relationships with Higher learning institutions due to the WIL programme. However, some host employers were still reluctant to host TVET learners. However, mentors reported that WIL students from TVET College were easier to manage

than university graduates. The eagerness of students to learn, and their strong theoretical background, was commonly appreciated by host companies. Nevertheless, some students did not display the work ethic required in industry.

*P1: "It is quite interesting as they show enthusiasm in their training; the organisation has benefited a lot as it has more capacity and less workload."*

*P2: "The department benefited by increasing productivity and building connections."*

*P3: "For me, they are much easier to deal with than dealing with university graduates."*

*P4: "They are eager to learn new things, and the theory background helps a lot."*

*P5: "Some of them do not yet have the standard work ethic of the industry."*

#### **4.11.3 Summary Analysis of Theme 1**

WIL programmes provided essential work resources to support the work of artisans. For mentors, the programme is expected to provide technical training and exposure in real workplaces to address challenges in recruitment, given the nationwide shortage of skills. Organisations benefit from hosting WIL students, which includes improved productivity. On the downside, with contrasting levels of students' work ethics, preparedness for industry standards differ.

### **4.12 Theme 2: Effectiveness of the WIL Programme**

The second theme relates to the effectiveness of the WIL Programme from the perspective of mentors. The theme comprises two sub-themes: evaluating WIL performance, and critical skills, and knowledge gained.

#### **4.12.1 Subtheme 1: Evaluating Performance during WIL**

The performance of WIL students is evaluated through basic training at the beginning, coupled with practical exams during their time in the training. Progress in student demonstrations of learned skills and completed logbooks are regularly reviewed to confirm that they have mastered many modules. The learners' performance is seen from how they start

using what they have learned to solve the problem, as well as when students begin to work more independently and rely less on asking for help.

*P1: "On their first up to 3 weeks, they are doing basic training on the workshop until we have confidence that they can be on the field as they will differ from one another."*

*P2: "They demonstrate what they have learned in the field."*

*P3: "Their logbooks guide ensuring that at least they understand 90% and more of their modules."*

*P4: "We can easily see by looking at the way they apply knowledge and solve problems."*

*P5: "For me, I think we can see that they are now doing well when they stop asking for help and asking questions about everything."*

#### **4.12.2 Subtheme 2: Critical Skills and Knowledge Gained**

Student-acquired skills related to problem-solving, communication, and critical thinking. Similarly, another important skill required is that of computer and software applications. Personal effort and workplace interaction also improve interpersonal skills. They give the students comprehensive exposure from project start to completion, resulting in the effective execution of tasks. WIL placements assist in developing these essential attributes through hands-on training during their TVET years.

*P1: "Circuit knowledge, problem-solving/ fault finding, communication, and critical thinking."*

*P2: "Interpersonal skills and soft skills required for the workplace can be improved through personal effort."*

*P3: "They gain valuable exposure to how to start a project to completion."*

*P4: "They can execute tasks given to them, but I wish they could do more practical during their TVET years."*

*P5: "Using computers and gaining knowledge of various Software and computer applications. However, there are many gaps in the college theory in this regard:"*

### **4.12.3 Summary Analysis of Theme 2**

Initial training is evaluated through practical demonstration, logbooks, and the application of knowledge concerning problem-solving by WIL students. Decreased student dependence means their ability to work independently has improved. The critical skills obtained within placements cover technical knowledge, problem-solving abilities, communication, and computer application. However, there are still many gaps in the college theory of computer software applications. These are necessary for students' employment in their careers, and giving more on-the-job training to the students during their TVET years can improve these skills further. Overall, there are things that cannot be taught in the classroom but can only be learned when a student completes practical work.

## **4.13 Theme 3: Recommendations for Improvement**

In the third theme, mentors suggested how the WIL programme could be improved. The two subthemes associated with this theme include the best practices for hosting students, and the contribution of WIL to industry skills development.

### **4.13.1 Subtheme 1: Best Practices for Hosting WIL Students**

There are resultant good practices for WIL students, which include promoting a strong interest in learning new things and valuing teamwork and productivity. Other benefits include encouraging knowledge-based decision-making and maintaining an open communication culture. It emerged that there is a need to address punctuality and reduce absenteeism. These practices are beneficial to share across organisations, as they can improve the quality and consistency of WIL placements.

*P1: "WIL students are very keen to learn new things."*

*P2: "Teamwork and highly productive groups"*

*P3: "Knowledge-based decision making and conversations"*

*P4: "Communication culture"*

*P5: "Punctuality that is outstanding and no absenteeism."*

### **4.13.2 Subtheme 2: Contributing to Industry Skills Development**

A demand-driven apprenticeship programme can also be implemented to enhance the additional industrial competencies. Students should also get more exposure and training through workshops, and more practical applications during the WIL programme. The programme can also be benchmarked against the practices of other developing countries.

*P1: "By creating an apprenticeship programme through the WIL students."*

*P2: "Our industry needs more technical experts and artisans."*

*P3: "The students need more exposure in the workshop and get as much training and information as possible."*

*P4: "It will make the programme more practically applicable."*

*P5: "Relevant like in other developing countries."*

#### **4.13.3 Summary Analysis of Theme 3**

In hosting WIL students, the best practices focus on their willingness to learn, working within a team environment, and making decisions based on knowledge and punctuality. By spreading these practices across organisations, we can improve the effectiveness of WIL placements overall. It is proposed that apprenticeship programmes be established to address workforce skills gaps, expand technical training opportunities, and give students more exposure through workshops. The relevance and applicability of WIL programmes can also be enhanced by benchmarking against the standards and practices in other developing countries.

#### **4.14 Chapter Summary**

The assessment of the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) policy at a TVET College indicates that although the policy is well-designed to provide hands-on experience in line with students' expertise, there are considerable areas that can be enhanced. College officials explained that the WIL policy requires careful selection of industry partners and a structured placement process, which includes induction and continued support. The efficacy of the policy is evaluated using logbooks, performance scorecards, and student feedback, with consistent monitoring and communication recognised as optimal approaches. Nevertheless, obstacles like restricted placement options and financial difficulties have been brought to attention,

requiring policy assessments, increased involvement of stakeholders, and upgraded support services.

Feedback from students in multiple fields, such as civil and electrical engineering, shows that the WIL programme effectively combines theoretical understanding with practical knowledge, enhancing industry-related skills and job prospects. Despite the advantages, students faced difficulties like insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) and unfavourable supervisory attitudes. Analyses with mentor input and self-evaluation highlight that students have acquired essential teamwork and technical abilities, but challenges like lack of resources and inadequate support systems persist. Suggestions for improvement involve providing students with improved preparation and support, proactive communication, frequent visits to sites by TVET representatives, and better integration of WIL in the curriculum to guarantee a consistent, practical experience and sufficient stipends.

Employers who host students for work-integrated learning note that the WIL policy effectively meets the demands for technical expertise and workplace readiness, enhancing organisational productivity. However, obstacles like differences in student work ethic and readiness for the industry continue to exist. Students gain advantages from practical training that improves technical skills, problem-solving capabilities, and communication skills, but there are still deficiencies in theoretical understanding, especially in computer applications. In order to enhance the programme, mentors recommend incorporating effective strategies like promoting a robust learning environment, timeliness, and collaboration and establishing apprenticeship programmes that are in line with industry norms.

## CHAPTER 5: Discussions

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings, contrasting them with previous research and emphasising how the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme may be affected. The chapter is organised around the three primary themes that were identified: suggestions for

improvement, the effectiveness of the WIL programme, and the appropriateness of the WIL policy.

## **5.2 Appropriateness of the WIL Policy**

The policy of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme is essentially created to provide students with real-world experience that enhances their academic learning and bridges a crucial gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. According to this research, the main goals of the WIL programme closely match the expectations of students. The WIL programme largely fulfils the expectations of the students, who are expected to gain practical skills and fieldwork experience. This is significant because it highlights the programme's applicability and flexibility in meeting the needs of students, a topic that has been covered in-depth in the literature (Abeysekera, 2006; Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). Given how satisfied students are with their practical experience, it appears that the WIL policy is being effectively implemented to foster opportunities for hands-on learning.

According to Freeman et al. (2020), this finding is in line with previous research that highlights the importance of practical experience in improving educational outcomes. Thus, the structure of the policy seems well-thought-out in terms of matching industry demands with educational objectives. The programme's overall efficacy is, however, diminished by obstacles, such as the absence of required instruments and personal protective equipment (PPE). These problems point to a significant disconnect between implementation and policy. The difficulties this study identified, support Bates and Hayes' (2017) claim that sufficient resource provision is necessary for WIL programme success.

Important insights are also provided by the viewpoint of the employees regarding the WIL policy. Their expectations are in line with the objectives of improving employability and addressing skill shortages, indicating that industry stakeholders and students alike view the policy favourably. This dual endorsement is noteworthy because it shows that the goals of the WIL programme are being accepted more widely. Effective WIL programmes greatly reduce skills gaps, according to Du Plessis and Bezuidenhout's (2019) research. This finding is consistent with employers' positive comments about students' performance.

## **5.3 Effectiveness of the WIL Programmes**

The effectiveness of the WIL programmes can be assessed using a variety of assessment techniques, such as mentor feedback, self-evaluation, and hands-on demonstrations. These techniques guarantee a thorough assessment of student's performance, which Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) point out is a crucial component of successful learning. One of the main goals of the WIL programme is competency development, which is demonstrated by students' ability to work independently and apply their theoretical knowledge to solve real-world problems. The abilities that students acquire—like technical proficiency, teamwork, and communication—are essential for their future employment. These results align with the literature, which emphasises how WIL improves practical skills and employability (Downey et al., 2015). However, the study uncovers important obstacles, including poor instruments and unfavourable opinions from certain managers. These problems imply that even though the programme works well in many areas, there are still some crucial areas that require development to provide a more conducive learning environment.

The generally positive feedback from host employers in hosting WIL students indicates that WIL also benefits the organisation, as evidenced by the generally positive feedback provided by the staff members who host them. As strong mentor-student relationships are critical to the success of WIL initiatives, many employers reported increased productivity. Mayombe's (2022) findings, which highlight the reciprocal benefits of WIL for both host organisations and students, parallel these advantages. Better preparatory programmes and support systems are obviously needed, as evidenced by the differences in students' work ethics and readiness. By doing this, you can maximise the advantages of the WIL programme for all parties involved and guarantee that every student is prepared for their placements equally.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Improvement**

The outcomes point to areas where the WIL programme needs improvement; ensuring proactive communication, site visits, and making sure PPE is sufficient are all essential to better prepare students. Mafaralala (2020), who discovered that adequate planning and resource provision significantly increase the effectiveness of the WIL programme, supports these recommendations. Some of the issues, like inadequate PPE and the need for better tools, can be lessened by making sure students are ready for their placements. Students' difficulties can be addressed with ongoing support during WIL placements, such as frequent check-ins and feedback sessions. This strategy is in line with Jackson and Bridgstock's (2021) recommendations, which call for continued assistance to

optimise the advantages of WIL. Frequent observation and feedback can facilitate the timely identification and resolution of problems, giving students a smoother and more productive learning environment.

To improve the programme even more, consideration should be given to stipends to relieve financial strain, starting hands-on modules early, and more efficient integration of WIL into the curriculum. Freeman et al. (2020) have suggested that students' career readiness is greatly impacted by early and ongoing practical experience. According to Downey et al. (2015), the establishment of the apprenticeship programme and increased access to technical training are additional strategies for addressing skills gaps in the workforce.

Finally, TVET institutions need to focus on obtaining enough resources such as software, technology, internet connection, and digital learning materials to facilitate Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities, particularly in engineering and technology programmes. It is important for both teachers and students to have the required technical expertise to make full use of these resources (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2018; Moonasamy & Naidoo, 2022). In regions where industry placements are scarce, especially in rural areas, TVET colleges should focus on developing practical learning spaces on campus that replicate actual work environments. This method can assist in closing the divide between theoretical understanding and hands-on abilities, guaranteeing that students are well-equipped for the job market (Smith et al., 2014). Efforts should also focus on forming and sustaining enduring partnerships between TVET colleges and industries, even in remote regions. Establishing clear operational guidelines and understanding the challenges involved are essential in supporting students with WIL opportunities through partnerships (Billett & Seddon, 2004; Remington, 2018). Furthermore, TVET institutions could consider integrating project-based tasks to offer students practical training and generate revenue while maintaining Work Integrated Learning programs and improving students' job readiness through hands-on education (Smith et al., 2014).

## **5.5 Summary of Findings and Implications**

The results of the analysis show that the WIL programme is effective in achieving its goals of giving students hands-on experience and closing the knowledge gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. However, maximising the programme's effectiveness

requires addressing the issues raised by better planning, the provision of resources, and ongoing assistance. The suggestions for creating an apprenticeship programme and incorporating WIL into the curriculum have the potential to improve students' employability and skill development greatly and significantly. These enhancements align with the WIL programme's overarching objectives, which are to generate graduates who are prepared for the workforce and possess the skills they need to succeed in it. The study underscores the significance of a meticulously designed WIL programme, incorporating extensive pre- and post-implementation mechanisms, sufficient resources, and ongoing assessment. These areas will be addressed so that the WIL programme can better meet the needs of the students, host employers, and broader industry.

# CHAPTER 6: Conclusions and Contributions

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## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study's findings, explains how the research questions were answered and identifies the key contributions to theory and practice. It also makes recommendations for further research while acknowledging the study's shortcomings and contributions.

## 6.2 Summary of the Thesis

This study aimed to evaluate the WIL programmes performance through the perspectives of its major stakeholders, employing stakeholder theory as the conceptual lens (Freeman, 1963; 1984). Students, educators, businesses, and institutional representatives provided perspectives through qualitative methods, which included interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The study found a match between student expectations and programmes objectives, highlighting benefits such as increased employability and practical skill development (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). However, resource limitations and logistical challenges were observed, reducing programme effectiveness (Bates & Hayes, 2017).

## 6.3 How the Research Questions Were Answered

The research intended to address several key questions, and the answers are as follows:

- **How do students, educators, employers, and institutions perceive the effectiveness of the WIL programme?**

According to the results of the study, students had a positive perception of the WIL programme, particularly the hands-on experience and practical skills they gained, which improved their employability. WIL is often perceived positively by stakeholders, who value its role in connecting academic knowledge with practical application (Cortini et al., 2024). Educators and institutions understand WIL's role in connecting educational achievements with industry objectives and improving job preparedness (Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2018).

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is essential for connecting educational achievements with industry objectives and improving job preparedness. However, challenges such as a lack of resources, including PPE and tools, can significantly reduce the quality of practical learning experiences (Ngubane *et al.*, 2020). Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure students gain meaningful and high-quality experiences that prepare them for the workforce. Logistical concerns, such as transportation and lodging during placements, impede programme implementation (Du Plessis & Bezuidenhout 2019). Furthermore, differences in student readiness and work ethic highlight the necessity for uniform preparatory programmes (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021).

- **What are the main challenges faced by stakeholders in the WIL programme?**

Challenges include insufficient provision of resources such as PPE and tools, which reduces the quality of practical learning experiences (Ngubane *et al.*, 2020). Students frequently feel underprepared for their placements, emphasising the need to develop a better preparation programme (Nduna, 2017). Furthermore, practical obstacles, such as student transportation and lodging during placements, hinder the programme's success. Some employers also observed differences in student work ethics and preparation, indicating the need for a more consistent preparatory programme. According to Oosthuizen *et al.* (2021), the success of the WIL programme is significantly impacted by a lack of regulation, especially concerning practical issues like student housing and transportation. Employers also highlighted the need for a more uniform curriculum after observing variations in students' work ethics and readiness (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2021). Similar concerns were raised in another SSACI assessment, which said that logistical problems pose a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of WIL. More structured support mechanisms are needed (SSACI, 2021).

- **What recommendations can be made to improve the WIL programme?**

Numerous proposals have been made to resolve these issues. It is critical to improve communication and preparation processes to ensure students are fully equipped for their training and preparation processes to ensure students are well-prepared for their placements is critical (Smith, 2023). Providing adequate resources, such as PPE and tools, is critical to supporting practical learning (Bates & Hayes, 2017). Implementing continuous support methods, such as regular check-ups and feedback sessions, can assist in addressing difficulties quickly and promote student learning (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021).

Furthermore, Jackson and Collings (2018) advocate better integrating WIL into the curriculum and proposing stipends to reduce financial demands on students.

This study has also emphasised the importance of resource allocation, industry partnerships, and practical on-campus learning environments to improve the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs at TVET colleges. It is crucial to tackle the difficulties related to scarce resources, especially in rural regions, to bridge the divide between theoretical learning and hands-on abilities. The results emphasise the necessity of lasting partnerships between schools and businesses.

In conclusion, enhancing the WIL programme requires a multifaceted approach that addresses communication, resource provision, continuous support, and curriculum integration. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers and educational institutions can improve the effectiveness of the WIL programme, ensuring that students receive the practical experience and support they need to succeed in their careers. Addressing these areas will not only benefit students but also strengthen them.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are made to improve the WIL programme:

Firstly, enhance student preparation. Enhance communication and planning procedures to guarantee that students are prepared for their placements. Pre-placement orientation workshops as part of the curriculum, site visits, and making sure students comprehend the duties and expectations of their positions are all part of WIL (Msukwini, 2017). Pre-placement orientation workshops give students important information about industry expectations also in terms of work ethic as mentioned, workplace cultures, and essential skills to help them prepare for their earlier placement, while site visits provide students with personal experience in potential work situations, bridging the gap between academic understanding and practical application (Smith and Worsfold, 2014).

Clear communication about training and expectations through the logbook, as well as regular feedback, ensures that students understand their duties and performance criteria, boosting success in their placements (Jackson 2015).

Educational institutions can considerably improve students' readiness for their placements by including these elements—pre-placement orientation sessions, site visits, and clear explanations of logbooks and expectations. This comprehensive strategy benefits students by equipping them with the tools and confidence they need to succeed while ensuring that placement providers receive well-prepared and effective WIL students or workers.

Secondly, improve resource allocation. Make sure there is enough PPE and equipment available to facilitate hands-on learning. Students must be provided with the equipment to go into the field entirely as part of the requirement for any construction site for the safety of the workers. Furthermore, it restricts the students from participating in practical work, and there is a legal implication. According to Bates and Hayes (2017), educational institutions ought to collaborate closely with industry partners in order to ascertain and provide the resources required for efficient learning and for them to go into the field to gain relevant experience to obtain the qualification.

Thirdly, provide continuous support. Establish routine evaluations and feedback meetings to help students develop and quickly resolve issues. To guarantee ongoing development and problem-solving, this entails frequent communication between students, mentors, and academic supervisors (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021).

Finally, enhance curriculum integration. To improve career preparedness, consider starting hands-on modules sooner and integrating WIL more effectively into the curriculum. Furthermore, consider giving students allowances to help with their monetary needs so they may concentrate more on their learning.

## **6.5 Limitations**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations:

Firstly, the sample size is acknowledged as a limitation. The study was confined to a subset of host employers, college officials, and students from a single TVET institution; as such, it might not be entirely representative of all WIL programmes.

Secondly, the geographical scope of the study was a limitation. Since the study was limited to a single college, the conclusions reached cannot necessarily be applied to other colleges. More studies in various geographic areas (provincial and national) and educational contexts are required to validate the results. According to Taylor and Govender (2017), there is a

notable lack of research on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) for TVET College students in South Africa, which lends further weight to this recommendation. A substantial vacuum exists about the unique demands and issues faced by TVET students, as most of the current published literature focuses on higher education institutions. This gap emphasises the need for additional targeted research to guide and enhance WIL practices for TVET students in South Africa, eventually improving their employability and attending to the issues they encounter.

The study design has methodological constraints. Despite efforts to verify the validity and reliability of the results, the dependence on qualitative methodologies may introduce subjective biases. A mixed-methods approach could be helpful in future studies to provide a more thorough assessment of the efficacy of the WIL programme.

Finally, there are temporal limitations. Stakeholder views may change over time, or long-term results may not have been taken into consideration in the study, which focused only on a moment in time. It is recommended that longitudinal research be done to evaluate the long-term effects of WIL on career outcomes. Over time, other variables, including industry shifts and the state of the economy, may also affect how effective WIL programmes are, necessitating continual assessment and modification (Mavundla, 2021).

## **6.6 Key Contributions**

This research makes several key contributions to both theory and practice.

### **6.6.1 Theoretical Contributions**

The findings of this study provide a better understanding of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme efficacy from the viewpoints of its main stakeholders, using stakeholder theory as an analytical framework. The study applies stakeholder theory to the context of WIL, highlighting the significance of meeting the different needs and expectations of multiple stakeholders (Freeman, 1984).

Based on a combination of the literature and the findings of this study, the main expectations that key stakeholders have of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) are summarised in Table 6.1. By applying stakeholder theory to WIL, this study provides insights into how vocational education programmes can better meet the demands of stakeholders. It emphasizes the need

to incorporate stakeholder viewpoints into educational programme design, to improve alignment with industry requirements (Mayombe, 2022).

**Table 6.1: Main Expectations of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)**

Stakeholder	Main Expectations of WIL	Source
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obtain hands-on experience to complement academic learning.</li> <li>- Improve employability and readiness for the job market.</li> <li>- Receive adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and tools.</li> <li>- The WIL policy must ensure that students receive comprehensive fieldwork and hands-on experience to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.</li> <li>- It should also mandate the provision of adequate PPE to guarantee student safety during training. Lack of PPE restricts students from participating in practical work and has legal implications.</li> </ul>	Du Pless (2019), Knight and York (2003), Govender and Tyler (2015)
<b>TVET College</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Align educational goals with industry needs.</li> <li>- Ensure continuous and effective student participation.</li> <li>- Address logistical issues to prevent premature training termination.</li> <li>- The policy should facilitate strong partnerships between TVET colleges and industry stakeholders to align curricula with industry requirements.</li> <li>- Provisions for monitoring student engagement and addressing logistical challenges that could hinder successful WIL completion.</li> </ul>	Eicker, Haseloff and Lennartz, (2017), Fleming et al. (2018)
<b>Host Employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address skill shortages in the industry.</li> <li>- Enhance employability of graduates.</li> <li>- Benefit from increased productivity and strong mentor-student relationships.</li> <li>- Ensure students are adequately prepared and possess strong work ethics.</li> </ul>	Du Plessis and Bezuidenhout (2019), Jackson and Rower (2023), Ernest. et al. (2016)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The policy should outline the roles and responsibilities of host employers in providing meaningful mentorship and contributing to skill development.</li> <li>- It should also emphasize the importance of preparing students with the necessary soft skills and work ethics before they enter the workplace.</li> </ul>	
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### **6.6.2 Practical Contributions**

From a practical perspective, the research provides insightful information about the need for improved student preparation and support and the critical role that adequate resource allocation plays in enhancing the effectiveness of the WIL programme (Du Plessis & Bezuidenhout, 2019). Prioritizing these areas is recommended for policymakers and educational institutions to ensure the success of WIL initiatives. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the benefits that WIL offers to both employers and students, highlighting the importance of strong partnerships between industry and educational institutions (Ferns, 2019).

### **6.6.3 Policy Implications**

The study's findings have a significant impact on policy, especially when it comes to continuous support systems and the availability of resources. To guarantee the success of the WIL programme, legislators and educational institutions must also give priority to these areas. Lawmakers should consider enacting measures that guarantee students have access to sufficient equipment and resources, along with monetary assistance, so that students have better access to, and participation in their internships (Ferns, 2019).

Furthermore, the study underscores the reciprocal advantages of work-integrated learning (WIL) for host employers and students, hence highlighting the necessity of strategic collaborations between academic institutions and businesses (Ferns, 2019). Successfully addressing worker demands involves forging better partnerships between companies and educational institutions (Mayombe, 2022).

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# Appendices

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## *Appendix A - Gatekeeper permission*

Sample of gatekeeper permission form used for compliance with ERAS for conducting research (host employers, students and college officials).





## ACCESS LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Rhodes University  
Drostdy Road,  
Grahamstown,  
6139

████████████████████  
16-3 Sisson St, Fort Gale,  
Mthatha, 5100

Date: 16 May 2023

Dear ██████████

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a registered master's student in the Department of Business School at Rhodes University. My supervisor is Prof Noel Pearse.

The title of my study is evaluating the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the perspective of its key stakeholders: A case study of a TVET College.

The goal of the proposed study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the TVET College Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the standpoint of its key stakeholders. To this end, the research objectives are to:

- A. Assess the appropriateness of the TVET College's Work Integrated Learning policy, given the current legislative framework and the feedback obtained from stakeholders.
- B. Assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the WIL from the viewpoints of three key stakeholder groups (i.e., the TVET, Host Employers, and Students) and
- C. Make recommendations to improve the WIL policy and its implementation.

I am hereby seeking your consent to interview mentors and managers involved in managing working-integrated learning and, students who are about to complete their Work Integrated Learning training.

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethics  
Ethics Coordinator: [ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)  
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727 f: +27 (0) 86 616 7707  
Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139



To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to this letter:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University.
- (b) A copy of the research instruments which I intend using in my research.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me. Our contact details are as follows:

Ms. Sandisiwe Madabane at [redacted] or my supervisor, Prof Noel Pearce [redacted]

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with feedback.

Your permission for me to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

**Signature:**

**Name: Sandisiwe Madabane**

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethics  
Ethics Coordinator: [ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za) t:  
+27 (0) 46 603 7727 f: +27 (0) 86 616 7707  
Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

## Appendix B – Letter of Ethical Approval



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*

**Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee**  
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa  
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727  
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8822  
e: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

<https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>

27 September 2023

Sandisiwe Madabane

Email: [REDACTED]

Review Reference: 2023-7093-7816

Dear Ms. Sandisiwe Madabane

**Title:** Evaluating the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the perspective of its key stakeholders: A case study of a TVET College

**Researcher:** Ms. Sandisiwe Madabane

**Supervisor(s):** Professor Noel Pearse,

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC). Your Approval number is: 2023-7093-7816

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,



[REDACTED]

**Chair: Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee, RU-HREC**

cc: Ethics Coordinator

## *Appendix c – Interview Guide*

Samples of interview guide form used for compliance with ERAS for interviewing participants (host employers, college officials and students).

### **Evaluating the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the Host Employer perspective: A case study of a TVET College.**

#### **PART TWO**

The evaluation would look at the WIL program's impact on the host employers, including the benefits they gain from hosting students, the challenges they face, and the program's overall effectiveness from their perspective. The case study approach would involve analysing a specific example of a TVET college WIL program to draw conclusions about the program's effectiveness.

1. How do you think the WIL program can contribute to the development of the skills and competencies needed by your industry?
  2. What are your expectations of the WIL?
  3. Can you describe your experience with hosting WIL students from the TVET College, and how has it benefited your organization?
  4. How do you evaluate the performance of WIL students during their placement, and what criteria do you use to assess their learning and progress?
  5. What are some of the critical skills and knowledge that you have observed WIL students gain during their placement, and how can they be further developed?
  6. What are some of the best practices you have observed in hosting WIL students, and how can they be shared with other organizations and industries?
  7. What are some of the challenges that you have faced in hosting WIL students, and how have you addressed them?
  8. How do you think TVET College can better prepare students for their WIL placement to ensure they meet your organisation's expectations?
  9. How do you think TVET College can better collaborate with host employers to improve the quality of WIL placements?
  10. How can WIL be further integrated into the broader curriculum and learning outcomes of TVET College?
  11. How can WIL be leveraged to foster greater industry-academic partnerships and collaboration?
-

## Evaluating the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the Student perspective: A case study of a TVET College.

### **PART TWO**

The evaluation would look at the WIL program's impact on the students, including the benefits they gain from participating, the challenges they face, and the program's overall effectiveness from their perspective. The approach would involve analysing a specific example of a TVET college WIL program to conclude the program's effectiveness. This could include investigating the extent to which WIL helps students develop practical skills and knowledge relevant to their field and the overall impact of WIL on their learning and career readiness.

1. What are your expectations of the WIL?
  2. Can you describe your experience with the WIL program at TVET College and how it has impacted your learning and professional development?
  3. What are the benefits of WIL for students?
  4. How do you evaluate your performance during your WIL placement, and what criteria do you use to assess your learning and progress?
  5. What critical skills and knowledge have you gained during your WIL placement, and how do you think they will benefit you in your future career?
  6. What are some of the challenges that you have faced during your WIL placement, and how have you addressed them?
  7. How do you think TVET College can better prepare students in advance of their WIL placement to ensure they meet employer expectations?
  8. How do you think the TVET College can better support students during their WIL placement to enhance their learning experience?
  9. What are some of the best practices you observed during your WIL placement, and how can they be shared with other students and organizations?
  10. In your opinion, how can WIL be further integrated into the broader curriculum and learning outcomes of TVET College?
  11. How do you think WIL can contribute to bridging the skills gap and improving your employability upon graduation?
-

## Evaluating the effectiveness of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from the College Officials perspective: A case study of a TVET College.

### **PART TWO**

This part will focus on evaluating WIL programs, which typically involve a combination of classroom-based learning and practical on-the-job training in a workplace environment. WIL programs aim to help students develop industry-relevant skills and knowledge, gain work experience, and prepare for employment after graduation. Examine their perceptions of the effectiveness of these programs in terms of student learning outcomes, engagement, and overall program quality.

1. What are your expectations of the WIL?
  2. Can you describe the process of designing and implementing WIL programs at the TVET College?
  3. What criteria are used for selecting industry partners and WIL placement opportunities for students?
  4. How do you facilitate matching students to appropriate work placements?
  5. What support services are provided to students before, during, and after their WIL experiences?
  6. How do you evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its intended learning outcomes?
  7. How do you evaluate the performance of WIL students during their placement, and what criteria do you use to assess their learning and progress?
  8. What are some of the best practices you have observed in supporting them during their placement?
  9. What challenges have you faced in implementing the WIL program, and how have you addressed them?
  10. How could the TVET improve its policy and procedures related to the WIL?
  11. How do you think TVET College can better engage with employers and industry partners to improve the quality of WIL placements?
  12. How do you think WIL can contribute to bridging the skills gap and improving the employability of graduates?
-