



# Students Perception towards Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) Colleges in the Greater Buffalo City Metropole

Tshepo Tlapana\* and Zinzani Myeki

Department of Corporate Communications & Marketing, Walter Sisulu University, East London, South Africa

\*Corresponding author: Tshepo Tlapana, Department of Corporate Communications & Marketing, Walter Sisulu University, East London, South Africa, Tel: +27437038567; E-mail: tlapana@wsu.ac.za

Received date: May 15, 2020; Accepted date: Mar 29, 2020; Published date: Jun 04, 2020

Copyright: © 2020 Tlapana T, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Citation: Tlapana T, Myeki Z. Students Perception towards Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) Colleges in the Greater Buffalo City Metropole. Global Media Journal 2020, 18:35.

## Abstract

Perception plays a vital role in anything one should be interested to acquire. This research study aims at investigating the expectations and perceptions of students towards Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions at the Buffalo City Metro. The objectives of this study included assessing whether student's choice when deciding to enroll at higher education institutions is influenced by their perceptions. Additionally, the study strives to investigate the marketing communication practices employed by the TVET Colleges that influence student decision thus contributing towards improving students' perception towards TVET Colleges. For TVET Colleges, marketing communication plays a vital role in students' recruitment. The findings of this study reveal that a majority of students would prefer a university rather than a TVET College as a higher education route. It was also noted that although that is the issue, majority students would go to TVETs as an alternative. Marketing communications of TVET Colleges need to be improved in order for students to change their perceptions and select TVETs well-informed.

**Keywords:** Technical vocational education & training; Service quality; Students expectations and perceptions

## Introduction and Background

TVET colleges were established in 2002 in terms of the FET Act of 1998. This is an international term. Originally TVET colleges were named Further Education and Training (FET), this was post the political democratic breakthrough [1]. TVET colleges were then moved to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2010, as they were eventually affirmed to be dealing with post-school programmes. The merger process constituted 152 former technical colleges (State and State- Aided) into the current fifty

(50) TVET multi-site colleges across the nine (9) South African provinces. The amalgamation of colleges was based on physical location, for example colleges were to be merged if they were in the same geographical vicinity and resource allocation played a role [2]. The reform was a result of the country's exposure to 46 years of governance under the apartheid authority, which brought imbalances and inequalities to all spheres of people's lives including education. As from 1990, when processes for formulation of new policies started, it became evident that the segregated education system had no place in the post-apartheid South Africa because reform in education must be the starting point towards meaningful change [3]. From the year 2000, colleges underwent a barrage of major institutional, structural and curricular changes. Formerly known as technical colleges, they were also racially segregated [4], as all other South African educational institutions were structured.

This study aims to find out where the problem towards the perception of Technical and Vocational Education and training (TVET) colleges originates. It also aims to contribute towards the understanding of the operations of TVET colleges and how they can be made clear. The researcher then makes observations on the possible misinterpretations that may exist in the marketing of TVET Colleges. The researcher contextualizes the problem about student perception in the Buffalo City Metro (BCM) area and will further on make recommendations for improvement.

## Literature Review

### Technical vocational education and training

TVET Colleges provide education and training opportunities that are responsive to human resource requirements for a diversified economy. The education and training offered by TVET colleges form a vital post-school education and training opportunities alongside universities. This then entails that there is a more diversified education and training options for school leavers. TVET Colleges makes education available for different types of students with a variety of individual learning and training needs. There are students who require

preparation to enter the workplace, then, there are those who wish to start their own businesses, while some seek to obtain a university degree. In the same token, there is another group of students with a need for re-skilling or up-skilling from present competency levels and lastly there are those who need to start a new career pathway due to personal or circumstantial reasons [5].

Maluleka alludes that programmes at TVET Colleges are intended to address the priority skills demands of the South African economy. They are customized and responsive to the needs of learners and industry, and the careers they encourage are essential for economic upliftment. Students who studied at a TVET College are armed with practical and theoretical knowledge thus, a full qualification at a lesser price than they would have paid at a university. However, many school leavers who intend studying further, still rush to universities and regard TVET Colleges as second choice.

Whatever the student's need or motivation to study, TVET still seems to offer all flexible ways to meet with students' needs to study [6]. In order to understand TVET one has first to understand the conflict that once existed between Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education and Training (HET). What exactly does TVETs offer? Most people understood that TVETs (formally known as FET) Colleges were lower-level versions of high skills, others believed they were higher-level versions of low skills or they exist somewhere in between.

The solutions to these conflicts are crucial to understanding the role and the purpose that TVET plays within the broader array of education and training in South Africa and some of those roles are not limited to: 1) meeting learning needs and aspiration of individual through development of intellectual abilities and aptitude; 2) providing labour market with high level competencies and expertise; and 3) engaging in creating, transmitting and evaluating knowledge by ensuring continual pursuit of intellectual enquiry in all field of human understanding through research and teaching.

Maluleka further argues that TVET acts as a catalyst in the economic upliftment of people by rendering appropriate education and training. Education is one of the most important activities organized in modern societies that creates a demanding but rewarding environment in which individuals may realize their creative and intellectual potential, education equips people with the necessary knowledge and skills to become effective citizens. Eulalia alludes that Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges offer courses that are vocational or occupational by nature, meaning that the student receives education and training with a view towards a specific range of jobs or employment possibilities. At a TVET College one can enroll for a vocational training course or qualification if they have passed Grade 9, any NQF level 1 qualification or a Grade 12 certificate. TVET also offers National N Diploma's, 'N' courses which combined with practical work, lead to a qualification as an artisan.

## Service quality

Service quality has been defined as more of a comparison between expectations and performance rather than imprecise adjectives like goodness, luxury or shininess [7]. The matter of the quality of services offered at higher education has attracted the attention of many researchers [8]. The quality and processes of TVET colleges has affected the way student perceive and therefore react about TVET's colleges service quality. These processes include the manner students are treated during the service interaction [9]. Zulu [10] emphasizes that the decision of prospective students to enroll at any higher institution, in this case TVET colleges, is influenced by the way students perceive the desired service.

Word of mouth is a very strong marketing tool, especially when it comes to higher education. Students tend to discuss amongst themselves about the type of services offered at a specific institution, as this is one of the main factors that students consider when deciding to enroll at a higher institution, because this then refers to the core service that specific TVET College sells and offers to the students [11].

Although students (customers) want good services provided to them, it is sometimes of their own doings that the desired service cannot be offered. Whilst, in secondary education, students tend not to apply on time and therefore that, causes the inconvenience of long queues in January of the following year. TVET Colleges, desperately, try and accommodate everyone hence the student perception that TVET's are the reliable institutions for irresponsible students.

## Students expectations and perceptions

Perception has been defined as a process of selecting, organizing and interpreting information inputs to produce meaning and coherent picture of the world. According to [12] perception plays a vital role in the identification of alternatives and influencing consumers in deciding whether to purchase or not, as in the case of education in the TVET sector. Khare [13] reiterates the importance of the influence of perception when customers compare their satisfaction and services offered to them.

The perception of students about TVET's is influenced and informed by numerous factors such as: 1) ability to understand what TVET colleges offers; 2) the marketing and positioning of the specific college's; and 3) the reputation and image of TVET colleges, according to the general public.

Student's expectations are set at different personal standards. Students expectations and perceptions towards an educational programme has everything to do with what the benefit programme will be with regard to employment, status and lifestyle [11,14]. Due to the negative perception towards TVET College, students have no confidence that the institution could bring success into their futures. A number of researchers have observed that TVET Colleges have been severely criticised for their high attrition and low job placement rates. The perception observed is that TVET's are experiencing a tarnished reputation stemming largely from their own

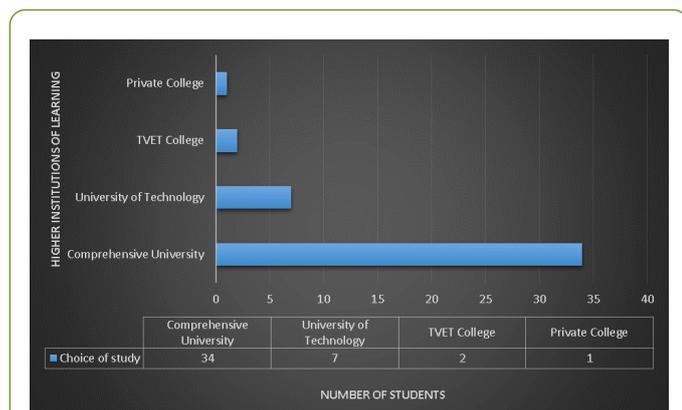
deficiencies and a poor public image. This then becomes the reason that they are the last option for students rejected by universities [10,15,16].

## Research Methodology

The study was exploratory in nature as it sought to find out how students in high schools perceive TVET Colleges. Primary data was collected in this study using the survey method. A questionnaire that contained 14 questions was used to gather the information required. The questionnaire consists of close-ended questions and only one open open-ended question at the end. The target population of this study were high school students in grade 12. These students were specifically based in the BCM area. Non-probability sampling was adopted whereby forty-four (n=44) students were conveniently chosen to participate in the study.

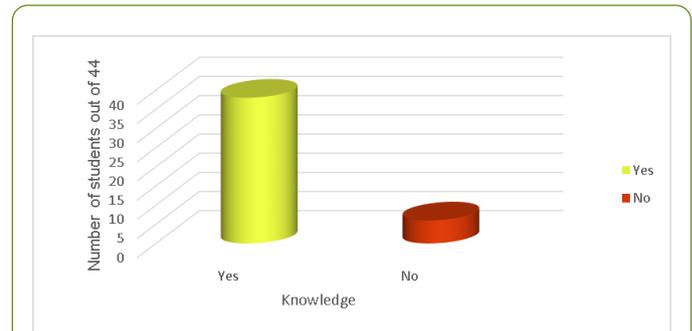
## Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

From **Figure 1**, 34 out 44 (77%) of the respondents noted that they would study through a comprehensive university, 7 out of 44 (16%) indicated that they would study through a university of technology, 2 out 44 (5%) indicated that they would study through a TVET College, whilst only 1 out 44 (2%) indicated that they would rather study through a private college than any other higher education system. A large number of students indicated that they would rather go to a comprehensive university than choose any other mode of higher education. It can then be concluded that students prefer comprehensive universities over TVET colleges.

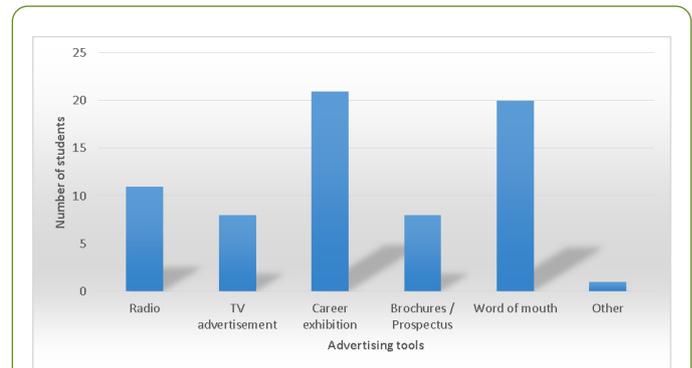


**Figure 1:** Preferred choice of higher learning institution.

**Figure 2** reveals that a large number of 38 out of 44 (86%) respondents indicated that they know of TVET College's and the balance of 6 out of 44 (14%) respondents indicated that they do not know of any TVET college's. It therefore, means that TVET are least known amongst high schools.

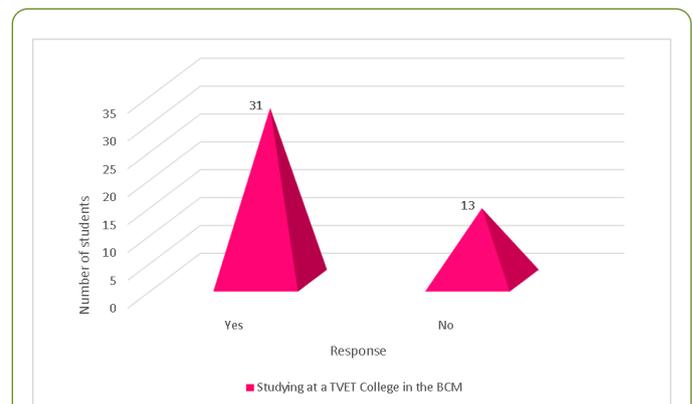


**Figure 2:** Knowledge of TVET Colleges.



**Figure 3:** Communication tools.

**Figure 3** illustrates that majority of students indicated that they know TVET's through career exhibitions, Word of mouth, radio and brochures.



**Figure 4:** Consideration of TVETs by students.

**Figure 4** illustrates whether or not matriculants would consider studying at a TVET College. A large number of 31 out of 44 (70%) respondents indicated yes, as they would consider studying at a TVET. Whilst 13 out of 44 (30 percent) responded no. Even though a small percentage indicated that they would never consider studying through a TVET, a positive amount of students indicated yes.

## Conclusion

- TVET Colleges should determine its target market: the type of students they need;
- Develop a focused marketing approach; and
- TVETs need to improve their social media image, as social media plays a vital role in the stirring of word of mouth.

## References

1. Unevoc U (2014) International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education in Seoul, South Korea. Proceeding of International conference on Vocational Education.
2. Cosser M, Badroodien A, Maja B (2003) Technical college responsiveness: Learner destinations and labour markets in South Africa. Cape Town : HSRC Press.
3. Nyerere J (1974) Education for Liberation : Development dialogue. Tanzania : Upssala, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation.
4. Sayed Y (2003) Educational Inclusion and Exclusion : Key issues and debates. Perspectives in Education 2: 1-12.
5. South Africa Department of Higher Education (2011) Higher Education Transformation. Pretoria: Government Printer.
6. Mzimela L (2002) Marketing in Higher Education-its multitude of missed opportunities.
7. Parasuraman A, Zeithaml VA, Berry LL (1985) A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. Journal of marketing 49: 41-50.
8. Koni A, Ibrahim K (2013) An assessment of the services quality of Palestine Higher Education. International Educational Studies 6: 3-48.
9. Green P (2014) Measuring Service Quality in Higher Education : A South African case study. International Education Research 10: 131.
10. Zulu NG (2017) The effectiveness of the language used in the marketing and advertising of selected eThekweni and Elangeni TVET colleges. Doctoral dissertation, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.
11. Mbambo SN (2013) Student expectations and perceptions about further education and training colleges with respect to college of choice in KwaZulu-Natal. Durban: Durban University of Technology.
12. Etzel E, Walker B, Michael C, Standon W (2001) Marketing. New York: McGraw Hill.
13. Khare A (2011) Customers' perception and attitude towards service quality in multinational banks in India. International Journal of Services and Operations Management 10: 199-215.
14. Van Heerden N, Wiese M, North E, Jordaan Y (2009) A marketing perspective on choice factors considered by South African first-year students in selecting a higher education institution. Southern African Business Review 13: 39-60.
15. Hall G, Kraak A (1999) Transforming Further Education and Training in South Africa: A Case Study of Technical Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal (1st ed). Pretoria: HSRC Publishers.
16. Brown R (2012) South Africa's Vocational Colleges Struggle to Do Their Job. Chronicle of Higher Education 10: 116-223.