

Chapter 11

Research–Driven Leadership and Management for Principals in South African TVET Colleges: ,Methodological Insights and Best Practices

Xolani Mpulu

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2961-9456>

Regenesys Business School, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This study examines research-driven leadership and management in South African TVET colleges, focusing on methodological insights and best practices. Challenges include governance inefficiencies, leadership gaps, and poor student outcomes. Findings reveal that evidence-based leadership enhances institutional effectiveness, governance, and student success. The study concludes that integrating qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods into leadership fosters adaptability, informed decision-making, and sustainable reforms. Recommendations include adopting data-driven leadership, enhancing professional development, and implementing participatory governance policies. Future research should explore leadership styles' long-term effects on student success, cross-regional comparisons, and digital leadership innovations in TVET education.

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INTRODUCTION

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges play a pivotal role in equipping South Africa's workforce with practical skills, directly contributing to economic growth and national development. However, despite their significance, these institutions face numerous challenges, including financial constraints, governance inefficiencies, poor industry partnerships, inadequate infrastructure, and high dropout rates. Effective leadership and management are crucial in addressing these issues, yet there is a gap in research-driven approaches that empower principals to apply evidence-based leadership strategies. Many TVET college leaders lack the academic skills necessary to leverage research methodologies to refine management practices, assess institutional performance, and implement leadership frameworks tailored to the sector's evolving demands.

This study explores *Research-Driven Leadership and Management for Principals in South African TVET Colleges: Methodological Insights and Best Practices*, focusing on leadership models and research methodologies that can enhance institutional effectiveness. By analyzing modern leadership styles such as transformational, adaptive, servant, and digital leadership this study highlights how different leadership approaches can be applied to solve governance and operational challenges. Additionally, it examines ethical and people-oriented leadership styles, which emphasize accountability, inclusivity, and employee engagement.

Furthermore, the study explores research methodologies such as qualitative and quantitative research, case studies, mixed methods, action research, and grounded theory to provide TVET principals with evidence-based strategies for improving leadership and management practices. These methodologies enable a deeper understanding of the institutional challenges, providing data-driven solutions for policy implementation, accreditation processes, and industry collaboration. By integrating leadership theory with research-driven decision-making, this study aims to bridge the gap between research and practice, offering insights into developing more resilient, innovative, and effective leadership in TVET institutions.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As highlighted in the introduction, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges play a vital role in South Africa's education system by providing industry-relevant skills that enhance employability and economic growth (Powell, 2019). These institutions are designed to bridge the gap between theoretical education and practical workforce demands, addressing skills shortages in key sectors such as engineering, manufacturing, and information technology (McGrath,

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