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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SELF-ESTEEM ON SUSTAINABLE LEARNING: A CASE OF ONE PUBLIC TVET COLLEGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the exploration of the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning of a public TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) college student in South Africa. I approached it from the premise that says building students' self-esteem for sustainable learning plays a vital role in students' academic achievements and their lives. This qualitative study employed Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research design. The population for this study comprised 120 students (18–21-year-olds); four lecturers; one SRC (Student Representative Council) member; one Student Development Practitioner (SDP); one Social Worker; one Educational Psychologist; and one Assistant Director for student support services (SSS) from one public TVET college in South Africa. Students in this study were voluntarily selected through advert. Other participants were purposively and conveniently selected. Data were generated through participant observation, focus group discussions, and motivational talk conducted by social worker. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used as data analysis. This study used Student Development Theory (SDT) by Chickering and Resseir, which focused on developing identity of students. The overall findings of this study revealed that students with low self-esteem do not achieve academically for sustainable learning. Based on this study, it is recommended that all co-researchers from this public TVET college should be aware of the consequences of the factors which negatively impact the self-esteem of students. There was a correlation between self-esteem and academic achievements of students for sustainable learning. Recommendations were discussed.

KEYWORDS: Self-esteem; Academic achievements; public TVET college; sustainable learning; South Africa

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Self-esteem has become a household word. At this public TVET college in South Africa, lecturers, SDPs and others have focused efforts on boosting students' self-esteem, on the assumption that high self-esteem on sustainable learning will cause many positive outcomes and benefits—an assumption that is critically explored in this study. Appraisal of the impact of self-esteem is complicated by several factors. Because many students with high self-esteem exaggerate their successes and good traits. In this study, we emphasised on exploring the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at

a public TVET college in South Africa. Self-esteem is a degree to which an individual appreciates himself or herself (D` Mello, Manteiro and Pinto, 2018), whilst Smith & Mackie (2007) defined self-esteem as the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it. Students with high self-esteem participate enthusiastically in the learning process and they are more confident, active and motivated towards their studies. Students with high self-esteem perform better in examination as compared to students with low self-esteem (Rahmani, 2011). Whilst academic success raises or maintains self-esteem, it is self-esteem, which influences student performance for sustainable learning. Self-esteem develops out of a person's experiences with success and failure. Amongst other influential factors that public TVET college students in South Africa relate with the lecturers and the Student Development Practitioner (SDP) are very important in developing the mental picture of one's self. Based on theories of interpersonal relationships, lecturers have basic need for relatedness with the students in their classrooms, which can play a significant role in students' self-esteem and expectations regarding sustainable learning, academic achievements and how to make meaningful life after college (Ewnetu & Fisseha, 2008). Hence, a students' self-esteem is the overall sense of support they feel from the important people around, particularly the lecturers and the SDPs also known as Student Support Officers (SSOs) as others call them (Tam & Fatimah, 2009). There is a gap between one's ideal self and what he/she perceives to be his or her real self. When the discrepancy is large, students see themselves as failing to live up to their goals; hence lowering self-esteem. Through the influence of lecturers, campus manager, assistant director (SSS), social worker, educational psychologist, and the SDP at a public TVET college, self-esteem should be developed as early as possible. A good relationship between public TVET college personnel and students has a positive impact on self-esteem, academic performance, and sustainable learning (Santrock, 2007). Because the relationships amongst these stakeholders are essential to one's social and emotional development; they have the potential influence on how a students succeed at a public TVET college. Many researches were conducted but not much were being done on the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa. There is therefore the lack of information and knowledge about the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa. Hence, this study aimed to explore the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Relationship between self-esteem, academic achievements and sustainable learning

There is a close relationship between self-esteem; academic achievements, sustainable learning and they all have a lasting impact to each other. High self-esteem plays a very crucial role not only in academic achievements for sustainable learning of a public TVET college student but also in developing students emotionally, socially, and academically (Pullmann & Allik, 2008). Self-esteem is a feeling that should guide the behaviour of students and motivate them for sustainable learning (Galbraith et al., 2011). In addition, self-esteem is an important student needs and the source for sustainable learning (Branden, 2001; Mruk, 2013 ;). It is a judgement of a student about his or her own value. Self-esteem is dependent on judgmental and emotional components, influenced by

experiences, and it develops in positive ways depending on the success of previous experiences (Ross, 2014). Self-esteem is necessary to gain personality, to be satisfied with life, to act with purpose, to have healthy and continuous communication with other people, to be harmonious with the environment, to be successful in the targeted works, and to plan for the future (Erşan, Doğan & Doğan, 2009). Students who consider themselves successful have positive feelings about themselves, and they also make positive judgements about themselves. Self-esteem is described as an interference of students made on the basis of observation of their abilities and behaviors (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & De Vires, 2004).

Kumar (2019) conducted a study on academic climate, academic stress, and self-esteem among Baccalaureate Nursing Students. The study aimed to find out the impact of academic climate on self-esteem and academic stress among nursing students. The results of the study revealed that self-esteem was reported well among nursing students. While Cherry et al., (1983) focused on the level and stability of self-esteem that affects the performance of students. The study found that low self-esteem affected students' academic performance.

On the other hand, D` Mello et al., (2018) conducted a study aimed to know the level of self-esteem of the students with low academic performance. They found that self-esteem and academic performance were interrelated factors. Ibili & Billingham (2019) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and loneliness in social networks among students in a guidance and psychological counselling teaching department. Their study found that there was a negative relationship between self-esteem and loneliness as experienced in social networks. Shahzad, Ahmed, Jaffari & Khilji (2012) explored the impact of various factors on student performance. They found that self-esteem had a significant negative relationship with student performance. While Atmaca & Ozen (2019) investigated the effect of the parents' success pressure, academic stress and fear of negative evaluation on high school students' self-esteem. Their study found that parental pressure for academic achievement on students and associated stress increase students' fear of being evaluated negatively at school, which in turn affects their self-esteem. Hernandez (2017) determined the relationship between self-esteem and freshmen students' adjustment to college in Higher Education Institutions, in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. Their study found that the respondents had high self-esteem and high level of adjustment to college. The two variables have a positive correlation. The study further recommended that there should be sequential institutional and classroom activities that encourage adjustment of new students and the development of their self-esteem. Uzman & Meya (2019) on the other hand determined whether and to what degree self-leadership strategies used by university students predict their self-esteem and life satisfaction. Their findings indicated that there were positive and significant correlations between the use of self-leadership strategies, self-esteem and life satisfaction. Of the strategies, behaviour-focused strategies were found to be the strongest predictor of university students' self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Ahmad et al., (2013) conducted a study that investigated government secondary school teachers' perceptions of the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievements of students. Results found that students with positive self-esteem had high academic performance and there was high relationship between self-esteem and academic achievements of students. Arshad et al., (2015) on the other hand assessed the self-esteem, academic performance, and sustainable learning among university students after arising of several behaviour and educational problems. Their study revealed that there was an important relationship between self-esteem, academic performance, and sustainable learning. Moreover, an important difference was found between male and female students on self-esteem and academic performance scores, which explained that female students had high scores on academic performance as compared to male students and male students had high scores on self-esteem as compared to female students. Rahmani (2011) studied relations between self-esteem, achievement goals and academic achievement among children from primary school. The results found that there was correlation between self-esteem, goal orientation and academic achievement and self-esteem and achievement goals had negative impact on academic achievement among children from primary schools.

Moghni & Riaz (1984) discussed student behavior toward study and academic achievement. The result showed that attitudes, study habits, and motives had a notable effect on self-esteem and academic achievements of students. Mayer & Baker (1987) discussed the behavior and achievement of students. They used panel data to reach the conclusion. Their study showed that students from lower grade misbehaved more as compare to students from senior grades. Furthermore, they found that self-esteem and academic achievement has a minor effect on the behaviour of students. Single parent family and mothers employment also had an impact on achievement and behavior of students. Rosenberg (1989) examined self-esteem in term of depression, delinquency and college performance. Result back the mutual effect relationship. Skaalvik & Hagtveta (1990) examined self-concept of ability and general self-esteem in Norwegian school children. The result supported somewhat relation between two variables. Cast & Burke (2002) conceptualised self-esteem as an outcome, motive, and buffer. But it is not over all theory of self-esteem. They also suggested that the student development theory focusing on identity provides the theoretical framework.

While Baumeister et al., (2003) critical reviewed assumption of high self-esteem causes the positive benefits. They said self-esteem has no effect on pupils' performance but it creates determination after failure. In congruence, Maheswari & Maheswari (2016:8) analysed the level of self-esteem among the college students studying at Bharathidasan University Constituent College, Perambalur and they used descriptive research design and purposive sampling technique to select 60 boy students. Their major findings of their study revealed that more than half of the respondents (52.5%) had low self-esteem, whereas 47.5 % of them have high self-esteem. Furthermore, EL-Daw & Hammoud (2014) analysed the effect of training a sample (N =116, ages:7-9) of regular and special needs students in building up self-esteem program on their academic and social skills in an integrated environment. Their findings revealed that the training had contributed in decreasing the average of Conner's

subscales for the participants with special needs as compared to the members of the control group who showed an increase in these elements. Moreover, findings showed that the integration of the students with special needs with regular students had helped in decreasing the behavior problems (as it shows through the decrease of their post averages on Conner's subscales and the increase in the grade average of self-esteem and scholar achievement as compared to the control group. Results revealed the public TVET college lecturers' self-evaluation can have a positive impact on the students' self-esteem.

On the other hand, D'Souza (2003) explained the effect of shyness on anxiety and academic achievement. Result showed that academic performance is independent of shy behavior. Yen et al., (2005) concluded that student-lecturer interaction can enhance self-regulated learning strategy. Student performance in exam actually linked with student attitude toward study and mother education, concluded by Hijzai & Naqvi (2006), after conducting survey from public TVET colleges. Whereas Pelish (2006) argued that a reduction in self-esteem can be reversed by indulging one in the enhancement programme. While Ansari & Aftab (2007) concluded that teaching styles and parenting styles are important for sustainable learning and academic achievements of students. In conclusion, this study found that there is a correlation between self-esteem and sustainable learning (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Locket & Harrell, 2003).

2.2 What is Sustainable learning?

Sustainable learning is perceived as learning that is retained after initial exposure to it and may involve a process of learning to learn (Tractenberg et al., 2016). Sustainable learning is also more than retained knowledge and skills. It involves responsive, purposeful, proactive, and ongoing learning; the student builds and rebuilds his or her skills and knowledge base as circumstances change. In this sense, it is similar to lifelong learning (Jackson 2011; Livingstone 1999), especially in terms of learning to learn (Stringher, 2014). It also involves unlearning (Pedler and Hsu 2014), and focuses on critical reflective action (Hays and Reinders 2018) and "environmental scanning" (Gardiner and Rieckmann, 2015). Compared to lifelong learning, sustainable learning is notable by intentional learning (Hays, 2017) amid an ongoing flow of circumstances and emerging possibilities. Sustainable education is formal and informal education and professional development that continually renews itself, incorporating principles and aspirations of sustainability in design and delivery, and educating in ways that promote sustainable learning. It is less structured and fixed than conventional education, and operates in an organic and responsive manner. This study aimed at exploring the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a Public TVET college in South Africa. Built on principles of sustainability, this way of thinking and the ensuing pedagogy lean into the future, inclining towards what is arising and what might be required rather than resting secure in the understandings and skills of the past. This means seeking to learn in the moment and to create learning moments, and rapidly adapting and disseminating the learning in recurring and quickening cycles. In sustainable learning, the skills and anticipatory learning are esteemed, whilst past knowledge and skills and knowledge are viewed as and receptive and flexible to change (Gardiner and Rieckmann 2015; Tschakert and Dietrich 2010; Wollenberg et al., 2000). It recognises that, in many respects, one has to let go of the past to move forward.

Developing this mindset is one half of the SLE equation. The other half involves equipping individuals and teams with the skills and disposition to aggressively deconstruct and reconstruct ways of being, understanding and doing so as to enable survival and the emergence of a sustainable future.

2.3 The Importance of Self-Esteem at a public TVET college

At public TVET college context, self-esteem should be a central concept that is related to sustainable learning of students. Self-esteem motivates students to be academically successful (Ferkany, 2008; Lawrence, 2006; Van Laar, 2000), and facilitating students' self-esteem might be a part that supports the public TVET colleges' academic goals, without making it as an educational priority (Ferkany, 2008). On the other hand, self-esteem is a construct that mediates between ability and achievement; self-esteem influences sustainable learning and students' achievements also influence subsequent levels of self-esteem (Humphrey, 2004; Mruk, 2006). Therefore, students with low self-esteem are less successful at a public TVET college. With regard to social functioning, students with low self-esteem are unlikely to be accepted by their peers (Donders & Verschueren, 2004). Furthermore, many studies have shown that low self-esteem is related to student psychopathology, including depression and anxiety. In other words, the self-esteem of students is an important attribute to be concerned related to sustainable learning. Hence, this study explored the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa. Students with positive self-esteem are motivated to strive for sustainable learning, and in turn, sustainable learning would to boost their self-esteem. Students with inadequate self-esteem level are likely to have social or disciplinary problems as bad as delinquent behavior, while students with adequate self-esteem level are likely to behave appropriately, as well as having better self-evaluation and expectancy. In short, it can be argued that self-esteem is vulnerable to social environment, which in Public TVET college context is represented by both lecturers and SDPs' expectancy.

2.4 Causes of low self-esteem on sustainable learning

Students' self-esteem develops from their experiences and relations from birth. Experiences of students that are negative and relationships that are troubled lower the self-esteem while good experiences, together with strong bonds with lecturers and SDPs raise self-esteem. Hence, the foundation of self-esteem of students at this public TVET college in South Africa is dependent on lecturers and SDPs. Lecturers and SDPs are the biggest influence on students' self-esteem. Students who are consistently criticised, yelled at, berated, yelled at by lecturers and SDPs quickly learn they are worthless. If students are continually teased, ridiculed, and ignored at a public TVET college or if they are expected to be perfect all the time in order to be accepted, they will eventually develop a poor self-image (Obidigbo, 2006). If students fail constantly at a public TVET college, they tend to experience identity issues, which negatively impact their self-esteem on sustainable learning. Hence, there is single person who can determines students' level of self-esteem. Self-esteem develops over time and can change with time and events. Therefore, the feelings that we are valued and understood, and that our worries can be soothed, gives us an internal picture of our worth and the feeling that the world is a safe enough place to live and work. It is noteworthy to understand that early experiences teach students at this

Public TVET college to nurture themselves and develop a resilience in order to deal with blows of lives and protect themselves from encountering too many dangers. Some students may be less resilient to recover from setbacks and may need external source of strength and assistance from lecturers and SDPs. Counselling of students at this Public TVET college provides this opportunity by establishing a secure base from which to explore and expand (Obidigbo 2006; Onyekuru, 2009). How lecturers and SDPs deal with the situation may develop students' high self-esteem. Low self-esteem can often occur because of the behaviour and neglect of lecturers and SDPs. Hence, this study aimed at exploring the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a Public TVET college in South Africa.

2.5 Outcomes of poor self-esteem on sustainable learning

There are various outcomes of poor self-esteem on sustainable learning. Poor self-esteem can result in a cascade of diminishing self-appreciation, creating self-defeating attitudes, psychiatric vulnerability, social problems or risk behaviours. This study aimed to explore the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a TVET college in South Africa. In several studies, there is a lack of clarity regarding the impact of self-esteem on sustainable (Flay and Ordway, 2001). This is an important observation, as there is reason to believe that self-esteem should be examined not only as a cause, but also as a consequence of problem behaviour. For example, on the one hand, students could have a negative view about themselves and that might lead to feeling of depression. On the other hand, depression could lead to bad feeling, which might lower the students' self-esteem. Although the directionality can work both ways, this study concentrates on exploring the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa.

2.6 The role of lecturers in improving students' self-esteem on sustainable learning

H1 = There is a positive relationship between self-esteem and sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa

H2 = Support of students has an impact on students' self-esteem for sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa

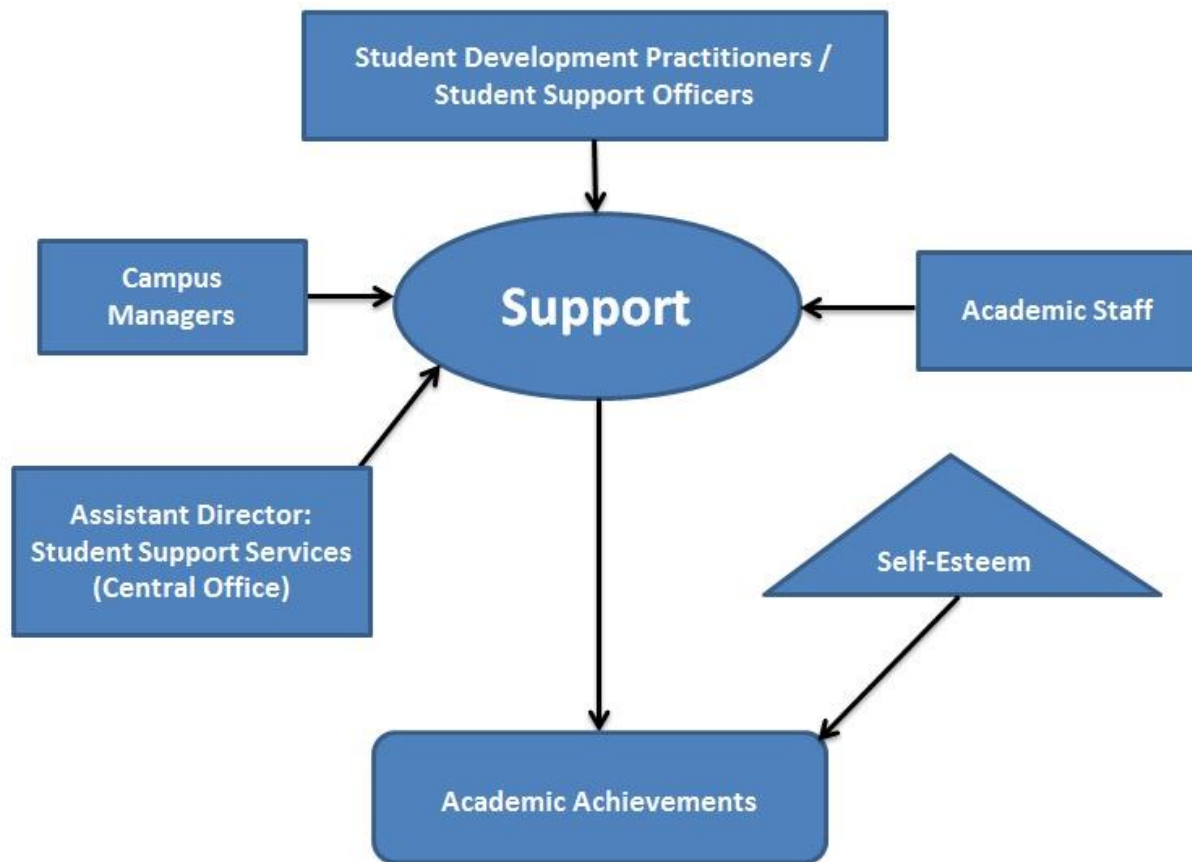


Figure 1. Model of student support at a public TVET college in South Africa

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a PAR approach which used participant observation, focus group discussions, and motivational talks to generate data from co-researchers. PAR was done with four lecturers (two from Report 191 programmes and two from NC(V) programmes), one assistant director (SSS), one Student Development Practitioner, one social worker, one educational psychologist, one Student Representative Council (SRC) member, and 120 students (60 from Report 191 programmes and 60 from NC(V) programmes). Four meetings were conducted over a period of two months. These meetings were conducted in English. All the meetings were audio-taped.

McDonald (2012) defined PAR as a philosophical approach to research that recognises the need for the persons being studied to participate in the design and conduct of all phases of any research in which they are involved, whilst Elmusharaf (2018) defined PAR as a manner of putting research abilities in the hands of the disadvantaged and marginalised people so that they can change their lives for themselves. In congruence, Evans et al., (2014) indicated that PAR differs from other research methods in that it seeks to bring positive change, not simply investigate or describe an issue. Hence,

the study sought to explore the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa.

3.1 Research design

The study used an approach that is qualitative because it is a plan of enquiry based on philosophy and psychology (Levitt et al., 2017). The qualitative research approach assisted us to describe the experiences and real practices of co-researchers. The study further afforded us to understand the setting where the research was conducted and also allowed for rich narrative descriptions. Through qualitative research, we managed to discover the experience of co-researchers and recognised the involvement of our own's view of the world and the nature of the relationship between ourselves and co-researchers (Mohajan, 2018). Thus, we sought to explore the impact of self-esteem to sustainable learning at a public TVET college through what had happened and through understanding the realities of co-researchers by offering meaningful explanations for co-researchers.

3.2 Data generation

Data were generated through meetings, participant observation, focus group discussions, and motivational talk. The plan for the meetings, participant observation, focus group discussions, and motivational talks was developed by co-researchers and also informed by the aim of the study. Tape recordings were used for the proceedings and notes were stored safely. Co-researchers met to introduce themselves and also be briefed on the background of the research study. A plan on the procedures to be followed during the research study and allocation of responsibilities of co-researchers were developed by co-researchers themselves.

3.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis iterates and denotes that data collection, processing, and reporting are interweaved (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this research study, CDA was used as method to analyse data. Fairclough (2015) asserted that CDA is suitable when the purpose of it is to understand meaning and to make suggestion. CDA was used in this research study because it changed the unacceptable situation with an assistance of co-researchers involved. Discussion meetings were used by co-researchers in this study. Interpreting generated data and determining the relationship between deliberations of co-researchers and text transcribed were done by me as a researcher. All co-researchers gave meaning which was made from data that were generated. Finally, the relationship between interactions of co-researchers was described. Tape-recorded information was therefore transcribed verbatim.

3.4 Sampling

This study was conducted at one public TVET college in South Africa. At this college, there was a Student Support Services (SSS) structure that included one SDP, one Educational Psychologist, one Social Worker, five co-opted lecturers working with SSS, and eight Student Representative Council (SRC) members. The SDP, Social Worker, Educational Psychologist, one hundred and twenty

students, four lecturers (two teaching NCV programmes and two teaching Report 191), one SRC member and one Assistant Director (SSS) from Central Office were identified as the key co-researchers for this study. Through purposive sampling, we managed to select the key co-researchers with good knowledge of the subject to be involved in the study. We used purposive sampling on one SDP, one Educational Psychologist, one Social Worker, one SRC nominee, and one Assistant Director (SSS). As a former lecturer and chairperson of SSS at this college, this advantaged me as I was aware of the key co-researchers who were involved in exploring the impact of self-esteem on academic achievements of students for sustainable learning. I continuously selected the co-researchers until the projected sample was attained. Convenience sampling on one hundred and twenty students (sixty doing NCV programmes and sixty doing Report 191 programmes), and four lecturers (two teaching NCV students and two teaching Report 191 students), was ideal for this study as the co-researchers were easily accessible since they were all from the research site. I approached all of them as co-researchers and found out their readiness to take part in the study.

4. PURPOSE

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this study, the presentation focused on the findings of PAR. The data that were generated indicated clearly the necessity to explore the impact of self-esteem on academic achievements of students for sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa. We found the following results in this study;

- There were no extra-mural activities at a public TVET college for building students` self-esteem.
- Educational authorities and policy makers at a public TVET college did not provide adequate resources such as computers and physical infrastructure for sustainable learning, development of college systems, and building students` self-esteem.
- Students lacked self-confidence for self-esteem.

5.1 Extra-mural activities to build self-esteem

The study found that the successes of the students in different fields of public TVET college such as participating in different sporting codes were not celebrated by college personnel. In concurrence, Jackson (2017) stated that studies have shown that marks of students who participate in co-curricular activities improve. This can be attributed to skills they learn such as better time management to accommodate their hobbies and class activities, better organisational skills and a boost in their self-esteem. Skills learnt in clubs such as debate can be applied in the classroom too, as the students learn how to express themselves better. Numerous studies have been conducted concerning the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance. Participation in extracurricular activities

in general, is related with an improved grade point average, high self-esteem, higher educational aspirations, increased college attendance, and reduced absenteeism (Broh, 2002). In congruence, Marsh & Kleitman (2002) indicated that many extracurricular activities have proven to be beneficial in building and strengthening academic achievement and self-esteem, even if the activities are not obviously related to academic subjects. They furthermore stated that a number of studies revealed that students who participated in extracurricular activities excelled academically than students who did not participate and their self-esteem is improved and developed.

5.2 Availability of resources for sustainable learning, development of college systems, and building students` self-esteem

Findings revealed that there were no adequate resources at this public TVET college for sustainable learning and development of college systems. This had a negative impact on self-esteem on academic achievements of students. Ajayi & Ayodele (2001) emphasised the importance of availability of academic resources to achieving effectiveness in educational delivery and supervision at colleges. In support, Yara & Otieno (2010) pointed out that students should be motivated through various ways which may include providing the required academic resources and physical facilities such as computers, lab etc. The provision of resources that are academic and physical facilities can improve students` self-esteem and their academic achievements. In addition, they stated that the government should support public TVET colleges by providing adequate academic resources for sustainable learning and that will improve students` self-esteem and academic success. Academic resources are essential for both sustainable teaching and learning and they develop students` self-esteem and improve their academic achievements. Adequate academic resources make learning and teaching more interesting, practical, realistic and appealing. They also enable both the lecturers and students to actively and effectively participate in the development of a college. They give room for acquisition of skills and development of self- esteem.

5.3 Building self-confidence for self-esteem

The study found that students at a public TVET college lacked self-confidence which negatively affected their self-esteem. In support, Ferkany (2008) argued that self-esteem is an important element of the confidence and motivation students need in order to engage in and achieve educational pursuits. Maruyama et al., (2008) also stated that students who generally feel confident perform well academically possess high self-esteem while students who with less confidence perform poorly academically and possess low self-esteem. High level of self-esteem develops high self-esteem (Ahmad et al., 2013). Similarly, Grantham & Ford (2003) also explained that high self-esteem students set higher goals in life and strive to achieve them with determination, commitment and steadfastness. Such students do not lose self-confidence even when they fail in life. In conclusion, Ahmad et al., (2013) emphasised that low self-esteem students usually lose hope, confidence, and feel rejected.

6. DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Implications for future research

As a researcher for this study, I recommend that all other public TVET colleges in all nine provinces in South Africa should also conduct the similar research study. This research study should be conducted in order to validate if the findings of this study are also applicable to other public TVET colleges in South Africa.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS

The study recommended that a public TVET college should use their student development practitioners or educational psychologists to conduct motivational talks in assisting students with strategies and skills for developing self-esteem. Motivational talk on developing self-esteem was conducted by the SDP at a public TVET college in South Africa. This motivational talk assisted students with strategies and skills for developing their self-esteem for academic achievements and sustainable learning. It was also recommended by the study that a public TVET college should also celebrate the successes of the students in different fields such as sports gala, festival, annual day celebrations, mothers` days, fathers` day, lecturers` day and so on. On mothers` day and heritage day, a public TVET college hosted an event to celebrate it and the event was organised by the SDP. This step contributed in improving and building students` self-esteem because the students felt proud to be associated with a quality public TVET college where opportunities are provided for their development. On the basis of this study it was recommended for the educational authorities and policy makers of public TVET colleges to provide resources such as computers and physical infrastructure for the development of college systems. A college bought new computers for students and built a hall for examination purposes. This step also contributed in building students` self-esteem for sustainable learning.

8. Recommendations of the study

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa. This study recommended that lecturers and the SDPs should make efforts to enhance and sustain the level of self-esteem of their students. This could be possible when lecturers and the SDP empower students in the lecturing process. This study further recommended that Assistant Directors (SSS) and Campus Managers should encourage their staff. The college personnel should also celebrate the successes of the students in different fields of campus such as sports gala, festival, annual day celebrations, mothers` days, fathers` day, lecturers` day and so on. These steps will surely improve the self-esteem of the students because the students will feel proud to be associated with a quality institution where ample opportunities are provided for their development. This feeling will further boost up the confidence of the community from where the students come and parents will own the college. Building of confidence is the hallmark of positive personality development of the students which is one of the aims of education. On the basis of this study, it was recommended for the educational authorities and policy makers of a college to provide resources such as computers and physical infrastructure for the development of college systems. Ill-treatment of students by lecturers should be avoided since it shatters the confidence of the students and students

feel vulnerable in an atmosphere of fear. The study also strongly recommended that there should be proper provisions for continued professional development of the lecturers, student development practitioner as well as campus managers to improve the teaching and learning environment. These efforts will augment the academic and physical infra-structure of a college. Below are some of the comments and recommendations on building students` self-esteem for sustainable learning at a public TVET college in South Africa:

NC(V) student 2:

“It is true that as students, we lack self-esteem. Maybe our college can come on board and assist us with skills to develop our self-esteem. I personally think that such skills can even help us to do well emotionally, socially, and academically. In addition, I also think that the rate of drop outs can be decreased by these skills.”

NC(V) student 1:

“...Yah I concur with student 1 that we really need to be assisted especially when it comes to being provided with skills to develop self-esteem. Maybe that can benefit us all, not just students. I heard our Mathematical literacy lecturer complaining about pass rate that has dropped due to students lacking self-esteem. Who knows, maybe these skills will help us to feel emotionally secure and confident.”

Report 191 lecturer 1:

“I like the fact that students themselves see the need to be equipped with skills to develop their self-esteem. However, I think having motivation talks on developing self-esteem on a continuous basis can have a positive impact on students` academic achievements.”

NC(V) lecturer 2:

“Developing self-esteem is not only important for students, but for all of us. As lecturers, I think they will assist us to understand students better and be able to cater for their academic, social and emotional needs.”

NC(V) student 4:

“Lecturers and Student Development Practitioners should make efforts to enhance and to sustain our level of self-esteem. I think this can be possible when lecturers and Student Development Practitioner empower us in the lecturing process.”

Report 191 students 3:

“I concur with NC(V) student 4. On top of that I think Assistant Director (SSS) and Campus Managers should encourage their staff, especially lecturers and Student Development Practitioners. College personnel should also celebrate the successes of the students in different sporting codes. Being

allowed to take part in different sporting codes will surely improve our self-esteem, because we will feel proud to be associated with a quality college where ample opportunities are provided for our development.”

Report 191 lecturer 2:

“These students are correct. To add, I think educational authorities and policy makers of a college to provide resources such as computers, and physical infrastructure for the development of college systems. Ill-treatment of students by us should be avoided since it shatters the confidence of the students and students feel vulnerable in an atmosphere of fear.”

NC(V) lecturer 2:

“...there should be proper provisions for continued professional development of the lecturers, student development practitioner as well as campus managers in order to improve the teaching and learning environment. I personally think that these efforts will augment the academic and physical infrastructure of a college for academic achievements.”

9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding ethical considerations, I respect the dignity, rights, and the confidentiality of co-researchers in this study. Ethical issues were considered when this study was conducted and generated data were not detrimental to co-researchers. I sought ethical clearance certificate to conduct this study from University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical research committee and was granted to make sure that issues of ethics were met. Permission to conduct this study before data generation was sought from the Principal of a public TVET college and granted. All participants received letters of concern to sign which clarified the research purpose. I also made sure that permission to conduct the study was granted before conducting meetings, participant observation, motivational talk, and focus group discussions. The anonymity of the research site and all co-researchers were protected. Details of co-researchers were not going to be known to ensure confidentiality. Feedback pertaining results of the research was communicated to the co-researchers when PAR was completed. Thus, I accepted accountability for maintaining confidentiality throughout the research process.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH

In order to understand the impact of self-esteem on academic achievements of students for sustainable learning at a public TVET college, researchers should carry out studies on larger sample size and in different contexts so that the impact of self-esteem on academic achievements of students for sustainable learning could be studied on a broader level. In addition, the gender aspects of self-esteem can also be explored by obtaining larger sample size for broader understanding of the concept of self-esteem and its impacts on academic achievements of students for sustainable learning.

11. LIMITATIONS

This study had only one major limitation. It concerned the sample and its small size and composition of only one hundred and twenty students (sixty from NCV programmes and sixty from Report 191

programmes); one SDP; one SRC member; one educational psychologist; one assistant director (SSS); and four lecturers (two from NCV programmes and two from Report 191 programmes) from one public TVET College. For this reason, due care should be taken in generalising the research findings. Despite this limitation, this study supported a positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievements of college students.

12. CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is necessary for soul survival and it also helps with self-respect to human existence. With regard to developing and building self-esteem, the lecturers, the SDPs, the social workers, the assistant directors (SSS), and the educational psychologists who are employed at a public TVET college should equip students with skills to develop their self-esteem for academic achievements and sustainable learning. It was therefore recommended by the study that a public TVET college should use their student development practitioners or educational psychologists to conduct motivational talks in assisting students with strategies and skills for developing and building self-esteem for academic achievements and sustainable learning. Developing self-esteem for students assisted lecturers and student development practitioner to understand students better and to be able to cater for their academic, emotional and social needs. The study recommended that for students to feel emotionally secure and confident, a public TVET college should prepare them with skills to deal with their emotions. Preparing students with skills to deal with their emotions would be of assistance in feeling emotionally secure and confident, and would prepare them with skills of taking full responsibility for their actions.

Building self-esteem for public TVET college students should be a college priority. Public TVET college and staff members need to be aware of the consequences of the impact of self-esteem on college students and direct their attention more to enhancing and building students` self-esteem for academic achievements and sustainable learning. We also recommended that academic staff, campus managers, Student Development Practitioners/Student Support Officers use either student support model or student development theory in order to build students` self-esteem for academic achievements and sustainable learning. Seeking counselling from Student Development Practitioners and educational psychologists should be a social normative at a public TVET college. Because most of public TVET college students have access to Student Development Practitioners and their services, campaigns should be implemented to help students overcome low self-esteem and to feel more comfortable using them and their services. Campaigns on social marketing can assist students at a public TVET college to dismiss the myth that low self-esteem is a sign of failure and to teach them that low self-esteem can be dealt with and be developed.

This study further recommended that quarterly newsletters located in bathrooms at a public TVET college should be a form of social marketing with the purpose of informing students at a college of the negative impact of low self-esteem and services of SDPs on dealing with students` self-esteem. A public TVET college should also recognise the importance of high self-esteem and specifically address

how it impacts academic achievements of students for sustainable learning. In conclusion, dealing with the impact of self-esteem on students, a public TVET college should involve a multidimensional and collaborative approach by the whole college community such as the campus managers, the academic staff, the SRC members, the SDPs, and the educational psychologists to deal with the impact of low self-esteem on sustainable learning at a public TVET college.

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14. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declared that there were no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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