

Building Research Capacity in TVET Colleges

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“If it is to be; it is up to me”. These ten most powerful two letter words by Colin Hines are indicative of a commitment one makes to achieve their goals. A greater percentage of successful outcomes are preceded by some measure of research. TVET Colleges are uniquely placed to deal with challenges and/ or problems of their clients (Internal and External clients) in a coherent manner. DHET has invested huge sums of money in ensuring that TVET Colleges are viable and delivering quality services.

However, the viability of TVET Colleges depends to a greater extent on their ability to establish themselves as reputable institutions, save for the viable ones. Hence, TVET Colleges have a responsibility to come up with some form of Research Units/ Hubs geared towards empowering them to address some of these challenges and/or problems without being dependent on outside help. TVET Colleges cannot afford to be spectators in a game in which they should be participants. The investment made in TVET College must yield good returns, and this should not happen by default.

After all, TVET Colleges were established for a divine purpose, mainly to empower the disempowered and enable them to participate in the mainstream economy. Re-search is searching again and again, looking at information that others have looked at before, trying to see something that they have not seen. The purpose: to come up with answers to enable you to do things better. If things are not done from an informed position, the risk is being continuously trapped in a vicious circle fraught with unintended consequences. Commitment to research on the part of TVET Colleges will empower these institutions to see how similar institutions here and abroad have managed to overcome the same kind of challenges and/or problems currently confronting TVET Colleges in South Africa.

TVET Colleges in South Africa do not exist in isolation, and the challenges and/or problems they face are not unique in the absolute sense. For this reason, a concerted effort to find working solutions could be found through undertaking research. TVET Colleges Know exactly what their challenges and/or problems are. If commissioned properly, research would offer workable recommendations best suited to the institution's circumstances.

Research contributes immensely to dealing with ‘wicked problems’; the type of problems that are chronic to the extent of defying people's best intentions to solve. In most instances, diverse stakeholders find it difficult to align their efforts despite shared intentions. The outcomes of the research will help eliminate opinionated approach of dealing with challenges and/or problems in a fair manner. In the words of Donald Rumsfeld “there are things we know we know, and these are the known knowns; and there are things we know we don't know, these are the known unknowns; and there are things we don't know we don't know, these are the unknown knowns”.