

# The Usefulness of TVET College's Websites as an Information Centre to Potential Students

Tankiso Moloi and Mpho Dichaba

**Abstract**—At the beginning of academic year, tertiary institutions in South Africa faces long lines, particularly from student who would just have completed their high school certificate seeking to be admitted for furthering their studies. To address this, universities and universities of technology introduced online information portals which contains rich information around the admission process. TVET Colleges have recently been revamped and are still fairly behind. To determine how far behind they are, this paper examined the usefulness of TVET College's website as an information centre to potential students through the formulation of the perceived useful information to potential students checklist questionnaire which was used as the extraction tool.

Obtained results indicate that when aggregated, majority of the TVET Colleges disclosed the useful information in their websites. This would mean that potential TVET Colleges' students would easily access useful information on the TVET Colleges' websites to make an informed decision. However, when disaggregated, it was observed that some TVET Colleges did not disclose the pre-determined information in their website. The study recommends that TVET Colleges enhance the information disclosed in their websites to take into account the results of this study. It would also be beneficial for TVET Colleges to survey potential students, particularly those that are at a high school level to determine the nature of information that they would potentially require when making a decision on their application.

**Index Terms**—TVET colleges, websites, potential students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of academic year, tertiary institutions in South Africa faces long lines, particularly from student who would have just completed their high school certificate seeking to be admitted for furthering their studies. This problem has plagued South Africa's universities and universities of technology for a long time. In view of this, the South African Government has begun a process of promoting Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutions (TVET) as a way to expand the technical skills mix in the country. In this regard, the South African government has invested resources in public TVET Colleges to ensure that they deliver quality higher education and become institutions of choice for learners, parents and employers (RSA 2015), for instance; these institutions are subsidized by the state with approximately R6 billion per year (DHET 2015) and they have more than 650 000

students across the country. To demonstrate its commitment to this layer of education, as recent as in 2014, the South African government made an amendment in the Further Education Act with the Further Education and Training Act of 2013 (RSA 2013) effectively converting the Further Education and Training Colleges to Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutions.

To address the challenge around long lines, universities and universities of technology introduced online information portals which contains rich information around the admission process. TVET Colleges have recently been revamped and are still fairly behind. As they receive more publicity from government, the demand is expected to increase. The long lines that previously plagued universities and universities of technology will soon be experienced by these Colleges. In this study, TVET Colleges' websites were explored in-order to determine the nature of information contained therein i.e. whether the information contained on the website could potentially be useful to a potential student who has to make a decision regarding admission process in the preferred destination.

Generally, institutional websites are used as an information centre for those interested in that particular institutions. With advances in technology and internet usage in South Africa, it is expected that potential students considering to engage with a certain TVET College will as a first port of contact engage with that particular TVET College website. It is on this background that the main aim of this study was to gauge the usefulness of publicly funded TVET College's websites as an information centre to potential students. The usefulness disclosure measurement instrument was developed in-order to utilise it for the extraction of the pre-determined information in the TVET Colleges websites.

The main limitation of this study was that it gauged the usefulness of information in the publicly funded TVET College's websites. Future studies could consider privately owned and operated TVET College's websites in South Africa. The remainder of this paper is structured in the following manner: Overview of TVET Colleges in South Africa. The method followed in extracting the pre-determined information in the TVET College's websites is discussed and then a section presenting the research results and an analysis as well as interpretation of the findings is presented.

## II. OVERVIEW OF TVET COLLEGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's higher education system consist of three layers namely; the basic education, technical vocational education and training as well as higher education. These

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categories are described by South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training as follows:

- 1) Basic Education – this is essentially the first twelve years of school education in South Africa;
- 2) Technical Vocational Education and Training – this layer of education comprises of vocational and occupational education and training. Typically, this education is offered at colleges and sometimes as the last three years of basic school education); and
- 3) Higher Education – this is the ultimate layer of education offered by Universities and Universities of Technology (DHET 2016).

According to DHET (2016), the TVET education is also referred to as ‘post-school, which indicated that it is the education and training that takes place after leaving school’. Further, the DHET (2016), indicate that the only restriction that applies in the TVET Colleges is that a person wishing to enrol with any of the TVET level should be 16 years or older. It is on this regard that the DHET (2016) believes that the targeted student group are those ‘responsible senior adolescents and adults’ which the DHET (2016) describe as ‘serious about following an education and training programme with a view to acquiring marketable skills’.

private colleges.

In terms of funding, private TVET Colleges are for profit making and they self-fund their operations. With regards to the public TVET Colleges, they are state subsidized. According to DHET (2016), public TVET Colleges are subsidised by the state with approximately R8 billion per year.

This paper focuses on the publicly funded TVET Colleges. As of 2016, there were 50 public funded TVET Colleges. Majority of the publicly funded TVET Colleges is concentrated in five provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal with nine (9) TVET Colleges, the Eastern Cape and Gauteng respectively with eight (8) TVET Colleges each, Limpopo with seven (7) TVET Colleges and the Western Cape with six (6) TVET Colleges. TVET Colleges in these provinces represent 76% of the total TVET Colleges in South Africa.

The other four (4) provinces contain the least number of TVET Colleges with the aggregate contribution of 26%. In this regard, the Northern Cape had the least number of TVET Colleges with two (2) TVET Colleges followed by both the North West and Mpumalanga with three (3) TVET Colleges respectively. This was followed by the Free State with four (4) TVET Colleges. Table I below provides a summary of South Africa’s publicly funded TVET Colleges.

TABLE I: PUBLICLY FUNDED TVET COLLEGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Province: EC		
Code		Code
BCC	Buffalo City TVET College	Eastcape Midlands TVET College
INC	Ingwe TVET College	Ikhala TVET College
KHC	King Hintsa TVET College	King Sabata Dalindyebo TVET College
LOC	Lovedale TVET College	Port Elizabeth TVET College
Province: FS		
Code		Code
FVC	Flavius Mareka TVET College	Goldfields TVET College
MTC	Maluti TVET College	Motheo TVET College
Province: GP		
Code		Code
CJC	Central Johannesburg TVET College	Ekurhuleni East TVET College
EWC	Ekurhuleni West TVET College	Sedibeng TVET College
SWC	South West TVET College	Tshwane North TVET College
TSC	Tshwane South TVET College	Western TVET College
Province: KZN		
Code		Code
COC	Coastal TVET College	Elangeni TVET College
ESC	Esayidi TVET College	Majuba TVET College
MTC	Mnambithi TVET College	Mthashana TVET College
THC	Thekwini TVET College	Umfolozo TVET College
UMT	Umgungundlovu TVET College	
Province: LP		
Code		Code
CAC	Capricorn TVET College	Lephalale TVET College
LEC	Letaba TVET College	Mopani South East TVET College
SET	Sekhukhune TVET College	Waterberg TVET College
VTC	Vhembe TVET College	
Province: MP		
Code		Code
EHC	Ehlanzeni TVET College	Gert Sibande TVET College
NKC	Nkangala TVET College	
Province: NW		
Code		Code
OTC	Orbit TVET College	Taletso TVET College
VTC	Vuselela TVET College	
Province: NC		
Code		Code
NOC	Northern Cape Rural TVET College	Northern Cape Urban TVET College
Province: WC		
Code		Code
SCT	South Cape TVET College	West Coast TVET College
FBT	False Bay TVET College	Northlink TVET College
BTC	Boland TVET College	College of Cape Town for TVET

Source: Authors own illustration

There are two types of TVET Colleges in South Africa. The private TVET Colleges and the public TVET Colleges. The difference between the two is that the public TVET Colleges are established and operated under the authority of the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006, whilst the private TVET Colleges are operated under the prescriptions of Chapter 6 of the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006 (DHET 2016). According to Chapter 6 of the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006, the Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training (or his designate) is the Registrar of

### III. METHODOLOGY

In-order to gauge the usefulness of TVET College’s website as an information centre for potential student’s eleven (11) questions were formulated. The formulated questions were used to develop the usefulness disclosure measurement index (UDMI). This usefulness disclosure measurement index (UDMI) was used to extract the pre-determined information on the TVET College’s websites.

The utilisation of the disclosure measurement index is not new in literature. Studies reveal that Cerf (1961) was the first researcher to use the disclosure measurement index (cited in Moloi 2016). Several other authors have used the disclosure measurement index (Cooke and Wallace 1990, Cooke 1991, Marston and Shrivs 1991 & 1996, Jones and Shoemaker 1994, Healy and Palepu 2001, Beattie, McInnes and Fearnley 2004, Ali *et al.* 2004, Mangena 2004, Huang 2006, Cheung *et al.* 2010, Hassan 2012 and Moloi 2016).

One of the advantages of the disclosure measurement index is that it a flexible method in a sense that it permits for the wide variety of approaches. The researchers that have employed this method are in a consensus that it is a flexible method (Cooke and Wallace 1990, Cooke 1991, Marston and Shrivs 1991 & 1996, Jones and Shoemaker 1994, Healy and Palepu 2001, Beattie, McInnes and Fearnley 2004, Ali *et al.* 2004, Mangena 2004 and Moloi 2016).

Table II below demonstrate the developed usefulness disclosure measurement index was subsequently used for the purpose of extracting the pre-determined information on the publicly funded TVET College’s websites.

TABLE II: DEVELOPED USEFULNESS DISCLOSURE MEASUREMENT INDEX

Pre-determined statements	EC			
	Yes [Y]		No [N]	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Incorporation of statements as per the pre-determined category</b>				
Does the TVET College have the website				
Does the website contain the information that permit students to apply online				
Does the website contain information relating to the student accommodation				
Does the website contain the information relating to the student support				
Does the website contain the information relating to the study fees				
Does the website contain the information relating to the bursaries and loans				
Does the website contain the information relating to the course brochure				
Are the courses contained in the brochure/website detailed enough to make the students make informed decision				
Does the website contain information relating on career guidance and learnership				
Does the website contain information relating to the various campuses of the respective college				
Does the website contain information on academic structure				

Source: Authors own illustration

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The results demonstrated below presents the aggregated research findings obtained based on the analysis performed on the websites of publicly funded South African TVET Colleges.

Table III shows the consolidated results of the information extracted from the TVET Colleges websites as per the developed usefulness disclosure measurement index. In general, it appears that majority of the TVET Colleges disclose the useful information in their websites. Detailed provincial analysis is provided in the figures below:

TABLE III: CONSOLIDATED RESULTS (SOUTH AFRICA)

Pre-determined statements	EC		FS		GP		KZN		LP		MP		NC		NW		WC		RSA	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Does the TVET College have the website	8	0	4	0	8	0	8	1	7	0	3	0	2	0	3	0	6	0	49	1
Does the website contain the information that permit students to apply online	0	8	0	4	3	5	0	9	0	7	1	2	1	1	0	3	1	5	6	44
Does the website contain information relating to the student accommodation	3	5	2	2	2	6	1	8	1	6	1	2	1	1	2	1	4	2	17	33
Does the website contain the information relating to the student support	4	4	4	0	6	2	3	6	4	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	4	2	30	20
Does the website contain the information relating to the study fees	2	6	4	0	5	3	3	6	4	3	3	0	1	1	2	1	6	0	30	20
Does the website contain the information relating to the bursaries and loans	5	3	4	0	6	2	2	7	5	2	3	0	1	1	2	1	6	0	34	16
Does the website contain the information relating to the course brochure	7	1	4	0	7	1	6	3	6	1	3	0	2	0	2	1	6	0	43	7
Are the courses contained in the brochure/website detailed enough to make the students make informed decision	2	6	2	2	4	4	3	6	1	6	1	2	1	1	0	3	4	2	18	32
Does the website contain information relating on career guidance and learnership	5	3	3	1	4	4	4	5	2	5	2	1	1	1	1	2	4	2	26	24
Does the website contain information relating to the various campuses of the respective college	8	0	4	0	6	2	7	2	2	5	3	0	2	0	3	0	5	1	40	10
Does the website contain information on academic structure	0	8	1	3	1	7	1	8	0	7	1	2	2	0	1	2	4	2	11	39

EC=Eastern Cape FS=Free State GP=Gauteng KZN=KwaZulu-Natal LP=Limpopo MP=Mpumalanga NW=North West NC=Northern Cape WC=Western Cape

Fig. 1 shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Eastern Cape (EC) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites relating to the pre-determined statement 1 (PDS1) with all TVET Colleges disclosing this information, PDS6 with five (5) TVET Colleges disclosing this information, PDS7 with seven (7) TVET Colleges disclosing this information, PDS9 with five (5) TVET Colleges disclosing this information and PDS10 with all TVET Colleges disclosing this information.

There was weak disclosure of information in relevant

websites with regards to PDS2 with all TVET Colleges not disclosing this information, PDS3 with five (5) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information, PDS4 with four (4) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information, PDS5 with six (6) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information, PDS8 with six (6) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information and PDS11 with all TVET Colleges not disclosing this information.

Fig. 2 shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Free State (FS) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of

information in relevant websites relating to the pre-determined statement 1 (PDS1), PDS4, PDS5, PDS6, PDS7 and PDS10 where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information. With regards to PDS9, three (3) TVET Colleges disclosed the pre-determined information.

A weak disclosure of information in relevant websites was observed in the following PDS', PDS2 with no TVET College disclosing this information, PDS3 and PDS8 respectively with two (2) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information. Finally, PDS11 with three (3) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information.

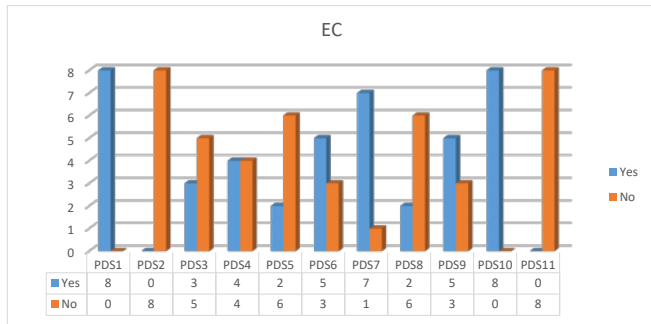


Fig. 1. Eastern cape TVET colleges.

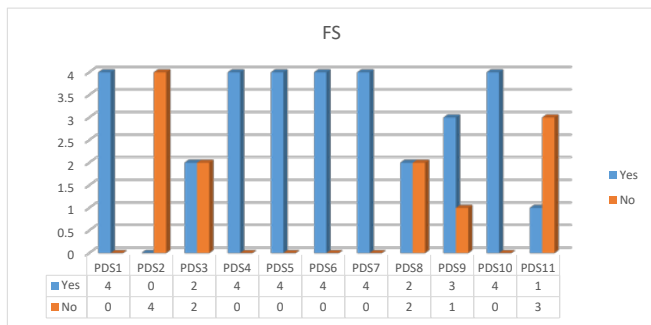


Fig. 2. Free state TVET colleges.

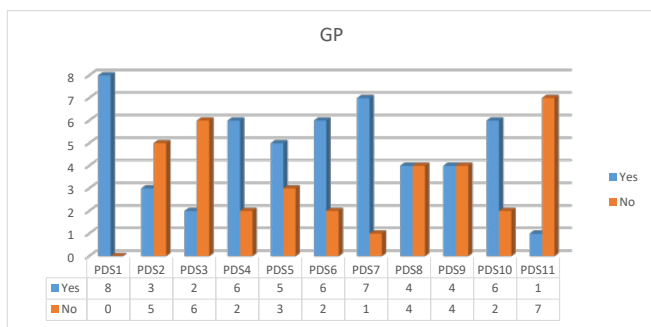


Fig. 3. Gauteng TVET colleges.

Fig. 3 above shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Gauteng (GP) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites relating to the pre-determined statement 1 (PDS1) where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information. There was also an improved disclosure of PDS7 with seven (7) TVET Colleges disclosing this information. With regards to PDS4, PDS6 and PDS10, six (6) TVET Colleges disclosed this information and five (5) TVET Colleges disclosed the information relating to PDS5.

A weak disclosure of information in relevant websites was observed in the following PDS', PDS2 with five (5)

TVET Colleges not disclosing this information, PDS3 with six (6) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information, PDS8 and PDS9 respectively with four (4) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information. Finally, PDS11 with seven (7) TVET Colleges not disclosing this information.

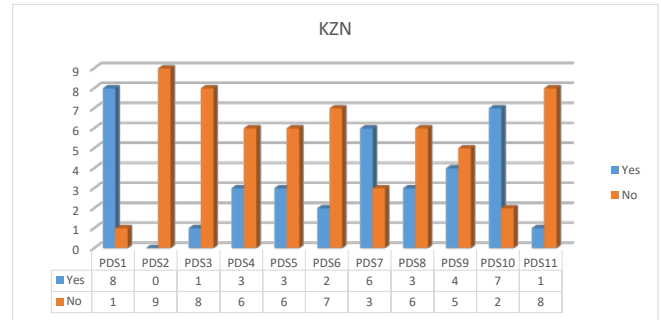


Fig. 4. KwaZulu-Natal TVET colleges.

Fig. 4 above shows the pre-determined information extracted from the KwaZulu Natal (KZN) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites for the three (3) pre-determined statement (PDS') namely PDS1 where eight (8) TVET Colleges disclosed this information, PDS7 where six (6) disclosed this information and PDS10 where seven TVET Colleges disclosed this information.

Eight (8) PDS' had weak disclosure of the pre-determined information, for instance; PDS2 had nine (9) TVET Colleges not disclosing the pre-determined information, PDS8 and PDS11 both with eight (8) TVET Colleges not disclosing the information. With regards to PDS6, seven (7) TVET Colleges did not disclose the pre-determined information in their respective websites, whilst six (6) TVET Colleges did not disclose the information relating to PDS4, PDS5 and PDS8. There were five (5) TVET Colleges that did not disclose the information relating to PDS9.

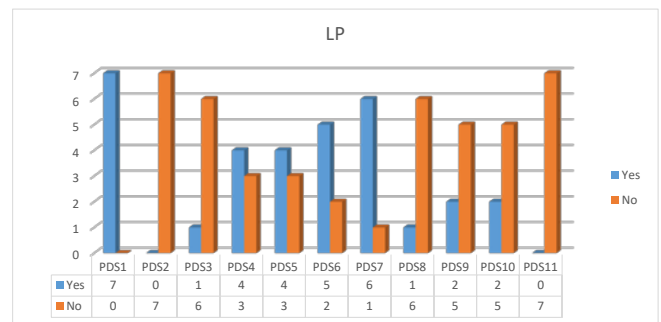


Fig. 5. Limpopo TVET colleges.

Fig. 5 above shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Limpopo (LP) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites for the five (5) pre-determined statement (PDS') namely PDS1 where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information, PDS4 and PDS5 where four (4) TVET Colleges disclosed this information, PDS6 and PDS7 where five (5) TVET Colleges and six (6) TVET Colleges respectively disclosed this information.

Six PDS' had weak disclosure of the pre-determined information, for instance; PDS2 where all TVET Colleges

had not disclosed the pre-determined information, PDS3 and PDS8 both with six (6) TVET Colleges not disclosing the information. With regards to PDS9 and PDS10, it was observed that five (5) TVET Colleges did not disclose the pre-determined information in their respective websites, whilst seven (7) TVET Colleges did not disclose the information relating to PDS11.

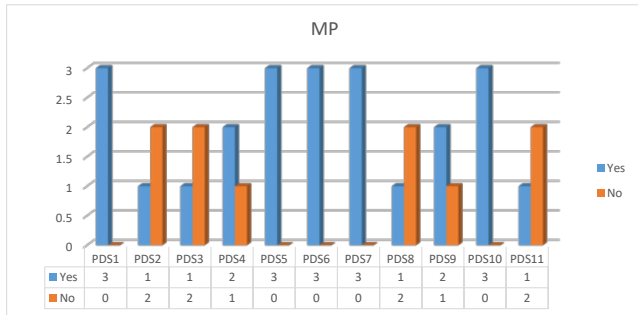


Fig. 6. Mpumalanga TVET colleges.

Fig. 6 above shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Mpumalanga (MP) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites for the seven (7) pre-determined statement (PDS') namely PDS1, PDS5, PDS6, PDS7 and PDS10 where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information. PDS4 and PDS9 had two thirds of the TVET Colleges disclosing the pre-determined information.

Four PDS' had weak disclosure of the pre-determined information, as such, PDS2, PDS3, PDS8 and PDS11 all had the two thirds of TVET Colleges observed not disclosing the pre-determined information.

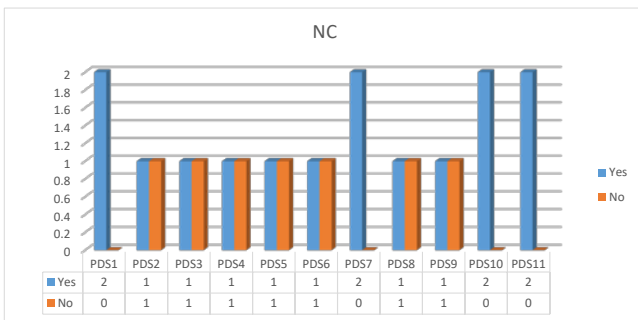


Fig. 7. Northern cape TVET colleges.

There are two TVET Colleges in the Northern Cape Province. Fig. 7 above shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Northern Cape (NC) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites for the three (3) pre-determined statement (PDS') namely PDS1, PDS7 and PDS11 where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information. As for the rest of the PDS', it was observed that each had one TVET College disclosing it.

Fig. 8 shows the pre-determined information extracted from the North West (NW) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites for the seven (7) pre-determined statement (PDS') namely PDS1 and PDS10 where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information. It was

observed that two in three TVET Colleges had disclosed information relating to PDS3, PDS4, PDS5, PDS6 and PDS7.

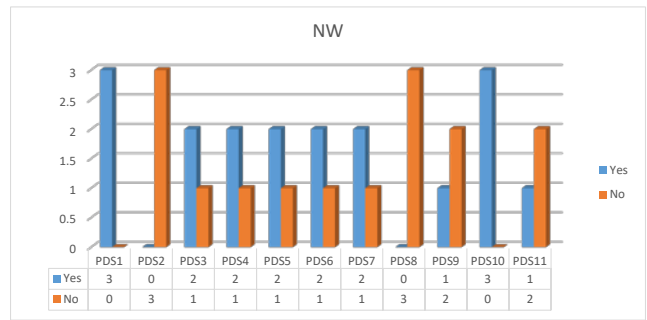


Fig. 8. North west TVET colleges.

Four PDS' had weak disclosure of the pre-determined information, for instance; PDS2 and PDS8 where all TVET Colleges had not disclosed the pre-determined information and both PDS9 and PDS11 both with two (2) TVET Colleges not disclosing the information.

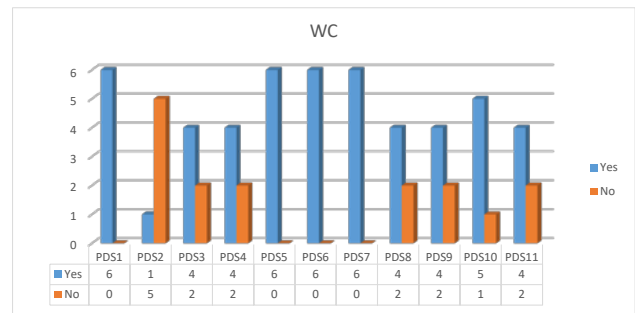


Fig. 9. Western cape TVET colleges.

Fig. 9 above shows the pre-determined information extracted from the Western Cape (WC) TVET Colleges' websites. Accordingly, there was an improved disclosure of information in relevant websites for the ten (10) pre-determined statement (PDS') namely PDS1, PDS5, PDS6 and PDS7 where all TVET Colleges disclosed this information. With regards to PDS3, PDS4, PDS8, PDS9 and PDS11 where four (4) TVET Colleges disclosed this information and PDS10 where five (5) TVET Colleges disclosed this information. Only PDS2 had a weak disclosure as five (5) TVET Colleges did not disclose the pre-determined information.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examined the usefulness of TVET Colleges' websites as an information centre to potential students using the pre-determined statements. When aggregated, the majority of the TVET Colleges disclosed the useful information in their websites. These results are indicative of the fact that potential TVET College's students would easily access useful information on the TVET College's websites to make an informed decision.

When disaggregated, it was observed that some TVET Colleges did not disclose the pre-determined information in their website. The risk of this is that potential student, if having browsed different TVET Colleges websites, may

decide to enrol in the TVET Colleges that contains the useful information to them assuming that the college that does not have the information on its website does not offer the services they require. In addition to this, the lack of information could result in potential students migrating to other areas/provinces as they assume that the service they require is not offered in the local TVET College, resulting in financial burden to the potential student.

It is recommended that TVET Colleges enhance the information disclosed in their websites to take into account the results of this study. Further, it would be beneficial for TVET Colleges to survey potential students, particularly those that are at the high school level to determine the nature of information that they would potentially require when making a decision on their application.

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