

# **Repurposing Rural Technical Vocational Education and Training in South Africa**

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## Declaration

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## **Dedication**

*This piece of work is dedicated to my late mother, Nombulelo Gwagwa, whose memory remains alive in my heart.*

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the merciful Lord for all the countless gifts that I have been offered, this being merely one of them.

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## Abstract

In South Africa, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)<sup>1</sup> is supposed to be instrumental in achieving the country's National Development Goals and play an important role in addressing the country's skills shortages, unemployment, poverty, and inequality. The persistent high youth unemployment, especially among rural communities, puts into question extant TVET policies that strive to equip youth with employability skills within formal sector, as opposed to skills within the context in which they live. The South African TVET system is based on a flawed theoretical understanding that fails to consider the broader social purposes of higher education.

The researcher argues for the need to “rethink” the purpose of TVETCs (Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges) in South Africa, particularly rural colleges that are struggling to develop a successful TVET in which a significant share of a typical youth cohort enrolls and get meaningful training. The research examines what TVET education is doing, and what could be done to produce graduates with skills for work, life and society. The researcher advances the notion that TVET education is important, but the education system needs to move beyond preparing students for employability alone, when it is known that jobs might not be readily available, and that the economy is not expanding, particularly in rural areas.

The researcher argues that what students value or have reason to value, the skills valued by the industry and in the local context, ought to a larger extent influence the education and training in rural colleges. The TVET education ought to produce graduates with capabilities for work, (students with employability skills influenced by the rural economy and skills), life (human development skills), and society (self-employment skills above the subsistence level). This implies that VET education ought to be intentional, more focused, and thus that colleges must establish strong institutional linkages with (rural) industry. Ultimately, the researcher proposes a Rural Integrated Vocational Education Training Approach (RIVETA), that advances CA perspectives, and provides a more expansive view of the role of rural TVETs.

A qualitative research approach was adopted, and semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth information from students and lecturers. The sample comprised 21 students in Phase 1, six lecturers in Phase 2, and 13 students in Phase 3. The findings reveal that the students valued the knowledge and skills acquired from the college and hoped that their qualification would help them to move up the social ladder. Notably, students did not only value employability skills, but also human development skills, including *entrepreneurship skills, self-esteem and confidence, recognition and respect, affiliation, social responsibility and resilience*. However, conversion factors including *TVET funding, college teaching, the curriculum, absence of practical sessions during learning, failure by students to access internships and poor-quality schooling*, disabled students to achieve these skills. The data further reveals that none of the graduates reported to have been formally employed, thereby questioning the quality and relevance of the skills attained. In addition, although students

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<sup>1</sup>The terms TVET and VET are used interchangeably throughout the thesis to refer to work done by colleges preparing students to become functional workers in a skilled trade.

valued entrepreneurship skills, the College inadequately imparted these skills to students, and only two graduates reported to have become entrepreneurs. Lecturers affirmed student views regarding the lack of practical sessions and internships for students, and the gaps in the curriculum. They argued that this compromised students in acquiring skills and knowledge relevant to the current world of work in South Africa. Lecturers also believed that students were not adequately equipped with Information Technology (IT) skills, social skills, and entrepreneurial skills, and attributed this to gaps within the curriculum.

Overall, the RIVETA developed in this study provides a broader view of the kind of knowledge and skills that rural TVETCs ought to equip students within South Africa. The approach explores the TVET system in a rural area beyond productivity, by integrating elements of the expansive CA. Further, the approach shows how rural TVET graduates ought to be equipped with entrepreneurship, innovation, leadership skills and knowledge that cross boundaries and that are valued by industry as well as local communities. The findings of this study will assist policy practitioners and relevant stakeholders in improving rural TVET in South Africa by moving beyond the dialogue of skills development for employment and focusing on human development and entrepreneurial skills. RIVETA is equally important to producing responsible global citizens, who are capable of not only contributing to the economy, but to critical social engagements and debates within the broader economic and human development project.

**Key words:** *Vocational education and training; Capabilities formation; Entrepreneurship; Integrated rural education.*

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
CA	Capabilities Approach
CCA-VET	Critical Capabilities Approach – Vocational Education and Training
CRDP	Comprehensive Rural Development Programme
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DPME	Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
EA	Entrepreneurship approach
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training College
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross domestic product
HCT	Human capital theory
HE	Higher education
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICT	Information communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISRDP	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NARYSEC	National Rural Youth Service Corps
NC(V)	National certificate (Vocational)
NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	Neither employed nor in education
NGP	New growth path
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSET	Post-school education and training
RIVETA	Rural Vocational Education and Training Approach
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
TVETC	Technical and vocational education and training college
UBPL	Upper Bound Poverty Line
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETC	Vocational Education and Training College
VETCs	Vocational Education and Training Colleges

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter aims to contextualise the research by setting the scene, providing an overview of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system in South Africa. The chapter examines the aim of TVETCs to provide much-needed skills to young people, especially those in rural communities. In addition, the chapter provides an outline of key policy interventions that continue to affect the TVET system, specifically focusing on how the Human Development Approach, and particularly the Capabilities Approach (CA) can inform a meaningful Integrated approach to the rural TVET system. Further, the chapter provides a rationale for the researcher's choice in focusing on the TVET system and a rural campus, whilst providing the research aim, questions, and scope of study. The researcher's positionality regarding the research is outlined and followed by an overview of the research methodology adopted in the study.

South Africa's high unemployment rate and continued skills shortages necessitate that skills development programmes and related projects be made a success. According to the World Bank (2015), high levels of poverty and unemployment are in large part fuelled by a persistent skills shortage gap. Thus, the skills shortages in South Africa contribute to a high unemployment rate, which subsequently perpetuates poverty. Before delving into the unemployment statistics and main arguments, it is important to highlight the tensions inherent in the definition of 'unemployment'. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva, a person is deemed unemployed if she: (a) does not work (regularly) for money; (b) are available for work; and (c) are actively looking for a job (ILO, 2008). After 1994, South Africa moved away from this traditional definition of unemployment, because the definition failed to accommodate the challenges people faced when seeking work. These included the prohibiting distance that people are required to travel in search of work, as well as gender issues, for example the failure to consider women who work at home, but who may prefer to engage in paid work (Van Tilburg, 2019). Following this, the South African government experimented with the extended definition of unemployment that would

capture what they now call ‘discouraged work seekers’.<sup>2</sup> This is another contested category because the qualification is determined by one’s own judgement. For example, one might not be actively looking for a job, but how would one answer a question about whether one would like a job? This means that not everyone answering “no” is voluntarily jobless. Additionally, people might answer “yes” even though they have not shown personal effort to find work.

For this research, unemployment refers to the share of the labour force that is without work but who are available for and seeking employment (ILO, 2008). In 2017, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) reported in their Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) the results for the fourth quarter of 2016, namely that the country’s overall unemployment rate is extremely high at 26.5 percent. Youth unemployment is one of the most challenging socio-economic crises faced in South Africa. According to the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Risk 2014 report, South Africa had the third highest youth (15 to 24 years) unemployment rate in the world. Recent statistics reported in the QLFS reveal that the youth remained vulnerable in the labour market, with an unemployment rate of 55.2% (Stats SA, 2019b). Of concern are those youth who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) due to the possibility of being socially excluded and permanently left behind in the labour market (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2016). According to the QLFS (2017), 30.1% of the youth were NEETs, with the percentage being higher for women than men (Stats SA, 2017). The phenomenon of youth unemployment also disproportionately affects those living in rural communities. The high unemployment rate among youth in these areas can be attributed to “apartheid’s racial distortions and the under-development of specific areas where the majority of black people were forced to live” (McConnell 2009, p. 12).

In response to South Africa’s high unemployment rate and skills shortages, the government has invested various resources towards developing policies that aim to transfer skills to most South African citizens (Zungu, 2015). For example, policies have been established within TVET institutions to facilitate skills development among graduates (Zungu, 2015). According to the White Paper released by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (DHET 2013, p. 12), the DHET’s highest priority is to strengthen and expand public TVETCs such that they become institutions of choice for a large proportion of school leavers. The main purpose

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<sup>2</sup>A discouraged work-seeker is a person who was not employed during the reference period, wanted to work, was available to work/start a business but did not take active steps to find work during the last four weeks,

of TVET is to “train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market” (DHET, 2013, p. 11). Furthermore, TVET plays “a strategic and key role in making education fulfil its mandate in producing useful skills for the economy, societies, and individuals” (Maluleke, 2013, p. 15). Hence, the TVET system in South Africa aims to provide education for employability and is considered to be instrumental in addressing the country’s unemployment and skills shortage challenges.

Despite the government’s efforts to strengthen the TVET system in South Africa, graduates from TVETCs and universities remain largely unemployed. This is evident in the recent statistics released by government that shows that the unemployment rate among graduates with a tertiary qualification was 7%, while alarmingly high among TVET graduates at 33% (Nkosi, 2017). This cycle is particularly evident among the youth in rural and disadvantaged communities, as opposed to the youth in urban areas. Overall, the lack of trained and skilled youths, which is associated with the high unemployment rate, especially among the rural youth, is of concern, and necessitates the need to review existing TVET policies so as to ensure that the rural youth benefit from the knowledge attained in college and can live flourishing lives. Concerns about the mismatches between current graduate attributes (as fewer students go into scarce skills fields) and the broader needs of society and the economy in South Africa have been raised (CHE, 2013).

In this realm of emancipating rural youth from poverty, several interventions are sought. These include the formulation of new policies, or reviewing existing ones when they are counter-productive; tracing why the benefits of education are not trickling down in a discernible manner to make a difference in the youths’ daily lives; and equipping the youth with entrepreneurial strategies and training programmes to enable them to take charge of their lives and change the direction of their lives for the better. There are many definitions of entrepreneurship, some see entrepreneurship as a process of successful organization, and other define entrepreneurship as building mindset and skills. Others regard an entrepreneur as an individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. It could be argued that an entrepreneur is commonly seen as an innovator, a source of new ideas, goods, services, and business/or procedures. Within this definition is various types of such entrepreneurs that can be identified and in this thesis the researcher imagined entrepreneurship that emerges from a TVET college. The assumption is that



students who are enrolled for different training are empowered with a mind set and skills that enable them to find and exploit opportunities or start a business. It is important to note that entrepreneurship is social and rational (Powell, 2022). (Powell, 2022) further states that entrepreneurship training focusses on entrepreneurial traits and ignores the dispositional aspects of skills such as language, culture, and knowing how talk to people. She goes on to say that entrepreneurship is understood as knowledge or skills separate from the knowledge and skills for the trade.

### **South African education context and reflections on TVET policy**

The education sector in South Africa has undergone massive change since the dawn of democracy. Government has invested resources towards developing policies that aim to deal with the inequality caused by apartheid policies. Higher education is seen as one of the platforms where issues of race, poverty, inequality, and youth unemployment can be meaningfully addressed. In the past, educational institutions were racially segregated, resulting in gross inequalities that saw up to five times more being spent on a white than on a black student (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Some of the successes of the post-apartheid years include the creation of a single national education department out of 19 racially and regionally divided departments (DHET, 2013), nearly 100% primary school gross enrolment ratio (Jansen & Taylor, 2003), and black (including African, coloured and Indian) representation at universities increasing from 52% in 1993 to 89% in 2011 (HESA, 2014). Moreover, there are more females in higher education than males (HESA, 2014).

On the downside, however, education outcomes are poor and drop-out rates high. South Africa is poorly rated on international league tables (Taylor, Fleisch & Schindler, 2008) and in the World Economic Forum reports (WEF, 2014), South Africa was ranked *last* out of one hundred and forty-eight (148) countries in Mathematics and Science performance, and one hundred and forty-sixth (146<sup>th</sup>) for its overall education quality. Throughout, rates are low at all levels of the education system. Of one hundred pupils that start school, only fifty will make it to Grade 12, forty will pass, and only twelve will qualify for university (Spaull, 1994). Of those that do make it to university, on average only 15% graduate (DHET, 2013), while less than 50% of further education students graduate (Cosser, Kraak & Winnaar, 2010). As such, the applicability of existing policy TVET documents such as the National Planning Council

(2012), the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) and the Further Education and Training Act No. 98 of 1998 (DHET, 2002) need to be reviewed and aligned with the needs of the youth, particularly rural youth.

Lewin argues that “fairly universally, poverty reduction is seen as unlikely unless knowledge, skill and capabilities are extended to those who are marginalised from value-added economic activity by illiteracy, lack of numeracy, and higher-level reasoning that links causes and effects rationally” (Lewin, 2007, p. 2). Based on this argument and considering the failures of many aspects of South Africa’s education system across basic, further, and higher education, it is not surprising that South Africa is characterised by high levels of poverty, with 45.5% of South Africans living below the Upper Bound Poverty Line (UBPL), and 20.2% below the Food Poverty Line (Stats SA, 2011). A total of 54% of black Africans, versus 0.8% of whites, live below the UBPL (Stats SA, 2011). Not only are absolute poverty levels high, but inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient,<sup>3</sup> is among the highest in the world, at between 0.65 and 0.69 based on expenditure and income, respectively (Stats SA, 2011).

The skills shortage is partly attributable to an increase in demand for relatively high-skilled workers, resulting from deepening capital in the economy since the 1970s, with a shift from investment in the primary sector (including the once predominant mining sector) towards the secondary (transformation of extracted material) and tertiary (services) sectors. The result is that the tertiary sector has become increasingly important, both in terms of its contribution to labour absorption, and to economic growth. By 2012, employment in the tertiary sector accounted for 72% of total employment. The result has been a skills-biased employment trajectory, with the high-skilled occupations absorbing 45.7% of the increase in employment between 2001 and 2012, the medium skilled occupations 30.7%, and the unskilled occupations 24.5% (Bhorat, Goga & Stanwix, 2013).

On the supply side, the failure to match demand for high skills has resulted in wages for this sector escalating in real terms by a mammoth 286.4% since 2000, fuelling persistent inequality (Sharp, 2011), while the failure to produce sufficient skills at the intermediate level has resulted in this level experiencing the smallest relative employment growth between

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<sup>3</sup>The Gini coefficient is a commonly used measure of income inequality that condenses the entire income distribution for a country into a single number between 0 and 1: the higher the number, the greater the degree of income inequality.

2001 and 2012 (Bhorat et al., 2013). While there are currently 829 800 unfilled positions for high-skilled workers, there are close to a million elementary workers in excess of the country's needs, contributing to South Africa's high unemployment rate and constraining growth (Sharp, 2011), which since 2008 has been sluggish at average annual growth rates of below 2%; although faring better than employment, which contracted by an average of 0.3% over the same period, resulting in "jobless growth" (Bhorat et al., 2013).

South Africa's high unemployment rate, skills need, and shortages led to the need for TVET, formerly referred to as Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges to be upscaled. However, TVETCs have experienced significant transformations pre- and post-apartheid (as discussed in the sections below) and the effectiveness and impact of the education system remain argumentative.

### **South African vocational and technical education context: 1887 to 1990**

The origin of vocational education in South Africa can be traced to the mission schools, which were aimed at 'civilising' the black and coloured populations. The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 marked the turning point for vocational education in South Africa. The rural, largely Afrikaner whites were faced with increasing unemployment, owing to the industrialisation of farms, which they lost to the English during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. At the same time, however, they were unequipped for employment in the urban areas, which were developing around the mines, and which were importing skilled white (English-speaking) labour and employing cheap black labour, which had migrated from the rural areas, in unskilled positions. This led to the problem of the so-called 'poor whites'. The first attempt to upskill these poor whites was led by the Dutch Reformed Church, which established industrial schools to train poor white boys to become carpenters, shoemakers and the like, and poor white girls in domestic occupations. There were also provincial and state schools providing similar training. Many of these schools also provided care to indigent whites, and were linked to the penal system.

The First World War led to increasing unemployment in general, and hence exacerbated the poor white problem. While the Mines and Works Act of 1911 had given the government the right to restrict certain mining jobs to white people, and an agreement between the Chamber of Mines and white trade unions had extended this list, the mines threatened to cancel this

latter agreement, and to replace white labour with cheaper black labour. This led to the violent white miners' strike of 1922 and to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Act. The 1922 strike set the scene for the fall of the Smuts government and the ascent to power of the Pact government in 1924, which saw the support of both the English-speaking working class and Afrikaner nationalists, and which introduced the so-called Colour Bar Act of 1926, which reinforced the segregationist stance of the Mines and Works Act of 1911.

The Apprenticeship Act required that all apprentices attend technical classes, which resulted in the growth of technical colleges for whites, which combined on-the-job and theoretical training. Students numbered some 4000 in 1924 versus approximately 21 000 in 1933 (Malherbe 1977, p. 173). Further to this, in 1925, all industrial schools – 19 state and 23 state-aided (Baker, 1999) – came under the auspices of the State. It has been argued that this represents the single most important development in the history of industrial and technical education in South Africa (Badroodien, 2004). However, while white enrolment in these schools continued to rise, only 53% of students found jobs in areas for which they were trained, as employers placed little value on the training and preferred to hire cheap black labour. From 1925, a second category of vocational schools for white boys over the age of 13 was established, namely technical high schools, which focused on academic as well as vocational subjects. They were established mainly in the urban centres, and were considered to provide a better quality of education than the industrial schools. Technical schools were attached to technical colleges. These technical schools were supposed to service the growing mining, railway, and industrial sectors. In the rural areas, vocational education was provided to white children via state-funded agricultural schools. These, however, proved unsuccessful, because as farming became mechanised, fewer and fewer white people were employed on farms, while negative perceptions around these schools became persistent.

By the 1940s, the technical colleges were also training non-whites. The reason for this was that the Second World War had made it difficult for South Africa to import labour and supplies, which forced it to become self-reliant. It was well-placed to do so – money from gold had enabled it to expand manufacturing, while coal and electric power were cheap and available. By 1943, manufacturing was producing more of the country's wealth and contributing more to employment than gold mining, and more skills were needed. Another reason for the training of non-whites in technical colleges is attributable to the absorption of

white skills into the war effort, as well as the more liberal policies of the United Party, which had come into power before the start of the war, resulting in non-whites being increasingly employed in more skilled positions in the industry. The key institution involved in the growth of black skills was the Central Organisation for Technical Training, established in 1940. It set up centres that were attached to technical colleges and that trained black men between the ages of 18 and 40 in courses that lasted about six months.

With the end of the Second World War, soldiers returned home to find that they had been displaced at work by people of colour, while the Smuts government insisted on importing white skills from Europe. This, together with several political factors, resulted in the National Party winning the 1948 elections and introducing policies of racial segregation, or apartheid (Badroodien, 2004). Prior to his departure, Smuts had appointed the De Villiers Commission of Enquiry on Technical and Vocational Education to devise a plan for the reconstruction of education to enable it to respond to growing urbanisation and industrialisation. The focus of the report was on the possibility of providing vocational education at schools, and to examine the scope of education in Technikons.

In the 1940s, the national government was responsible for technical education, and the provinces for general and vocational education. The Commission recommended that the State take responsibility for the latter as well, reflecting the growing wave of post-war optimism in the benefits of increased state intervention (Baker, 1999). The De Villiers Report argued that all white children ought to undergo a 'liberal' general education and that could only happen in the last three years of secondary/high school (i.e., after nine years of general schooling students should be split among general, vocational, and technical education, with the first two to be imparted at schools and the last at technical colleges) (Baker, 1999). The Commission opined that "no pupil could be regarded as well-prepared for most vocational training courses without having had at least two years of full-time general education at secondary level" (p. 534), and that the aim of general education was to foster the "whole person" (p. 661). Although Baker (1999) notes that the Report was therefore not merely functionalist, in Pells' book *Three Hundred Years of Education* (1951, p. 94), written from the view of Christian National Education (the ideology underpinning white schooling), states that the report "fails to see that excessive concentration on learning how to make a living and to amass material goods may result in a complete failure to learn how to live and achieve

spiritual good". Baker (1999) notes that the report reflected the tensions between the prevailing discourses that education look backwards to Victorian values of order and authority, and forwards to modernity. The report also stood at the crossroads of 'skill', meaning the ability to engage in certain technical practices, versus the ability to plan and execute, and reflected this discourse. In this regard, Baker (1999) notes that the "strand in the discourse of the Report was the importance attributed to the inculcation of values of discipline and compliant worker attitudes, as well as the transmission of particular skill competencies" (pp. 22-23).

In the meantime, black education was largely administered by the 4491 state-aided missionary schools and coloured and Indian education by the provinces, with the annual government budget for education per child in 1945 being 38 pounds, five shillings and 10 pence for whites; 10 pounds, 16 shillings and two pence for coloureds and Indians; and three pounds, 17 shillings and 10 pence for Africans (Baker, 1999). De Villiers recommended that black (urban) schooling be made compulsory (to age 14) as a grounding for employment in industry, but also to contain the social problems including delinquency and militancy that were growing in urban areas. Unlike in the case of white schooling, the emphasis was to be on practical subjects like 'woodwork' and 'hygiene'. With regard to industrial training, De Villiers suggested that the aspiration of black persons to become 'semi-skilled workers' should be accommodated in an expanded polytechnic sector or pre-work training institution. Baker (1999) remarks that the De Villiers Commission report reflected the growing white liberal discourse of 'separate but equal', given that total segregation – black people living and working in the 'homelands', demarcated by the Natives Land Act of 1913 – was at odds with the realities of black urbanisation, and the needs of industry (if not mining and agriculture, which required a cheap stable workforce in the former case, and a cheap migrant one in the latter). It should be noted, however, that government reports on black urbanisation at the time (notably the Fagan and Sauer reports) reflected conflicting discourses in this regard, with the segregationists (National Party) prevailing and winning the elections in 1948, and the De Villiers report being shelved.

The new government proceeded to introduce a plethora of segregationist education, including the infamous Bantu Education Act of 1953. According to a source it is alleged that H.F. Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid said, "The Bantu must be guided to serve his own

community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour” (Gross, 2016). While the purpose of Bantu education was to separately educate indigenous Africans to contribute to their own separate society in the (infertile) homelands, the immediate priority for Bantu education was to bring restless black urban youths into the school net and to train enough numbers of semi-skilled black persons to fill the gap in the growing industrial complex. In this regard, the State, which had taken control of all but a few mission schools (the latter which were required to become fully self-funding), deemed a four-year primary education with basic literacy skills to be sufficient (Hyslop, 1989). Those students who passed a test were able to proceed to a further four years at school, which provided both academic and vocational content, the latter including courses such as Gardening and Agriculture. Those who succeeded could then move on to post-primary schools, which very few ultimately did, due to the low quality of teachers in black schools. Black students, who had previously shared educational institutions with coloured and Indian students, were forced out, as were black students at white technical colleges. In rural areas, however, two technical colleges, five technical secondary schools, and ten trade schools were built for African students (Christie & Collins, 1982).

With regard to whites, the apartheid government was particularly concerned with making vocational education available to Afrikaans-speaking people, with a specific focus on their attaining employment in the increasing openings for skilled employees. By 1970, the quantum of technical education for white students had so increased that secondary and post-secondary technical courses were split; urban institutions offering post-secondary technical courses was upgraded to tertiary institutions termed Technikons, making them subject to the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, which enabled them to admit only white students subject to Ministerial permission (Badroodien, 2004). Bunting (2006) argues that this distinction reflected apartheid’s obsession with essence, with it considering the essence of university being science or abstraction, and that of Technikons being technology or application. Bunting (2006) says that these Technikons were quintessentially conservative in nature and aligned to the ideologies of the apartheid government, making little use of the permit system.

The 1970s were characterised by economic recession at home, the fall of colonialism in neighbouring countries, and growing black resistance to apartheid, which manifested itself in ongoing strikes (notably the 1973 Durban strikes); and student protests (starting with the

watershed 1976 Soweto uprising), particularly in the urban areas, where, despite restrictions on keeping permanent residence there, the black population continued to increase. The result was the appointment of a few Commissions of enquiry, including the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions into labour relations and black urbanisation, respectively. The Wiehahn Commission (1979) recommended the removal of restrictions on black apprenticeships (restrictions on coloured and Indian apprenticeships were removed in 1971), and this was accepted by the government. It also recommended an overhaul of the entire apprenticeship system claiming in-service training was poorly supervised. It further recommended the legalisation of the black trade union movement (Kraak, 2004). This movement had, during the 1970s, implemented several worker training programmes, although the focus was on building trade union leadership which was to lead the legalised movement in the 1980s (Cooper, Grossman & Vally, 2002).

What is clear is that the education and training that was offered in vocational and technical colleges deprived non-whites of the skills necessary for both economic and human development. In addition, access to these colleges was difficult, and some specific fields were reserved for whites.

### **Technical and vocational education: 1994 to present**

When the democratic government came to power in 1994, the post-school space consisted of 21 public universities and 15 technical universities or “technikons” divided along racial lines, with a student admission ratio of 7:2 (Lemmer, 1993). Further, there were 152 regionally and racially segmented state and state-aided technical colleges, with a small number of students, and with loosening ties to the apprenticeship system they were set up to serve (DHET, 2013). Lemmer (1993, pp. 58-59), writing at the time, notes that

Although the unequal per capita expenditure between race groups has decreased, black education is underdeveloped and of an inferior quality. This is reflected in the relatively small number of black matriculates and university graduates; the disproportionate distribution of high-level manpower in favour of whites; the skewed pattern of tertiary students in favour of whites; and a disproportionate number of black school-leavers without Mathematics or Science. An excessive emphasis on academically oriented education—with its historical origins in the



colonial era—at the expense of technical and career-oriented education, and the prejudice towards technical and career-oriented education encountered among all population groups (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 1985) have led to a failure to equip the young from all population groups with the necessary work and entrepreneurship skills needed to meet output requirements, especially in the engineering and technical fields.

Following 1994, the further and higher education landscape changed dramatically. Some universities and technikons were merged to form six comprehensive universities, with six remaining as universities of technology (former technikons) and 11 as universities (a further two have just come on stream). Adult Education and Training Centres were established in the black urban townships and rural areas to train adults and out-of-work youth. In 2002, a process began to merge the 152 technical colleges into 50 multi-campus institutions, which were renamed Further Education and Training Colleges (FETCs) (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). While responsibility for education initially fell under the Department of Education and that for skills development fell under the Department of Labour, both became the responsibility of the provincial offices of the newly formed DHET in 2009 (DHET, 2013).

Higher education is expanding rapidly, globally and in South Africa. This expansion brings to the fore issues concerning what students have access to, the graduate attributes that the students acquire, and what the economy and society at large require. The TVET institutions are one of the vehicles that are important to South Africa's post-apartheid socio-economic development approach. The sector, which is regarded as a skills incubator, is expected to increase students' enrolments and provide relevant quality education. In the report entitled *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training (PSET) in South Africa 2015*, the DHET (2017) provide statistics on institutions, students, programmes, staffing and funding. It should be noted that these statistics are only based on PSET, over which the DHET has oversight, and not other government departments or state entities (DHET, 2019).

Remarkably, there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled in TVETCs from 2010 to 2015. In fact, during this period, student enrolments increased by 106 per cent. According to the White Paper (DHET, 2013), headcount enrolments in TVETCs are expected

to increase to two and a half million by 2030. While these developments are positive, it is time that we focus on what students have access to in terms of knowledge received and the intended outcomes.

**Table 1: Total number of students enrolled in TVETCs by qualification and province (2015)**

Province	NC(V) <sup>4</sup>	Report 191 N1-N6 <sup>5</sup>	Occupational Qualifications <sup>6</sup>	Report 550/NSC <sup>7</sup> & Other <sup>8</sup>	Total
Eastern Cape	21 731	53 967	195	1 084	76 977
Free State	6 096	41 002	1 312	710	49 120
Gauteng	33 989	143 786	868	9 838	188 481
KwaZulu-Natal	31 614	85 782	7 202	8 251	132 849
Limpopo	26 078	75 121	3 137	616	104 952
Mpumalanga	7 339	10 881	0	25	18 245
North West	20 989	49 609	720	493	71 811
Northern Cape	2 371	9 625	666	244	12 906
Western Cape	15 252	49 691	6 433	11 163	82 539
<b>National</b>	<b>165 459</b>	<b>519 464</b>	<b>20 533</b>	<b>32 424</b>	<b>737 880</b>

*Source: TVET College Annual Survey 2015, data extracted in November 2016 (as cited in DHET, 2017, p. 28)*

The data reveals that in 2015, the largest proportion of student enrolments in TVETCs were in Gauteng (26%), KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (18%) and Limpopo (14%), while the lowest were in the Free State (7%), Northern Cape (2%), and Mpumalanga (2%). Regarding the qualifications, most students enrolled for N1-N6 programmes (70%), followed by NC(V) programmes (22%), and NSC (4%) and Occupational Qualifications (3%). Again, while certification is important, the focus ought to be on whether colleges are providing quality programmes. Lecturers' qualification and experience have a bearing on the quality of programmes provided, hence the need to examine lecturer qualifications and industry experience.

<sup>4</sup>**NC(V)** refers to the National Certificate (Vocational), and is offered at levels 2, 3 and 4 of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). The NC(V) is an "alternative vocational pathway to Grade 10, 11 and 12 of the schooling system" (DHET, 2017, p. 27).

<sup>5</sup> **The Report 191** National Technical Educational Programme, known as NATED certificates, "are offered at six sub-levels (N1 to N6) for Engineering Studies and three or four sub-levels (Introductory, N4 to N6) for Business and General Studies. These part-qualifications result in a National Diploma on condition that students meet the requirements for work experience" (DHET, 2017, p. 27).

<sup>6</sup> **Occupational qualifications** refer to "qualifications associated with a trade, occupation or profession resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge unit standards, practical unit standards, and work experience unit standards" (DHET, 2017, p. 28).

<sup>7</sup> **NSC** refers to the old National Senior Certificate (which is equivalent to Grade 12) (DHET, 2017, p. 28).

<sup>8</sup> **Other** refers to "all other skills development programmes" (DHET, 2017, p. 28).

**Table 2: Number of TVETCs, lecturers and students per province**

Province	TVET Colleges	Lecturers	Students
Eastern Cape	8	1161	76 977
Free State	4	658	49 120
Gauteng	8	2 072	188 481
KwaZulu-Natal	9	2 426	132 849
Limpopo	7	1 456	104 952
Mpumalanga	3	362	18 245
North West	3	544	71 811
Northern Cape	2	172	12 906
Western Cape	6	1 741	82 539
National	50	10 592	737 880

*Source: TVET College Annual Survey 2015, data extracted in November 2016 (as cited in DHET, 2017, p. 29)*

Overall, in 2015, there were 10 592 lecturers and 737 880 students from 50 TVETCs. Notably, KZN (nine) had the highest number of TVETCs, followed by Gauteng (eight) and the Eastern Cape (eight). Further, both KZN and Gauteng had the highest number of lecturers, which accounted for 42.5% of the total lecturers in TVETCs. In contrast, the least number of lecturers (172) and students (12 906) were from two TVETCs in the Northern Cape. The names of the 50 colleges are listed in Annexure One.

**Table 3: Total number of students enrolled per qualification and gender and population group in 2015**

Qualification Category	Gender		Population Group						Total
	Female	Male	African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Other <sup>9</sup>	Reconciliation <sup>10</sup>	
Report 191	274 836	244 628	479 160	27 920	2 080	7 899	262	2 143	51 9464
Report 550/NSC	603	393	895	88	5	8	0	0	996
NC(V)	101 674	63 785	156 429	7 597	263	606	44	520	165 459
Occupational Qualifications	10 489	10 044	13 935	4 016	269	1 483	56	774	20 533
Other	15 148	16 280	0	0	0	0	0	31 428	31 428
<b>Total</b>	<b>402 750</b>	<b>335 130</b>	<b>650 419</b>	<b>39 621</b>	<b>2 617</b>	<b>9 996</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>34 865</b>	<b>737 880</b>

Source: TVET College Annual Survey 2015, data extracted in November 2016 (as cited in DHET, 2017, p. 32)

<sup>9</sup> "Other" refers to population groups that are not mentioned (DHET, 2017, p. 28).

<sup>10</sup> "Reconciliation" refers to numbers created to balance the totals (DHET, 2017, p. 28).

The data in the table above shows the number of students enrolled for each qualification according to gender and population group. In terms of gender, a higher proportion of women (approximately 55%) enrolled into TVETCs than men (approximately 45%). Further, more women enrolled for N1-N6 programmes, NSC, NC(V) and Occupational Qualifications compared to men.

As expected, the data reveals that, of the 737 880 students, most students enrolled into TVETCs were African (650 419). This was followed by coloureds (39 621), whites (9996) and Indians/Asians (2617). A similar pattern is also evident within each qualification category, as most Africans are enrolled for all programmes when compared to the other population groups. This finding aligns with various reports, which state that TVETCs are mainly attended by black African youth, particularly by “marginalised black African youth, many of whom may have left school early, do not qualify to enter higher education, have limited financial resources for continuing to study and are at high risk of unemployment” (Paterson, Keevy & Boka, 2017, p. 1).

**Table 4: Total number of students enrolled per qualification category and age group in 2015**

Qualification Category	Age Group								Total
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	≥40	Reconciliation	
<b>Report 191</b>	0	60 010	274 697	95 133	33 376	14 217	9 621	32 410	<b>519 464</b>
<b>Report 550/NSC</b>	0	2	27	54	26	13	16	858	<b>996</b>
<b>NC(V)</b>	0	22 487	88 755	32 349	6 176	1 585	728	13 379	<b>165 459</b>
<b>Occupational Qualifications</b>	0	969	5 274	6 522	3 326	1 641	1 616	1 185	<b>20 533</b>
<b>Other</b>	0	3 191	10 872	7 232	4 298	2 315	3 197	323	<b>31 428</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>86 659</b>	<b>379 625</b>	<b>141 290</b>	<b>47 202</b>	<b>19 771</b>	<b>15 178</b>	<b>48 155</b>	<b>737 880</b>

*Source: TVET College Annual Survey 2015, data extracted in November 2016 (as cited in DHET, 2017, p. 34)*

The data reveals that a large proportion of the youth (i.e., 15 to 24 years) (63%) were enrolled in TVETCs in 2015, followed by individuals aged 25 to 29 years (19%). It is evident that enrolments declined for the older age groups.

Although positive developments have been recorded in terms of student enrolments, grey areas still exist with regard to the following: quality of programmes that are available; the resources available to the lecturers and their students; the intended outcomes of the different programmes; lecturer qualification; industry experience; the throughput rate; and how all these feed into the broader national developmental agenda of South Africa. This resonates with the need to rethink the purposes and policies of the TVET system in South Africa.

### **Problem statement**

In the South African context, TVET is supposed to be instrumental for achieving the country's National Development Goals,<sup>11</sup> which, as from September 2015, are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These play an important role in addressing skills shortages, unemployment and poverty. The South African TVET Uniz@2003 is based on neoliberal assumptions, which focus on providing skills for employability to contribute towards economic growth. In addition to this, TVET also contributes towards reducing poverty and addressing social inequalities by increasing participation in education and training with the aim of creating employment among communities most affected by unemployment and poverty (Powell, 2012).

However, Powell and McGrath (2019a, p. 3) assert that the South African TVET policy is based on a flawed theoretical understanding of the TVET system's purpose and value, particularly in developing contexts. McGrath affirms that TVET is based on an "outmoded version of development" centred on a 'productivist' approach, which is "the development of human capital for economic advancement and employability as a solution for unemployment" (McGrath, 2011). There is therefore a need to "reimagine" the purpose of TVETCs, particularly rural TVETCs, by considering other human-centred development approaches, such as the CA, which place the needs of the people first as opposed to the economy. To help us broaden the

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<sup>11</sup> One of the priorities for the NDP is improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation (see NDP page 17).

purposes of TVET, I also briefly critically evaluate the benefits of other approaches such as the Human Capital Theory (HCT). Hence, TVET policies should not only aim to train for employability but should also provide youth with skills that are relevant to other aspects of their life.

The persistently high youth unemployment in rural and disadvantaged communities call into question the existing TVET policies that aim to educate youth for employability within formal sectors as opposed to employability within the context in which they live. Maluleke and Harley explain that the role of TVET goes beyond training the youth to become artisans. TVET should also “furnish young people with knowledge and skills they need in life to contribute to local development” (Maluleke & Harley, 2016, p. 101). Furthermore, Maluleke (2013) explains that the TVET system cannot only be developed for the labour market as “there are rural people who still use traditional methods for production”. It is against this background that the research seeks to determine whether the existing TVET policies meet the needs of the rural youth and communities in which they live. The study is focused on a rurally based TVETC in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa, a place rarely researched in this regard.

### **Significance of the study**

The importance of this study emerges from examining the critical role TVET plays in the socio-economic development agenda. McGrath (2018) emphasises that it is necessary for the TVET system to look beyond the productivism<sup>12</sup> paradigm, to imagine a new future for vocational learning that reflects the rise of alternative development theories. The neoliberal business-like approach that influences TVET is too narrow, as it fails to give attention to the broader social purposes of higher education. The education seems to focus on market demands, which reinforce a reductionist HCT. While employability skills are crucial to innovation, productivity and economic development, human development and entrepreneurial skills are equally important, as they produce responsible global citizens who are capable of not only contributing to the economy, but to critical social engagements and debates within the broader economic and human development project.

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<sup>12</sup> Productivism is a concept within modernity where the economy is separated from other aspects of life to encourage economic growth (Giddens, 1994).



This research is therefore concerned with the relationship of TVETCs, the rural community, and the wider development agenda and particularly the challenges that TVET students face after graduating in their contexts. The research informs debates pertaining to rural TVET graduate outcomes and the repurposing of rural TVETCs in South Africa, by considering the local context in terms of what students and lecturers value, and what students become as a result of rural TVET. In addition, the research will also contribute to policy formulation that ensures that more TVET resources are allocated to removing obstacles to capabilities, so that rural TVETCs can take its rightful role in aiding in South Africa's development.

Moreover, higher education is continuing to expand, without providing adequate support to tertiary institutions and students who mostly come from poorly resourced schools or backgrounds. As a result, students graduate with poor skills to contribute to economic growth and the good of the society. In fact, fresh graduates from universities and TVETCs are still unsuccessful in finding jobs (Ebrahim, 2017), and they struggle to fit into society. The situation is particularly severe for youth within rural communities, as they are more likely to be unemployed as compared to the youth in urban areas. The unemployment crisis, which is automatically coupled with poverty in South Africa has initiated the need to investigate skills development policies, and whether rural TVETCs are contributing to the country's socio-economic development. Specifically, the research critically scrutinises the applicability of the existing TVET system and policies to rural communities as youth unemployment within these areas continues to increase. Despite the importance of TVETCs, the South African higher education system is poorly funded, and often without sufficient capacity to produce quality qualifications (Ebrahim, 2017).

In addition to the above, research has been conducted on the TVET system, and graduate outcomes or capabilities formation in South Africa. Further, as discussed above, the theoretical underpinnings of the TVET policy remain lodged in the HCT, which is an approach that has been discredited for its focus on growth and absolute poverty reduction, at the expense of the expansive human development ethos, which contributes to both economic advancement and human development.

It is anticipated that this study will answer the call for further research in the area of TVET provision and, in particular, will respond to calls to situate TVET theory and policy within a

paradigm that will support the full spectrum of human flourishing. More so, to the researcher's knowledge, limited research has been carried out where the participants have been asked about their valued capabilities; as such, the methodology will also add to the limited research regarding how the CA is operationalised (Biggeri, Libanora, Mariani & Menchini, 2006).

## **Research aims and questions**

Considering the problem statement described above, TVETCs are expected to address South Africa's skills shortage situation, thereby increasing access to jobs and consequently growing the economy and alleviating poverty. The overarching aim of the research is therefore to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by rural TVET graduates contribute to their wellbeing, their societies, particularly rural places, and the broader economy of South Africa. Drawing on concepts from the CA, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do students understand the aims of the education, knowledge, and skills they acquire?
- What knowledge and skills (functionings and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value through studying for a TVET qualification?
- What do lecturers aim to achieve with the curriculum that they implement?
- In which way can the CA lens contribute to the policy and theoretical and practical development of TVET?

## **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the CA. The CA has been used to explore unemployment and poverty in many countries around the world and has also shaped many educational policies. While the HCT views the TVET system as a means of boosting a country's economy, the CA is a more "people-centred" approach, which extends beyond economics to areas such as health, education, and freedom.

The CA was first introduced by an Indian economist and philosopher, Amartya Sen, in the 1980s, and has recently been developed by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum. This approach seeks to drive social change that aims to expand human capabilities, rather than economic

growth (Andrés & Chavez, 2015; Clark, 2005). Education in the CA is viewed as an important aspect of an “individual’s process of becoming who he or she needs to be, as quality of education provides people with options and allows them to shape their future” (Andrés & Chavez, 2015, p. 21). The CA is, therefore, a more “people-centred” approach that places “human agency, rather than organisations such as markets or governments at the centre of the stage”. The CA goes beyond providing a theoretical and abstract notion of social justice and human development, by providing a practical approach by which social justice can be enacted and monitored (Walker, 2005). The implication of the CA is that it shifts the emphasis from normative and instrumental measures to a focus that evaluates educational policies and institutions in terms of how they improve the quality of lives and the wellbeing of individuals (Walker, 2006) with the emphasis on the ‘real freedoms that people enjoy’ (p. 3) to “lead the kind of lives that they value and have reason to value” (Sen, 1999).

The CA is equally fundamental in developing entrepreneurial capabilities that will motivate individuals to pursue entrepreneurial career paths. According to Gries and Naudé (2010a), the CA can inform theoretical thinking on and measurement of entrepreneurship. The CA views entrepreneurship as a human functioning that can be valued as an end, and not just as a means to other ends. It can enrich human capabilities if people’s complementary capabilities are expanded so that they can choose not to be entrepreneurs (Naudé, 2013). The quality of entrepreneurial ability involves improving the skills and education of entrepreneurs and focusing on the innovative abilities of entrepreneurs (Naudé, 2013).

A skills shortage situation in South Africa not only requires the TVET system to boost the country’s economy, but to also produce rounded citizens, who can pursue an entrepreneurial career. I propose that TVET education is important, but the education system needs to move beyond preparing students for employability only when it is known that the jobs might not be readily available, and that the economy is not expanding, particularly in rural areas. I argue that what students value or have reason to value, the skills valued by the industry and the local context, should, to a significant extent, influence the education and training in rural colleges. Ultimately, TVET education ought to produce graduates with capabilities for work (students with employability skills influenced by the rural economy and skills), life (human development skills), *and* society (self-employment skills above the subsistence level). This

implies that TVET education should be intentional with better focus, where colleges must necessarily establish strong institutional linkages with (rural) industry.

CA advances the notion for sustainable development and livelihoods. It views TVET as a means for supporting the development of a range of capabilities that are conceived as opportunities to develop functionings that individuals, the communities and society at large have reason to value (Walker & Fongwa, 2017). The novel aspect of this research is that it interrogates skills and knowledge acquired by rural TVET graduates through the CA lens. This research aims to generate a deep understanding of rural TVETCs and advances an CA inspired approach to TVET.

### **Research methodology**

This study was conducted in one of South Africa's TVETCs in KZN. In particular, the choice of conducting research with this college was because it is a rural college, where students had requests for job opportunities. In addition, the college is within the researcher's vicinity, as a general context which she understands holistically. Furthermore, the researcher has a vested interest for the college to do well, as this will improve the quality of life of surrounding communities. If the youth can receive quality vocational education and training, it will contribute to better skills and better employment prospects. Simultaneously, the research is equally conscious of her positionality in society and business.

The research methodology adopted a qualitative approach. The researcher elicited information on students' experiences in rural TVETCs, and as such, this study allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information that can be used to evaluate the role of TVETCs in facilitating both economic and social development. According to Family Health International (2004), one of the commonly used data collection tools for qualitative study are in-depth interviews. Some of the questions asked during interviews were open-ended to allow participants to freely discuss their original dreams and aspirations<sup>13</sup>. From the college student population, approximately 5% was chosen as a sample size. Purposive sampling was

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<sup>13</sup> Aspirations are dreams, hopes or ambitions to achieve personal, team, or organizational goals and objectives (Cole et al, 2022). Aspirations are closely linked with the concepts of wishes and desires (Hart, 2016). In this case, aspirations are linked with wishes when describing goals that are most important for students enrolled at a rural TVET college. The aspirations could be intrinsic (those that help satisfy psychological needs) or extrinsic (those focused on achieving an instrumental outcome such as becoming financially stable) (Martela, Bradshaw, & Ryan, 2019).

employed as follow up. Students in their last year were interviewed in three phases. The first phase was done in one year; the second was executed the following year. The rationale for this was to have comparative results between students' perceptions about TVET outcomes while they were studying, and then after they had completed their studies and had started their job search.

### **Ethical considerations, trustworthiness and positionality**

Ethical issues were considered throughout the research process. Ethical considerations include protecting the rights and privacy of all research participants (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009) and maintaining confidentiality (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). This study employs qualitative research conventions, and as a result, the trustworthiness of the study is established through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985a).

The researcher was born in Durban, but spent all her early years in uMzimbhulu, until she moved to boarding school for high school education, followed by two decades of teaching and later a lecturing career before exploring life as a businesswoman. Her late mother, who was and will always be her pillar of strength as a development activist, excelled as a community builder in uMzimbhulu for several decades. The TVETC is a five-minute walk from her mother's home. Both young and old community members would pay her mother a visit looking for assistance in different aspects.

It was at that point that the researcher and her siblings would always find a couple of unemployed rural college graduates anxiously awaiting assistance for both placement and guidance regarding job opportunities, because their mother would promise that they would try their best to assist. One of their companies, the Crimson Company, as part of its core business as an accredited institution, provides and empowers the youth of South Africa with knowledge and skills through training and development.

*"Our commitment to transformation stems from our own experience of growing up in the rural Umzimkulu and the battles we faced as we stretched our horizons outwards to explore and embrace the world. But even though we may have travelled far and achieved much, our feet and our hearts are still firmly rooted in the soil of our ancestral home. It is this connection*

*that keeps us grounded, humble and focused, no matter where we go, what we do or who we meet.”*

It was this perspective that the researcher found interesting and equally depressing, in the sense that the government was spending billions of Rands on the TVET system, yet the majority of the graduates produced in that system were roaming the dusty streets of uMzimkhulu looking for jobs and, equally, were unable to start their own businesses as entrepreneurs. This led to a sense of urgency to assist unemployed rural graduates and a rethinking of her TVET system rendered herein.

This research is thus personal, central to which is upholding relevant ethical considerations to the highest standard.

## **Thesis structure**

Turning to the remaining chapters of the thesis:

Chapter 2: Provides a literature review of higher education and TVETCs. The chapter details what TVETCs are, and the aims and objectives of the education provided by VETCs. The chapter also debates about the weaknesses and strengths of the TVET system, the main approaches to TVET, and what we know about TVET research globally as well as in South Africa. One key consideration of the chapter is the foregrounding that has been laid by policy in South Africa where vocational education should equip students with skills that contribute to the development of the country's economy as well as that of the rural areas that are marginalised. What is clear is that the South African TVET and its alignment to the needs of the economy require a policy shift, particularly for TVET in the rural context. The chapter discusses the strengths of using the CA make the much-needed shift, which considers both instrumental and intrinsic values of education.

Chapter 3: The chapter presented an in-depth discussion of the CA framework used in the current study. It has noted that the TVET policies in South Africa are dominated by the HCT, where the aim is economic productivity, by focusing on skills

development for employability. The chapter goes on to show how the engaging CA with TVET shifts attention from the economy to the person, therein advancing the need to address various dimensions of human life as well as the need to pursue long-life aspirations.

Chapter 4: Describes the qualitative research methodology adopted in this research study and the underlying reason for selecting this research methodology. In addition, the chapter outlines the research paradigm, the sampling process, and the data collection method. Furthermore, the ethical considerations taken in the study are discussed.

Chapter 5: Presents student perspectives from Phase 1, viz. when the students started the course. The chapter also captures the students' aspirations and how they expected knowledge and skills to change their lives and everything else. The students clearly valued what they learnt and the knowledge they received during the first year.

Chapter 6: Presents the lecturer findings from Phase Two. Lecturers indicated their will to develop employability (education for instrumental value) and entrepreneurial skills (education for entrepreneurial skills), but there is little evidence to reveal their intention or plans to develop these skills. The need to equip students with social skills is also less pronounced from the data.

Chapter 7: Presents the student findings from Phase 3. Most graduates interviewed have not achieved their dreams and aspirations. The majority of the graduates had not undergone an internship or been employed. It is reported that the College was not doing enough to support students to find such opportunities.

Chapter 8: Presents theorisation in the form of the key research findings and discussions, while considering the research questions as well as the theoretical framework in which the research is located. The chapter reinforces the need to "rethink" the purpose of TVETCs in South Africa, particularly rural colleges that are struggling to develop a successful TVET in which a significant share of a typical youth cohort enrolls and obtain meaningful training. In the end, the researcher

proposes a Rural Integrated Vocational Education Training Approach (RIVETA) to influence the education that can be delivered in rural colleges.

Chapter 9: Presents conclusion and recommendations and recapitulates what the research paper discusses, further highlighting the key and interesting findings of the research. The exploration of the rural TVET in South Africa using a human development perspective is advanced and a novel approach RIVETA is proposed.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, background information relating to South Africa's triple challenge of poverty, inequality, and unemployment was provided, coupled with the South African TVET system. In addition, the researcher introduced the theoretical frameworks on which the study is based and outlined the problem statement and research questions. More so, the researcher's positionality was presented followed by an overview of the research methodology. In Chapter 2, the researcher focuses on from the literature review.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

It is imperative to highlight that a lot of research, interest and literature have been generated about TVETCs in general in South Africa and the world more generally. It is equally important to note that research has been done but not enough, about rural TVETs in South Africa, taking into consideration that the majority of South African TVETCs are situated in and serve rural areas in this country. It was, therefore, important for the researcher to proceed with care, setting a solid base in this research space.

This chapter evaluates literature on TVET systems in South Africa, the rest of Africa and on western countries. It responds to the question of what conceptual and empirical gaps exist in the literature on the TVET system in terms of addressing the broader societal challenges in South Africa, given the rapidly changing industry, social problems and globalisation. As presented earlier, South Africa has a unique history of apartheid, which has left a legacy of high inequality, unemployment, extreme poverty levels, low economic growth, and social ills, including racism. This chapter therefore builds from the understanding that rural TVETCs ought to produce individuals who are equipped with skills for addressing economic, social, and community challenges.

The labour market and TVETCs are characterised by inequality and the exclusion of rural populations, where the skills these communities should be offered through TVET need to be considered (McGrath, Powell, Alla-Mensah, Hilal & Suart, 2020). Rural TVET needs to be contextualised within the political economy of the country, the way the apartheid state was set up, and the limits the new state has in terms of its ability to manoeuvre and make meaningful change that empowers the majority blacks (Allais, 2012; Powell & McGrath, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; McGrath et al., 2020). It is notable that formal democracy in South Africa has largely failed to address skills development for the economy due to the wider internal and external contradictions. The present South African TVET system remains largely influenced by the historical political economy of colonialism and apartheid. Central to studies such as those presented by Allais (2012) as well as McGrath et al. (2020) is that the apartheid system put in place structures that marginalised black indigenous people in accessing good quality education and participating in the economy. Challenges of unemployment both in urban and

rural areas continue to bedevil the country, with rural communities being the worst affected, as they do not have any form of income-generating economic activity, lacking access to land, tenure, security, and water. As much as the need for rural development is recognised through entrepreneurship, it appears that the political economy does not support a flourishing TVET system (McGrath, 2011). Neoliberalism market forces have also played a role in the stagnation of the economy and the limitation of job opportunities.

The political economy of the country affects the TVET system in that the reforms that are made in TVET are likely to reinforce the low skills outcomes, as opposed to overturning them (McGrath, 2011). While sound policy reforms could be made, the practicality of realising a functional TVET that produces the skills needed for South African society remains limited, largely due to poverty. Allais (2011; 2012) explains that inadequate social security, high levels of job insecurity, and high levels of inequality are some of the factors affecting the development of skills through TVET in South Africa. Graduates cannot simply secure jobs through employment in rural areas, because there is no economy to create those jobs. Moreover, the TVET students do not have access to internships that give them work experience. Even when they want to become entrepreneurs the conditions are generally not supportive. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2013) asserts that TVET can be transformed with credible, comprehensive skills systems by means of which to address the needs of individuals and communities and improve their livelihoods.

### **TVET systems in the Western countries**

The Western countries literature on TVET systems discusses two types of systems. The first originates from countries following neoliberal approaches, e.g., the Anglophone model, where TVET is designed to provide skills only for industry with individuals being responsible for the cost of TVET and securing jobs. A second system of TVET is characterised by a well-regulated and coordinated system of government, labour, and businesses, e.g. in Northern Europe such as in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. These countries have a TVET system separate from the main education system, which is supported by businesses. Embedded in the curricula in these TVET systems are a focus that extends beyond skills for production to skills for good citizenship.

A body of literature has delved into TVET in developed countries including the UK, USA, Canada and Australia (Bosch & Charest, 2009; Keep, 2012; Guthrie, 2009; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2017; 2018). Specifically, this literature investigates the nature and role of vocational qualifications in accessing employment as well as for TVET graduates' social mobility within a context of liberal markets. Wheelahan and Moodie (2017) reveal that most of the countries, such as Canada and Australia, that are influenced by the Anglophone education systems follow a liberal approach to the labour market and their vocational system is integrated with the main education system. Due to the influence of the neoliberal approaches and the fluidity in the labour market, these countries invest little in training labour, but invest more in education, while giving individuals the responsibility to pay their fees and access the labour market. This presents a challenge in the TVET system where some of the graduates fail to access labour markets. Scholars such as Wheelahan and Moodie (2017), Keep (2012) and Guthrie (2009) reveal a challenge of a skills mismatch in the UK and Australia and attribute this to the education systems that inadequately respond to the skills demand in the industries. As such, most of the graduates in Australia do not work in the fields they are qualified for (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2017). Blame is placed on the competency-based qualifications, few apprenticeships offered by business, and failure to link the graduates to labour market.

It appears from the literature that the negative perception that TVET receives from communities, parents, students and many sectors of society is a huge challenge emerging in the countries that do not have a separate TVET system, particularly those that have adopted the Anglophone education system (Bathmaker, 2019; MacLean & Wilson, 2009). This has resulted in most students preferring to enrol for university education instead of in TVETCs, or in students becoming unemployed after completing their vocational education studies (Bathmaker, 2019; MacLean & Wilson, 2009). Bathmaker (2019) reveals that the vocational colleges are seen as belonging to 'other' people, which emphasises the stigma that the colleges suffer from in the community. This is partly because most of the students enrol at the vocational college as a second option, and hence, have fewer opportunities after their college studies.

Countries in the North of Europe such as Germany and Scandinavia, however, have their labour markets coordinated by the government at national and regional levels, together with business and labour (Winch, 1998; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2017). Wheelahan and Moodie

(2017) indicate that these countries have a separate vocational system that runs parallel to higher education, and that their market economies are coordinated, resulting in them accommodating the graduates, including those from TVET. Due to the relative stability in the economic markets, businesses are forthcoming to invest in labour through apprenticeships, unlike the countries where there are fluid liberal markets, such as the Anglophone countries (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2017). The vocational curriculum focuses mostly on skills as well as good citizenship. Underpinning the vocational system of Germany is the concept of 'learning how to learn', which stresses the need to develop graduates who could learn throughout their lives (Benner 2003, p. 180) in addition to a strong link between the TVET and the labour market (Winch, 1998). This literature points to the need to involve industries and business in vocational education, which can help the development of appropriate skills within countries.

Some literature also explores curricular issues to address the question of what kind of curriculum the TVET ought to offer in Western countries, given the context of liberal markets (Young, 2006; Wheelahan, 2007; 2014; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2018). The authors indicate that the TVET curricula in these countries are underpinned by competency-based training, which restricts the students to practice of the discipline, but lacks the depth found in higher education disciplines and professions. This has implications for social justice in terms of TVET graduates having lifelong skills needed for them to pursue their aspirations in the complex working world. This narrow conception of work-based curricula is limiting, because it perpetuates the perception that TVET exists to serve the weaker students in society, thereby reproducing inequality (Wheelahan, 2015; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a). The TVET is usually designed to address the marginalisation of those excluded by the society (Bernstein, 2000), however, it equips the students with only those skills of how to practise their jobs without equipping them critical abilities to evaluate the knowledge they are applying and giving them the abilities of thinking about new knowledge. As such, TVET students lack access to the powerful knowledge that combines the theoretical knowledge underpinning vocational practice in an occupational field with the knowledge of the workplace (Bernstein, 2000; Wheelahan, 2015; Young & Muller 2014). This means that, in societies where there are inequalities, the TVET pathologises those from the low socio-economic backgrounds, who would have academically performed poorly in school. TVET qualification should promote the students' access into the labour market, facilitate their progression to another educational

level, as well as promote social mobility of the disadvantaged in the communities (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2018).

The global literature has highlighted the productionist perspective of TVET influenced by the neoliberal approach, which offers only skills for industry in some countries, but also good citizenship in others. Consequently, these literature resources show that the conditions in the Western countries are, to a large extent, supportive of TVET systems, which raises the question as to whether the political economy in South Africa is also supportive of its TVET system. More important is that the literature seems not to dwell sufficiently on the kind of skills that TVET should offer within a rural context in South Africa.

### **TVET in Africa**

The dominant view from literature in Africa on TVET is mainly productionist in the sense that TVET ought to provide skills for production. Based on neoliberal thinking associated with the World Bank, this literature forwards that the market ought to determine the skills needed in the economy (Oketch, 2015; 2016; Oketch & Lolwana, 2017). Psacharopoulos (1996) postulates that conceptualising TVET in terms of HCT means that colleges must focus on skills development for employability, which may be confusing because acquisition of some form of training may not necessarily guarantee a job, although it increases the chances of finding one. According to Psacharopoulos (1987), the best way to tackle the issue would be for colleges to offer on-the-job training that would be more relevant, more responsive to technological change, and would allow an applicant more choice. Despite Psacharopoulos's claims, grounded in global surveys and early studies in developing countries (Tanzania, Colombia and Jordan), there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that vocational secondary education frequently has higher social returns than general secondary education, in particular in middle-income, developing countries. The interesting point from these studies is that the returns to TVET were rising, and that studies did not conclude that TVET investment was misplaced, as long as it emphasised broader problem-solving skills, rather than narrowly defined vocational skills. Some of the Psacharopoulos study methodologies and data have been questioned, particularly the Jordanian study.

Oketch (2016) posits that the conditions in the political economies of many Sub-Saharan Africa countries do not yet allow for an expansive TVET system. Breaking this down, he argues

that regardless of the renewed commitment to expand the TVET systems in Sub-Saharan countries, funding patterns often do not correspond with this commitment. In absolute number terms, it is evident that enrolments in TVET are growing much more rapidly than the financing capabilities of Sub-Saharan African governments (Oketch & Lolwana, 2017). In fact, the World Bank shows that Africa is the only region in the world that has experienced a decrease in the volume of current public expenditure per student (30 % between 1995 and 2010). Aitchison (2018) observes that Africa has many challenges regarding TVET, including inequitable geographical distribution of colleges, with those in urban areas being of better quality than those in rural areas. Generally, lack of infrastructure and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) prevent the TVETCs from delivering quality skills. Shortage of trained professionals is a common characteristic in African countries, contributing to TVET achieving little in the way of matching the demands in the labour market, skills needed for entrepreneurship and small businesses (Aitchison, 2018). The weak educator core in these countries is the result of how educators are prepared to be professionals that could build strong institutions (Oketch, 2015). The result of all these problems is that the TVET system is not playing a meaningful role in bridging the transitions between schooling and work in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. Oketch (2015) defines as a social justice concern as many young people have been denied the currency to bargain with employers as well as means to earn livelihoods.

The education systems in most Sub-Saharan African countries have been criticised for failing to address inequality, and such problems as high unemployment, due to the overemphasis of academic education and the neglect of vocational education. For example, the education system in Uganda has been blamed for youth unemployment as it is largely theoretical and excludes practical skills (Ukundane & Blaak, 2010; Kanyandago, 2010; Blaak, Openjuru & Zeelen, 2013; Zeelen, 2015; McGrath et al., 2020). This contributes to the gap between the skills young people are equipped with through TVET and those required by the labour market (Zeelen, 2015). Zeelen (2016) explains that the Ugandan government prioritised secondary education and university education more than TVET and gave limited financial and infrastructural support. As opposed to students obtaining a diploma or a degree in higher education and becoming unemployed, Zeelen (2015) argues that youth ought to be encouraged to learn a trade through TVET, which gives them the opportunity for

employment. The education system should be related to the labour market, where learners gain practical skills at an early age (Tukundane & Blaak, 2010). Besides that, the vocational education in Uganda is viewed as having a low status and being a sanctuary for those who have failed in their education, while craftsmanship is regarded as having low value (Zeelen, 2015).

Similar trends of emphasising enrolment into primary and secondary schools while neglecting the development of practical skills are found in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. In the context of Kenya, Mwinzi and Kelemba (2010) point out that inasmuch as some aspects of vocational education were incorporated into the country's polytechnics, the TVET is weak and under-resourced. In the same vein, Muwaniki and Wedekind (2019) reveal that the TVET was perceived as inferior during colonial and post-independent Zimbabwe, and that TVET teachers' professional development is being ignored, with priority being given to higher education. This highlights the absence of a functioning TVET system in these countries, despite most young people being unemployed and impoverished.

Apart from the prioritisation of knowledge by Sub-Saharan African countries, Oketch (2016) stands against the adaptation of TVET systems from other countries, without changing them to suit the African context. He notes that there are several reforms and international practices that have been implemented in many Sub-Saharan countries, without relevant changes. The examples of reforms in TVET in the last two decades refer to qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, and employer involvement, including private sector providers. Oketch (2016) points out that the reforms do not seem to be making a significant impact on the expansion of TVET systems. The result of all these problems is that the TVET system is not playing a meaningful role in bridging the transitions between schooling and work in most Sub-Saharan countries.

Studies that have examined TVET education have also aimed to determine ways of linking the vocational colleges to informal economies in the Global South, including Africa, and with work-based training or apprenticeship (Ahadzie, 2009; DeJaeghere, 2018; Akoojee, 2019). Ahadzie (2009) explores the traditional informal apprenticeships in West Africa and recommends that policymakers ought to consider integrating informal training with basic education, where teachers would play a facilitating role. It is a concern that in most African

countries, the informal economy is less supported by government, yet it has persevered over several decades (ILO, 2012; Akoojee, 2019). Findings from this study point to the need to improve the quality of learning and accrediting the programmes in TVETCs. In another study, Akoojee (2019) explores the nature, role, and form of learning in the informal sector in Africa, and provides the basis for its incorporation into the work-based learning discourse. His study found that work-based learning can provide a powerful means to ensure that forms of informal learning are embraced in the national space. Using the case of Tanzania, DeJaeghere (2018) perceives promoting the apprenticeships in the informal sector as crucial in contributing to the livelihoods of the youth, especially those with limited access to education. She perceived apprenticeships as presenting the youth with the opportunity to establish relationships essential for them to pursue their aspirations (DeJaeghere, 2018). Findings from the above studies illustrate that focusing on work-based learning in informal economies is significant, given the informal nature of most countries in the Global South, and the rural context of TVET, on which this study places focus.

The literature in Africa points to the dominance of a market-related perspective of TVET in Africa, and the over-academisation of the education system. It also indicates the paucity of information on which comprehensive skills can be foregrounded to transform TVET in the post-conflict societies in West and East Africa.

### **South African TVET literature**

Similar to other Sub-Saharan countries, TVET in South Africa is influenced by a neoliberal approach, where the markets determine the kind of skills provided. There is heated debate on TVET, considering that TVET in South Africa are captured by neoliberalism and have failed to address the unemployment and other social challenges in its society, particularly in rural areas. Right-wing authors such as Becker (1993) believe in human capital and a neoliberal approach to TVET, according to a narrow perspective of training where TVET graduates are trained for production only. On the left are authors who criticise the neoliberal approach to the TVET in South Africa and advocate for a government intervention considering the political economy in South Africa (Allais, 2003; Allais, 2007; 2013; Kraak, 2004; McGrath & Lugg, 2012; McGrath, 2012; Powell, 2012). In addition to the above, some literature on TVET in South Africa focuses on the approaches to TVET, management of TVETCs, teaching and learning,



curriculum and pedagogy, student support, and teacher education. The following sections expand on these themes.

### ***Human capital and TVET in South Africa***

A view from McGrath (2012) is that the TVET system in South Africa is based within the human capital, economism and productivism paradigm, which is an outdated version of development. Associated with that are quantitative studies, which mainly serve management and policymakers, as will be shown. Thus, fewer studies were university based and qualitative in nature. Akoojee and McGrath (2008), who were involved in an HSRC project, did an extensive overview of human resources development in the country, which resulted in crucial findings leading to the realisation that the critical skills shortage was a major challenge. Such findings led to an emphasis on the need to expand middle level skills, such as those required by artisans and technologists. Research activity during this stage, which helped in policy directions, was extended to other research projects, including the situational analysis of colleges in nine provinces, and the labour market reviews conducted by the HSRC and the Colleges Collaboration Fund (CCF). The CCF also conducted three national surveys of the TVET sector in 1998, 2000, and 2002. The findings from this research were mainly negative, and, according to Powell and Lolwana (2012), there were challenges that included poor-quality service in the sector, poor management, unskilled staff, and inequalities in terms of race and gender. A significant contribution during this period was a further study by the Colleges Collaboration Fund, which included both focus group discussions and a quantitative component (Fisher et al., 1998). Powell (2013) argues that these focus group discussions, however, limited the nature of the responses, as the students and the lecturers who took part were not given enough space to express their views. Thus, research around this time was predominantly quantitative and, when qualitative approaches were adopted, they tended to present descriptive data on which policy could be built (Powell, 2013). From the above discussion, it is evident that neoliberal forces and drivers have formed the relationship between higher education, graduates, and the labour market in South Africa, and that this in turn influences the kind of graduates produced by TVETCs in the country, who are mostly industrially oriented, while limited in terms of human development skills.

The post-1994 TVET policy in South Africa was developed precisely in order to address the racialised inequity between white and black introduced by colonialism and apartheid, that is, to address the penetrating poverty under which most of the black citizenry continue to live, and to situate the country completely within a global economy. McGrath (2009) reviews the policies that the South African government crafted in response to the above aim, with 2010 studies entitled *TVET needs research* and *Beyond aid effectiveness: The development of the South African further education and training college sector*. McGrath and Lugg (2012) then explore a possibility of phasing in new approaches of looking at vocational education and training. McGrath (2012) further identified a need for a policy shift. Most studies, including those of McGrath and Lugg (2012), were conducted towards the same goal of vocational education and training reform. That is also supported by previous research by McGrath, Badroodien, Kraak and Unwin (2004), who highlight a clear need for a shift and understanding of skills in South Africa. In management studies, much of the focus has been on attempts to improve management systems (Akoojee & McGrath, 2008). Observing these, it becomes clear that the few studies that sought to understand student experiences used a deficit approach, by understanding students as lacking. An approach that is sensitive to the diverse contexts of the colleges and students, and one which promotes individual freedoms, good citizenship, and social development, cannot continue to be overlooked.

### ***TVET and skills system contestations***

Reform of TVET colleges that drew from the imposition of neoliberalism in South Africa has been well outlined (Wedekind, 2008, 2010, 2016; King & McGrath, 2002; Boonzaaier 2003; McGrath, 2004, 2005; Akoojee, Gewer, & McGrath, 2005; McGrath & Badroodien, 2005; Young, 2006; Papier, 2009). The relevant key policy statements in this regard include the Further Education and Training Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998), the TVET White Paper (RSA, 1998) and the New Institutional Landscape document of 2001 (DoE, 2001). Broadly, the policy legislatures aim to transform colleges from being government dependant, to being autonomous business-like institutions (Akoojee & McGrath, 2008). In TVET-specific terms, they borrowed from the 'Old Commonwealth' a 'tool kit' of new public management reforms, that included new governance structures, giving institutions more autonomy, and businesses more say at local and national levels on sectoral bodies; competency-based curricula; national qualifications frameworks; and outcomes-based funding (Allais, 2003; McGrath & Lugg,

2012). From their inception, TVET colleges have been viewed as “a vehicle for providing skills that respond to the economic needs of the country” (Buthelezi, 2016, p. 2). Colleges were positioned to “address priority skills demand by delivering sound general-vocational programmes that would prepare young people for entry into the workplace” (Gewer, 2016, p. 32). The perceived “learn and work” benefits constitute building blocks for economic growth (McGrath, 2003, 2005; McGrath et al., 2006; Akoojee, 2008). For example, the introduction of a new curriculum named the National Curriculum (vocational) was perceived to be relevant to the needs of the economy as the country was experiencing a shortage of artisans (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007). The major critique of the policy that has been implemented is that the majority of the literature on African TVET is grounded in an inadequate theorisation of both TVET and development and fails to fully account for political economy histories emerging out of colonial regimes that shape both what is present and what is absent in VET policies and debates (McGrath, 2011, 2012). What is clear is that the South African VET and its alignment to the needs of the economy both require a policy shift.

McGrath (2012) suggests that this reimagining of TVET needs to take place within revised developmental paradigms which, to various degrees, oppose and supersede the “productivist” frameworks in which TVET is currently located. More recently, McGrath et al. (2020) argue that the orthodox set of theories and policies for vocational education and training do not work, as they misunderstand the current worlds-of-work and desires for human flourishing of individuals and communities and are incapable of addressing the ways that these are likely to be shaped by the horizon of profound challenges promised by the near future. These scholars offer an exploration of the theoretical approach of TVET research and offer insight into how TVET education can be transformed in order to contribute to the wider transformation agenda on sustainable human development. While McGrath and colleagues propose a Critical Capabilities Account of Vocational Education and Training (CCA-VET), their focus is placed more on international vocational education, where this thesis places its emphasis on a more rural approach.

Literature in South Africa has also focused beyond student transition on employment, to pursuing university education (Needham, 2018). These studies reveal that students enter TVET with secondary schooling, and that they had little willingness to proceed to enrol for universities after their vocational training. Despite the introduction of the NQF in South Africa,

reports show that students struggle to progress into universities, which suggests the negligible impact of a qualifications framework. Mabunda and Frick (2020) explored factors that influence NC(V) graduates' employability by means of a case study at a rural TVET college in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Unlike this study that included the capability approach perspective, the case focused on recent NC(V) graduates' perceptions of their own employability and on input from lecturers in selected NC(V) programmes and potential employers in the study area. In Zimbabwe, Katsande (2016) investigated the views and attitudes of students, teachers, and education inspectors towards TVET in rural Zimbabwe. The study did not focus on human development or the capabilities approach. The findings revealed divergent views. It emerged that most students did not necessarily have negative views of TVET, but they were put off by the low status, lack of choice and the lacklustre delivery of TVET. Teachers and students alike were sceptical about the role of TVET in securing employment. In India, Ramasamy and Pilz (2020) explores the demand-driven approach at the micro level by focusing on the perspectives of individual learners within the context of their localities to position them at the centre of the skill development process. Another study conducted by UNESCO (2013) in Southern Africa points to low number of students who transition from college to universities. Besides the preference of academic backgrounds by universities, the report further identifies low throughput in TVETCs as key in limiting students' transition (UNESCO, 2013). As discussed earlier, these studies demonstrate the low status that other higher education institutions give to TVET qualifications, which shows perception of the quality of TVET to be a determinant on the success of a TVET system. Thus, the few studies that sought to understand student experiences used a deficit approach, by viewing students as lacking.

### ***Management, teaching, and learning***

A related area in the student support discourse centres on the question of why TVETCs have ineffective student support systems when compared to the support systems of universities. Needham (2018) explains that universities enjoy a certain degree of autonomy, which allows them to have tailor-made interventions, e.g., academic support programmes, accommodation, and wellness centres. This is enabled by the resources they have based on funding formulae (CHE, 2013). On the other hand, TVETCs are bound by uniform support policies and guidelines for implementation in each of the colleges (Needham & Papier, 2018).

Lack of autonomy accompanied by a 'one size fits all approach' to student support services ignores the context-specific challenges that students from a specific college could be facing. Furthermore, performance in the TVET has been affected by leaders who struggle to balance leadership with their management roles (Robertson & Frick, 2018). Unlike best practice worldwide, Robertson and Frick (2018) found that leaders in South African TVET often micro-managed the different aspects of the TVETC to conform with legislation, as opposed to placing focus on teaching and learning.

Whereas the students' opportunities to learn effectively are constrained by institutional infrastructure, underprepared students do not receive the additional academic support that they require. A framework document established by the DHET emphasises the need for academic intervention as a form of academic support to students (DHET, 2013). What the document reveals is a lack of preparedness among students as they demonstrated a poor foundational knowledge in English and Mathematics, which contributed to the poor performance during their studies at college (DHET, 2013). This literature stresses the role of student support programmes, targeting those who are underprepared for the TVET system.

There is a low throughput among South African TVET students, hence there is a need for more research on student experiences in colleges. Researchers who have focused on this area have noted that those students who drop out do so as a result of their low-income backgrounds and the inadequate levels of support given to them (Needham & Papier, 2018). In his study of TVET students in South Africa, Jeffery (2015) traces students' experiences in post-apartheid South Africa and found that students were constrained by low self-esteem and self-stigma, which inhibited them from seeking academic support. Students chose TVET as a second choice after they failed to meet the admission requirements for university education. While Jeffery's (2015) study provides insights on TVET in South Africa, it provides a deficit perspective of students' experiences, which ignores the resources they had when they enrolled at the vocational colleges. This points to a need for developing a conceptual approach, which not only seeks to understand what and how the students in TVETCs are lacking, but how their strengths can be capitalised upon for their success.

## ***Curriculum, pedagogy and teacher education***

Another group of literature focuses on curricula and pedagogy (Gamble, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2016a, 2016b; Papier, 2010; Allais & Shalem, 2018). These studies reveal that TVET curricula ought to be subject based and incorporate practical skills and knowledge. Gamble (2016a) argues that work-related curricula should not only be based on competences, but on knowledge for technical skills complexity. As such, competence-based approaches have limited capacity to understand the labour market in a neoliberal world and the complex relationship between education, employment, and financial rewards (Gamble, 2016a). Competence-based qualifications also emphasise workplace skills, but neglect the relevant knowledge underpinning that work. Moreover, the competence-based qualification gives little preference to other roles that TVET education ought to play for rural development, such as entrepreneurship and good citizenship.

The researcher's reading of the literature shows that certain literature resources focus beyond the curricula to students transition into employment (Papier, 2017; Terblanche & Bitzer, 2019). Papier (2017) finds that, inasmuch as TVETCs prepared students for the industry, employers found them to be inadequately equipped for the eventualities at the workplace. The author further argues that employers perceived students as needing some more practical work before joining the workplace as employees (Papier, 2017). Concomitantly, Terblanche and Bitzer (2019) identify the need for curricula changes in TVET in South Africa, in order for the country to respond to the needs of the industry and meet the TVET requirements. The authors suggest a framework to consider when reforming the curricula that requires leadership (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2019). This suggests a lack of exposure to practical work, and that TVET is not teaching the students practical skills, and/or that there is no link between the businesses and the students for students to undergo internships.

It appears that what is learnt and how it is taught affects TVET learning outcomes. This is the case in a context where traditional pedagogic models fail to bring to the fore the meaning-making, resourcefulness, and creativity that young people in South Africa have, in order for them to keep abreast of the rapid changes of the twenty-first century (Johanson, 2009). A study by Johnson (2009) investigates the changing needs of the economy and the curriculum in South Africa, assessing how the curriculum design can contribute to innovation and

creativity amidst world social and economic changes. The findings emphasise that students are innovative and creative, and can solve the real-life problems in the country, but that these abilities are not easily tapped, given current learning contexts. Furthermore, Needham (2018) contends that TVET in South Africa does little to prepare students for their transition into universities. This study raises an important issue, namely how to establish a learning context to exploit the abilities young people have, which is an area widely ignored in the South African literature. In addition to that, the TVET in South Africa is constrained by a failure of the system to adjust to new educational technologies. This results in students graduating without the higher skills needed in, for example, the automotive industry (Wildschut & Kruss, 2018).

Some researchers also interrogate teacher education, and the quality of vocational programmes (Papier, 2009; Gamble, 2013). While the role of quality teaching is stressed, much of the focus to improve TVET is on the macro-level, ignoring the micro-level. Lecturers were underqualified, not possessing an academic qualification required to facilitate sessions in TVET (Rudman & Meiring, 2019). Underqualification refers to the lecturers not having the required academic qualifications and professional teaching qualification (DHET, 2014). A relevant example of the areas in which lecturers were lacking is humanising pedagogy, which refers to a lecturers “abilities to recognise and respect diverse knowledges, to solve problems and contribute to society” (Rudman & Meiring, 2019, p. 93). However, Gamble (2011) argues that TVET teachers need to have subject knowledge, and they need to know how to teach that subject, as well as how to construct a curriculum. As such, practical teachers are expected to have technical qualifications recognised in the workplaces and with that discipline. Although universities train the TVET teachers, they offer a generic pedagogical component of lecturer qualifications, without training in the specific disciplines taught in colleges (Gamble, 2013). These studies indicate the weakness of the teacher training that affects teacher performance when delivering content, and during practical sessions.

Gamble (2013) considers the idea of vocational pedagogy and argues for the strengthening of formal teaching and learning in TVET institutions. She argues that a deepened understanding of knowledge differentiation in curricula necessitates a reconsideration of the competence base of TVET teaching, and by implication, of its capacity to bring about successful learning and further learning progression. Contrary to the common wisdom that proximity of curricula to the workplace is the ‘golden wand’ of successful TVET, the author claims that improved

formal teaching and learning are as important in TVET as they are in all other educational domains. TVET teachers need to have subject knowledge, and they need to know how to teach that subject, and how to construct a curriculum, she argues.

### ***Student support***

Some researchers have assessed how TVETCs are supported in South Africa. In their synthesis of the literature, Papier and McBride (2018) observe that student support services differed from one college to another, ranging from financial, social-psychological, to academic support. Considering the students' backgrounds of poor schooling, students required academic support, especially when it came to Science and Mathematics subjects (Papier & McBride, 2018). Poor living conditions, financial hardship, and inability to afford food were challenges observed in the economic dimension. Although the country adopted a free higher education policy in 2018, students continue to experience financial hardship due to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) failing to cover all the college expenses and supporting all deserving students, and its failure to disburse funds in time (USAF, 2019). Furthermore, Jeffery (2015) observes inadequate academic support for students from their lecturers in class, as students were not confident to seek help and felt that it was their fault that they did not master the content the first time around. The study has important implications for how academic support ought to be structured in South African TVET (Jeffery, 2015). These are the key areas that required further investigation in the study to determine whether the support system adequately equips students with knowledge and skills for their future occupations, especially in rural settings.

Papier and McBride (2019) investigate the ways of systematising student support in South African TVET. The authors reveal that student support is wide-ranging, and includes domains such as finances, psychosocial, and academic support. Career guidance prior to college entry and "course support" are essential to helping students make choices on what to study and what careers to pursue, as well as to practically help them gain access to employment through placements. Socio-economic challenges that include lack of finances to pay for living expenses, poor nutrition and living conditions, and substance abuse affected many students. More significantly, rural TVET colleges were characterised by poor infrastructure, due to the historical inequalities with rural students. The rural TVETCs were much more affected than



urban ones, with rural students from low-income backgrounds having limited opportunities to succeed. Papier and McBride's (2019) study not only highlight the need for supporting students, but for interventions to be sensitive to the needs of marginalised rural colleges and students.

While the above findings stress the need for experienced and well-trained teachers, academic literature on the subject has focused on student support services as a way of reforming TVETCs to improve successful outcomes among students. Student support services are important for this study, as students' participation and success are partly influenced by the support they receive in their transition from schooling to vocational education. Literature has focused on student access, participation, and success in TVET, and reveals fragmented student development services at colleges, little consultation between colleges and provincial departments, limited financial resources to support students, failure to understand the need to support students, and poor infrastructure (Department of Education, 2008). Poor infrastructure is not a problem limited to South Africa alone. MacLean et al. (2009) observe that most countries are burdened by cost of construction, equipment, and maintenance, training materials coupled with the absence of routine maintenance (MacLean & Wilson, 2009). There is therefore the need to find ways of addressing these challenges through an investigation of repurposing the role of TVET in South Africa.

Overall, a review of TVET literature in South Africa indicates that there are studies that interrogated students' experiences, management of the TVETCs, student support, teaching and learning, curricula, and pedagogy. In particular, the above literature does not focus on the rural context of TVETCs, or on how they can play a role in improving the lives of the marginalised youth. Central in the above literature is that TVET in South Africa is informed by a human capital perspective, with the need to provide graduates with the requisite skills for production. The next section explores literature that provides an alternative perspective to TVET in South Africa.

## **The Capabilities Approach and TVET in South Africa**

HCT is the main informant of educational policies, particularly when it comes to the perceived role of education and skills in relation to economic growth, whereas the CA emphasises human flourishing (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 2009). Thus, according to the CA, economic growth is essential for development, but it is insufficient (Powell, 2014). This research uses the CA an approach for conceptualising and evaluating TVET which differs in orientation from dominant productivist conceptions. This study shifts the focus from economic development to human development. By placing the wellbeing of TVET students at the centre of the researcher's concern, the study shifts its lens from income generation and with-it employability to capability expansion, which includes but is not limited to the capability to work. Motala and Vally (2014, p. 40) postulate that, if HCT continues to inform the TVET education, it will lead to seeing the sector as pivotal in solving "a problem that is not primarily an educational problem". To consider this context is to broaden the conceptualisation of TVET education to cater for both the intrinsic and extrinsic purposes of education. This kind of education can empower students and hence graduates to fulfil their lives. McGrath and colleagues have done extensive work on TVET systems, where for example, Powell (2012) has carefully considered TVET in South Africa and has explored the value of the CA for TVET as well as the purposes of TVET and its role in development thinking. McGrath (2011) reiterates the importance of interrogating the TVET sector in terms of the failing policy reforms by considering new approaches to TVET education and gradually drifting away from productivism approaches.

McGrath (2011) and Powell (2012) both recognise the paucity of research on TVET in Africa and add that this could be due to the low social status associated with these institutions, and the neglect of the sector by the funders of research. Powell (2012) highlights that in the small amount of research carried out by academics, donors and policymakers, students' voices have been notably overlooked or suppressed. In South Africa, when research has been done to gather the voices of the students, this has largely been through quantitative studies (Cosser, McGrath, Badroodien & Maja, 2003; Powell & Hall, 2004). McGrath (2011) argues that learners' perspectives should be privileged in TVET research, since they lie the heart of the system. Powell (2013) argues that prevailing research studies do not tell us what we need to know about the experiences of students. It is important to highlight that these studies have

been helpful to understand the challenges that affect TVET institutions. In fact, they have influenced decisions regarding management; governance; college infrastructure; and student and staff profiles (Powell, 2013). Powell (2013:60) argues however, that for research to be more effective, there needs to be a reconsideration of the assumptions that inspire the 'paradigmatic and epistemological' approaches applied. This is important in understanding the sector and for policy making.

Applying the CA, McGrath and Powell (2013) conducted a study in South Africa to gather the views of students, and their reasons for enrolling in TVET colleges. The results from this study indicate that learners are not only concerned with work, but that they value other attributes that are important for life and society. Their results show that employment is one of the most important facets of education, but not the only facet, as students also value the intrinsic purposes of education. McGrath (2012) reiterates that significant work needs to be done on vocational education and capabilities. In considering justice, agency and wellbeing, the CA allows a wider, person-centred analysis. This emphasises the analysis of the empowering role of TVET alongside the technical aspect (McGrath, 2012). Differing from previous studies, this research seeks to capture TVET students' experiences in a rural setting and uses the CA to understand the positive outcomes beyond the economic benefits of TVET education.

There is less literature that focuses purely on the kind of graduates that rural TVET are producing in South Africa that live meaningful/flourishing lives. There is no study that captures aspirations of TVET students and the extent to which these aspirations are being met by the education they acquire in a rural setting in South Africa. Matenda (2018) conducted a study that explores the gender inequality at one TVET in South Africa. What emerged is that women chose their study programmes based on gender inequality stereotypes, e.g. engineering programmes were understood as being for men (Matenda, 2018). What we can learn from Matenda's study (2018) is that while women faced similar challenges compared to men, e.g. limited support from their colleges, they were further marginalised and discriminated against due to sexual harassment and gender stereotypes. Although Matenda's study uncovers gender inequalities, it is interesting to follow this aspect in a rural setting. Powell's study (2012) demonstrates that, despite students having enrolled into TVET due to constrained choices, they had long-term aspirations to improve their lives, including pursuing higher education, even though they did not know how they might achieve these goals.

This study reviews literature that focuses on theorising TVET and on the use of CA in rethinking it (McGrath, 2012; Powell, 2012; Powel & McGrath, 2014; 2019; McGrath & Powel, 2014 etc). Again, this literature indicates that TVETC students do not only value having access to jobs, but value being empowered and acquiring social skills related to good citizenship. McGrath and Powell (2014) argue that the relationship between training and economic growth is dependent on social, economic, trade and political policies and practices of a country. Equally significant is the criticism that economic growth does not automatically lead to poverty alleviation, as there are many countries with high economic growth, that nonetheless suffer widespread inequality and poverty. These are issues to consider when rethinking TVET within the context of sustainable development. The implication of this is to shift away from a simplistic HCT approach to a more sophisticated approach that considers all relevant structures. Thus, the common thread throughout the literature is the need for a departure from only developing skills for employment to broadening the skills that TVET should equip their students with.

While there is growing literature on TVET and capabilities formation, there is a need to put emphasis on literature that focuses on the education provided to rural students and what they become. These studies largely ignore student agency, and there is less focus on rural skills for TVET students. This research therefore focuses on the marginalised context of rural TVET using the CA. A few publications have focused on the TVET system and capabilities formation in South Africa. These studies examined the policy shift and the possibility to expand the capability to aspire in the TVET system. Only a few studies that have focused on rural TVETCs, for example, Maluleke (2013), argue for a bottom-up approach in policy development for youth programmes. Maluleke (2013) opposes a form of neoliberalism that promotes the rights of business at the expense of people's livelihoods and lives, and contends that meaningful policies are those that are developed by the people they are meant to serve. Maluleke (2013) uses the theory of food sovereignty, which states that it is the right of natural persons to own and control their own outcomes. Unlike this study, which places student wellbeing and agency at the centre, food sovereignty theory takes food production and distribution as the point of departure.

The academic literature shows that there is little research conducted on rural TVET. There is a paucity of knowledge on what students at rural TVETCs value, and how their education

meets their human development, economic, and entrepreneurial aspirations. The significance of this research lies in its attempt to point towards a new approach to the conceptualisation of the TVET system, particularly for rural colleges, and what it ought to achieve, while being informed by the CA.

From the above discussion, it is evident that neoliberal forces and drivers have formed the relationship between TVET and the labour market in South Africa, and that this in turn influences the kind of graduates produced by TVETCs in South Africa, who are mostly industrially oriented, while limited socially and in terms of entrepreneurship. Accordingly, the TVET system in South Africa is based within the human capital, economism, and productivism paradigm, which, according to McGrath (2012), is an out-dated version of development. Additional salient points that can be drawn from the above literature review are that authorities, employers, and communities give limited support and recognition to rural TVETCs, and that the centralised system of managing TVETCs also shows limitations including inadequate teaching support. Furthermore, the few studies that sought to understand student experiences used a deficit approach by viewing students as lacking. An approach that is sensitive to the diverse contexts of the colleges and students, and one which promotes individual freedoms, good citizenship, and social development is needed.

Most of these studies above reveal an urban bias mentioned previously and emphasise the skills that young people ought to be equipped with in the urban context. This ignores the precarious nature of the rural context of South Africa, which is the focus of this study.

## **Rural development and TVET in South Africa**

The researcher focuses on rural skills and TVET due to the marginalisation of these communities. As mentioned in the introduction political economies in Africa do not adequately support TVET, as evidenced by the weak industry support given to training and limited labour markets in urban areas (McGrath et al., 2020). Transformation of TVET in South Africa therefore require credible and comprehensive skills for rural development that take into consideration the economic needs of the people. Teaching entrepreneurship and developing well-rounded graduates is critical for colleges to address multidimensional poverty in rural communities and enable graduates to live flourishing lives. This section critically examines literature on rural TVET in South Africa, and reveals that considering the

political economy in South Africa, particularly in rural areas, there is a deficit of research focusing on rural skills.

The fact that the qualitative research takes place in a rural area is key to this study. Three decades since the political transition to democracy, rural areas remain marked by limited economic opportunities, inadequate infrastructure and state services, along with enduring human development deficits (Neves, 2017). In 2003, a significantly large proportion of South Africa's population (43%) lived permanently in rural areas, and an even larger proportion of this group were poor (71%) (Stats SA, 2003). It is worth noting here that little is known about rural skills development per se, as most studies and policies concentrate on the sectoral or occupational distribution of skills, without denoting their spatial location (Jacobs & Hart, 2012). As previously stated, the supply of post-schooling or tertiary education in rural areas is challenging, and reflects the legacy of apartheid (DHET, 2012). It is thus worthwhile reviewing the literature on experiences of students in rural colleges, considering the inequalities of access, participation and success that are only exacerbated by the urban-rural divide.

A major characteristic of rural South Africa is the lack of access to land for most black people living in those areas (a majority constituency). Lack of access to productive land (in terms of size, quality and water), security of tenure, agricultural support, and markets hinders agriculture activities in the rural areas (Ransom, 2015). This positions land reform and redistribution as crucial for rural development. To understand inequality and poverty in South African rural areas, it is necessary to explore the historical context of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. The Natives Land Act of 1913 alienated the indigenous people from their land, in favour of the minority white population, with most of the indigenous African people being settled in marginal "native reserves" aimed to limit land acquisition and ownership by non-white South Africans. As a result, more than 13 million black people were confined to marginal "native reserves" that were later referred to as "Bantustans" or "African homelands" (Stickler, 2012, p. 2). Towards the end of apartheid, policymakers were faced with the challenge of how to address rural development under the imposition of apartheid homelands. Abrahamse-Lamola (1993) asserts that besides the commercial farms owned by white families, most people who live in the rural areas are black, and include women, children, the unemployed, pensioners, those waiting for employment, commuters to urban areas, and

small-town dwellers. Land reform has been identified as key for rural development through agriculture, as well as the development of appropriate skills used to utilise natural resources (Abrahamse-Lamola, 1993; Ransom, 2015).

As much as land reform has been perceived as a way of addressing inequality and poverty, it has been largely unsuccessful, and the reasons for its failure are beyond the scope of this study. For example, black people who constitute 75% of the population owned 13% of the total land in the country in 2000, while only 2,9% of the land was transferred to them by 2004 (Ransom 2015, p. 30). Even when indigenous black people in rural areas have access to land, Ransom (2015) argues that the agriculture sector, particularly smallholder farmers, have been affected by neoliberalism that favours large scale corporations in the marketing and distribution of products. Additionally, the domination of supermarkets to provide goods including agricultural products has stifled small-scale agriculture production in rural areas, and highlights the need for alternative economic activities in rural areas to compliment agricultural production, particularly for local youth.

Unemployment and poverty continue to bedevil the rural communities of South Africa. As a form of livelihood, some of the rural population migrate to urban areas, while others survive on remittances from those employed in urban areas. As such, there has not been meaningful development in rural areas regarding the growth of businesses, entrepreneurs and the economy (Du Toit & Neves, 2009). Most of the rural people in South Africa are impoverished through a lack of educational facilities, resources, transport, access to health, and unemployment (Omodan, Tsoetsi & Dube, 2019). The rural areas therefore have become reserves for labour and sanctuaries for the retired and those who are unemployable.

The literature review shows that the approach to rural development by academics and policymakers seems to be ineffective in addressing the marginalisation of the rural communities. Du Toit (2018) argues that economic growth and employment in rural areas in most contexts ought to thrive when there are strong economic links with urban areas, which have access to markets. This is, however, not the same within South Africa, where there has been a significant divide between rural and urban areas, and where development has excluded rural areas (Du Toit, 2018). The spatial bifurcations that resemble apartheid still exist, even after two decades of democracy (Noble, et al. 2014), which points to the role of

the historical political economy of the country in the marginalisation of rural people. Accompanying that, a lack of political action continues to exclude the rural communities from development. Mugobo and Ukpere (2012) contend that the South African government has not developed or implemented policies to achieve the intended results for rural development, as most of the interventions have targeted urban areas. The authors argue that most statements about poverty alleviation and rural development constitute political rhetoric, and there has not been many attempts to develop policies specifically for rural areas (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012). The lack of focus on rural areas has resulted in the rural communities being further disadvantaged and excluded from participating in the economy.

One way to approach the issue of rurality is to focus on rural development. Rural areas have struggled to become a source of jobs and growth in the post-apartheid era, which has been a disappointing factor for the majority of inhabitants. The 'Land Question' in post-apartheid South Africa has been debated for years, and there appears to be hesitation in dealing with this decisively. In fact, when the ANC came into power in 1994, the expectations were high that the lives of black people were going to improve in terms of meeting the basic human needs for all. In point of fact, many policy documents including the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), and the 1997 Rural Development Framework among others, aimed at creating vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities, and food security for rural people. The policy documents promised a renewed focus on rural development through the creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work in rural areas. While the land issue has been key in the redress and development discourse, the call for efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure development, and particularly the rejuvenation of rural industrial activity for inclusive growth, has been largely consistent. It could be argued that policy has led to transformation of commercial agriculture, but there are rising concerns that a trend of farming largely pursued through joint ventures, strategic partnerships, and convenient black economic empowerment (BEE) is emerging. Such arrangements seem to empower black people through ownership, yet leave patterns of production and employment and ultimately the impact on the economy largely unchanged (Hall, 2015). Cosmetic ownership has little or no effect in decongesting the overcrowded communal areas, or leading to meaningful job creation (Hall, 2015). What can be deduced from this is that the redistributive attempts seem to have done less to override trends



towards capital intensive farming, job shedding, and consolidation of both land and agricultural capital in fewer hands – trends that are antithetical to rural development (Hall, 2015). Meaningful dismantling of the apartheid capitalist structure for rural people is yet to be achieved.

It is documented that most of the jobs that continue to be created in rural areas are only on a short-term basis, with lower wages (DPME, 2013). The largest set of jobs were created through the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC), the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Community Work Programme (CWP), but these jobs were short-term in nature, and low wages were paid. Aside from this, these kinds of initiatives did not require a skilled and capable workforce that supported and could contribute to an inclusive growth path. The skills gained from these initiatives did not facilitate entry into the labour market, and did even less to develop entrepreneurial drive or secure permanent jobs. Hence, there is a need for the TVET to play a role in closing that gap. Additionally, development initiatives such as enterprises and cooperatives are aligned to municipal elections (cycle of four years), which in most instances, do not address long-term developmental outcomes (Gwagwa, 2020). It is in the public domain that short-term initiatives focus less on broader developmental goals, sustainability issues, and integration objectives.

What is clear is that ‘rural development’ within South Africa has proved largely ineffective (Neves, 2017). One key weakness is that rural development is undermined by a reliance on top-down planning, and a dearth of local participation (Neves, 2017). Neves (2017) highlights three key points regarding the way in which rural development has commonly been conceptualised in South Africa: i) it has typically been predicated on agriculture, including, often, the notion of small farm efficiency and the ‘inverse relationship’ between scale and farm production; ii) processes of rural development are typically conceived as nested within wider processes of rural transformation, and ultimately the larger structure and growth path of the economy; iii) inclusive and pro-poor growth is far from assured within processes of rural development (IFAD, 2016). The preceding points show that rural development policy development ought to be conceptualised in a broad manner, that recognises the past and the importance of land and agriculture, while also developing an environment of industrial modernity (Neves, 2017). What is needed now is a reconceptualisation of rural development in terms of land reform, and a workable strategy to enable large numbers of the rural poor to

participate in economic activities and human development. In this study, the researcher does not dwell on the policy alternatives for redistribution of both land and water for agriculture, to make possible the expansion of incomes from employment and self-employment. Rather, this study's focus is more on what could be practically done in TVET training to prepare young people for the future. One of the roles of TVET is to address inequality and poverty among the marginalised groups, particularly the youth, who may not have accessed higher education (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2018).

### ***TVET and rural development in South Africa***

The TVET system has come under scrutiny in recent years due to inactive local economies and the challenge to achieve employment growth in South African rural areas. Without wading into potential contestations over its definition, rural development can be broadly defined as a process of improving the lives of the rural population, and "recognising the contribution of rural areas to the welfare of the whole society" (Haines & Robino, 2006, p. 15). The term rural is indeed ambiguous. Wiggins and Proctor (2001) point out that there is no exact definition of the term, but that rural areas are clearly recognizable. They constitute the space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscape, most of which is dominated by fields and pastures woods and forest, water, mountain and desert. IFAD (2001:17) adds to this that rural people usually live in farmsteads or settlement of 5-10,000 persons, but also makes the point that national distinctions between rural and urban are arbitrary and varied. One of the simplest, but clearest definition of rurality is that one that expresses rurality as "a condition of place-based homeliness shared by people with common ancestry or heritage and who inhabit traditional, culturally defined areas or places statutorily recognized to be rural" (Chigbu, 2013). From the various definitions, rurality is a term describing a location where farm activities are more pronounced coupled with low population density, remoteness and a bit of nonfarm activities (Abdulwakeel, 2017). In this thesis, rurality' refers to a way of life, a state of mind, and a culture which revolves around land, livestock, cropping and community (KZN-PGDP, 2019). To put this in context, KZN rural areas continuously rely on the social welfare approach of distributing grants to unsustainable local projects, without creating an environment that would adequately support these projects to ensure their sustainable impact. Furthermore, local economic development projects mushroom anywhere, without any formal, common vision or approach to holistic

development (Bacus, 2011). Examples of rural development may include opportunities for income generation and local economic development, social unity, and physical security within rural communities, improved infrastructure and improved service provision (Nkomo & Sehoole, 2007). Post-apartheid, several initiatives have been introduced to target rural areas, including the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP), the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), and the National Rural Youth Service Corps (Narysec) (2010) (Maluleke, 2013). More so, government has made statements about prioritising rural development and expanding post-school education in rural areas (DHET, 2013). However, the student increase has also given rise to low lecturer–student ratios, and the TVET system is characterised by a high attrition rate (only 2% graduate on time) as well as significant delays in obtaining certification.

TVET is also believed to be one of the drivers of rural development, through encouraging rural people to participate in the economy. This is true in the context where there are high unemployment rates (Tilak, 2003). While TVET is thought to promote entrepreneurship and the establishment of small businesses by the rural youth, Tilak (2003) finds that it could also promote equity when established in rural areas. Tilak implies that having a viable TVET system in rural South Africa could contribute to the redress of inequalities.

The extent of poverty within rural communities impacts people’s ability to support TVETCs (Kathure & Mbijjiwe, 2014). Globally, rural TVETCs face numerous challenges, such as new competition, low skill and literacy levels among candidates applying the digital divide, and lack of student diversity in relation to race, ethnicity, and academic achievement (Van Wyk, 2010). Van Wyk (2010) conducted a study on the challenges encountered by a rural TVETC in South Africa. A number of these challenges related to lack of infrastructure, such as insufficient classrooms, workshops, and internet facilities, lack of resources from central office to respond to or deliver teaching and learning materials, poor management, and delays in appointing lecturers. An HSRC study (HSRC, 2008) of the employment and learning pathways of learnership participants indicates that weaknesses in the TVET and learnership system include insufficient practical experience as many TVET colleges do not have the necessary facilities; weak or non-existent partnerships between the public and private sector that constrain learners from getting on-the-job training; and the great distances from residence to institution (Jacobs & Hart, 2012).

The South African sector studies that directly or indirectly focus on rural skill demand include agro processing (Pieterse, 2009), forestry, wood and pulping (Pogue, 2009), as well as the creative industries (Joffe & Newton, 2009). Bhorat and Jacobs (2010) conducted an economy-wide analysis of skills demand, and found steady declines in the demand for unskilled workers and a significant increase in the demand for highly skilled workers across all sectors and industries, indicating a shift towards a knowledge-based economy (Jacobs & Hart, 2012). Agricultural studies have tended to focus on agricultural extension, technology adoption, and the relevant skills required. However, even in these studies there is limited focus on the supply and demand for these skills. A more robust analysis of skills supply and demand in rural areas, and specifically for rural development, is required (Jacobs & Hart, 2012). Brown and Majumdar (2020) explore the unique challenges to development of agricultural vocational education. They focus on (1) highlighting the reasons why, in developing and emerging economies, TVET in agriculture differs from TVET in other sectors; (2) exploring seven key challenges in implementing effective agricultural TVET programmes; (3) identifying cases of innovative responses to these seven challenges; and (4) offering a series of recommendations for countries in the Global South who are reforming their agricultural TVET programmes, or introducing new programmes (Brown & Majumdar, 2020). Another key work is a report by Assaf (2017) that provides evidenced-based information and clear recommendations to policymakers and other relevant stakeholders with an interest in agricultural human capital development. Some of the key findings of the study include inadequate funding for practical-level training; weak linkages to industry for understanding training needs; inadequate numbers of good quality educators who are appropriately trained to teach agriculture at school level; and poor linkages in the research–teaching–extension nexus (Assaf, 2017). These findings aroused the researcher’s interest regarding how a rural TVET college would fair if these recommendations could be turned into questions.

Maluleke and Harley’s report (2016, p. 85) shares findings on a qualitative study conducted with youth from the Limpopo Province so as to investigate what TVET out-of-school youth consider to be relevant in their context. Participants revealed that TVETCs in South Africa do not offer quality education, and do not align with local needs. Participants emphasised the need for TVET relevant to their local context that provides them with both vocational skills and a broader education. While participants valued skills for the marketplace, they also

sought to develop other skills relevant to their livelihoods so as develop and secure local culture, improve inter-personal communication, and understand the local and wider context. This is where the current study enters the conversation, using a human development perspective to posit that TVETCs should be able to contribute to the general wellbeing of individuals and society that is not limited to extrinsic value of education alone.

This study focuses on rural TVETCs in South Africa and is thus unique when compared to other studies that have limited their exploration to TVETCs in urban and peri-urban areas. It is against this background that rural TVETCs ought to play a pivotal role in terms of equipping students with relevant entrepreneurial and business management skills, skills for employability, and above all, human development capabilities. The research therefore considers how this could be realistically achieved, bearing in mind the challenges that higher education, and particularly TVETCs face. It is also clear that the challenges that rural communities face lie beyond the scope of what the TVET system could contribute or do. The broader issues require an integrated and phased approach that can systematically transform the economic and social systems that keep rural communities in a poverty trap, into systems that improve rural communities' quality of life.

### ***Rural entrepreneurship***

This section puts into context the importance of providing meaningful TVET to rural and remote areas. Similar to other developing countries, the majority of South Africa's population still live in rural areas (Maluleke, 2013; Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012). It is, therefore, rational that the government and policymakers recognise entrepreneurship as an important element in rural development, and as one of the strategies for creating employment even in urban areas. According to Mugobo and Ukpere (2012, p. 829), rural entrepreneurship refers to "the creation of a new organisation that introduces a new product, service or creates a new market, or utilises a new technology in a rural environment." Essentially, rural entrepreneurship refers to establishing businesses in rural areas, and represents the informal sector of the economy. For example, Petrin (1994) explains that individuals and institutions perceive entrepreneurship as a strategic development intervention that could accelerate the rural development process. He further elaborates that individuals and institutions perceive entrepreneurship as an opportunity. For instance, development agencies see rural

entrepreneurship as having great employment potential; farmers perceive this as a way to increase farm earnings; and women perceive it as an employment opportunity that is conveniently close to home and also as a space in which they already practice various forms of informal labour (Petrin, 1994). Entrepreneurship in rural areas is fundamentally based on promoting local entrepreneurial talent and growth of local companies, which would subsequently generate employment and boost the economic growth of the region (Sherief, 2008), thereby improving skills and talents of the local rural people, as well as developing organisational capabilities and financial support is fundamental to addressing poverty (Omodan et al., 2019; Ngorora & Mago, 2013).

In terms of the entrepreneurial landscape in South Africa, the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Index ranked South Africa 52nd in the world in terms of entrepreneurial environment (Acs, Szerb & Autio, 2017). Further statistics from the latest South African Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report show that “only 10.1% of South Africans of working age intend on starting their own business in the next three years, compared to 41.6% in other African countries” (Herrington, 2017). The GEM report attributes the 10.1% to the overall low level of education and training in South Africa (Nicolaidis, 2011; Herrington, 2017). South Africa’s schooling system has been criticised because it has failed to prepare students to participate in the country’s economy (Herrington, 2017). Herrington (2017) further states that, although entrepreneurship ought to be included in the secondary school curriculum, it is taught neither widely, nor effectively. Similarly, in a study conducted by Isaacs, Visser, Friedrich and Brijlal (2007), 60% of the 39 leading schools in South Africa did not offer entrepreneurship training programmes. It should further be noted that only 19% of rural high schools, where it is most needed, and 57% of urban schools, offer some form of entrepreneurial training (Isaacs et al., 2007). The schools that did not comply with the mandatory requirement of offering any form of entrepreneurial training programmes up to Grade Nine, provided the following reasons: there [was] no syllabus on entrepreneurship or the requirements; businesses tend to prefer supporting Mathematics and Science programmes; and in rural areas, a major problem is distance as it presents challenges (Isaacs et al., 2007, p. 621). According to Herrington (2017), school leavers would be better prepared for the transition into the labour market if entrepreneurship was being offered at schools.

The importance of entrepreneurship as a catalyst to achieving economic growth, skills and development and reducing poverty is well recognised by the South African government. As a result, the government has introduced various initiatives to facilitate entrepreneurship through incubators, mentorship programmes, and funding grants (Kgosiemang, 2015). In addition, the youth are encouraged to pursue entrepreneurship as a possible career path, as opposed to seeking employment opportunities, especially in rural areas. However, South Africa's schooling system teaches youth to become job seekers and employees. They are taught to finish matric, go to university, get a degree, and then find a job. Instead, they need to be equipped with the skills to seek a career as a job creator – otherwise known as an entrepreneur. Hence, schools and higher education institutions need to equip students with skills that will enable individuals to pursue entrepreneurship as a career aspiration rather than a last option to unemployment. Furthermore, continued challenges encountered by entrepreneurs, such as red tape, lack of access to finance and credit lines, and the generally high cost of doing business (Phakathi, 2016), ought to be reduced so as to encourage entrepreneurial activity in South Africa.

Regardless of the potential role that entrepreneurship can play in rural areas, there is little evidence that small businesses have grown into Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and large companies or co-operations in rural South Africa. This is due to several challenges the rural entrepreneurs encounter. A study by Mugobo and Ukpere (2012, p. 832) on the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs in the Western Cape indicates that a lack of funding (59%) results in the entrepreneurs failing to operate their businesses. Aside from that, a lack of skills due to rural to urban migration contribute to businesses not having the required technical skills, and not being able to retain labour due to less attractive salaries (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012, p. 832). Additionally, poor infrastructure and remoteness from key services, such as poor road networks and transport and unreliable telecommunications, emerged as constraints to entrepreneurship, since the infrastructure in these areas is poorly developed. Remoteness and poor communications restrict rural entrepreneurs from accessing information about markets and support services, including finances, and restrict general exposure to that which is taking place in the wider economy (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012).

For rural entrepreneurship to contribute to rural development, there needs to be an enabling entrepreneurship environment, which, according to Mugobo and Ukpere (2012), is only

possible through policies and programmes. Several studies have been conducted in South Africa on the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012; Ngorora & Mago, 2013; Madzivhandila & Musara, 2020). Ngorora and Mago (2013) reveal the following factors as hindering rural entrepreneurship in the Nkonkobe Municipal Area of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa: limited access to finance; small markets; poor transport systems; limited networking; absence of electricity; lack of equipment; corruption; lack of marketing initiatives; and stiff competition. Furthermore, a lack of effective demand of product (or service) also hindered rural entrepreneurship in Nkonkobe Municipal Area (Ngorora & Mago, 2013). Similar challenges were also found in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012). Mugobo and Ukpere (2012), however, identify some opportunities that were available for rural entrepreneurs to sustain their enterprises, such as government commitment to support rural businesses, and the land reform programme that intended to provide land for farming and other business purposes (Mugobo & Ukpere, 2012). The literature on entrepreneurship in rural South Africa suggests that TVET alone does not guarantee success and human flourishing, hence the need to also contextualise the business environment and the role of individuals.

As stated above, a major obstacle in the growth of SMEs in rural areas in South Africa, including KZN, is limited access to finance. Bomani and Derera (2018) further argue that financial institutions prefer funding well-established and large-scale businesses that are already successful with skilled personnel, which excludes most SMEs. Local authorities redistributing land to the SMEs, developing skills and offering mentorship support to businesses could help entrepreneurship in the rural areas (Bomani & Derera, 2018). A study by Mthembu and Mutambara (2018) on rural development in KZN illustrates that, despite the emphasis on creating employment through, for example, rural tourism, little has been achieved in terms of addressing poverty and promoting rural development. Although rural tourism is one focus promoting rural development, there is not much referencing of the kind of skills the youth ought to have, or whether enough jobs will be created in this way.

The above literature review provides context as to the ways in which TVET could play a role in improving the opportunities for the youth of rural South Africa. The literature review reveals the weak government policies aimed at developing rural entrepreneurship, the skills required and the need to promote rural development. More significant from the review is



that the TVET system finds it difficult to ground itself in the realities and the possibilities of rural districts.

### ***Policy system and institutions***

The focus of the South African government's strategy after 1994 was the reduction of poverty, inequality, as well as unemployment. These strategies have been articulated in the main national economic policies, such as the New Growth Path and the National Development Plan (NDP) (National Planning Council, 2012). Education in general, technical, vocational and training education and skills development are central to achieving this. Underlying these expectations from education is the assumption that education leads to employability and productivity and, in turn, economic growth. As the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013, p. 5) states, "Education will not guarantee economic growth, but without it, economic growth is not possible." Although issues of equitable distribution, representation, access and participation are dominant, the desire to steer South Africa along a "high skills, high growth" path of economic development is evident across relevant policy and reports. The following sections provide an overview of the main TVET policies and legislations and shows a common thread regarding how government envisioned building South Africa's present and future skills needs.

The Further Education and Training Act No. 98 of 1998 was established (DHET, 2002, p. 1):

To regulate further education and training; to provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public further education and training institutions; to provide for the registration of private further education and training institutions; to provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in further education and training; to provide for transitional arrangements and the repeal of laws; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Among other goals, the Act strives to attain the following: to establish a national coordinated TVET system, which promotes co-operative governance. and provides for programme-based further education and training; to restructure and transform programmes and institutions to respond to the human resource, economic, and development needs of the Republic; to redress past discrimination, and to ensure representability and equal access (DHET, 2002).

The notion of skills building for employment and economic development has been strong since the early years of democracy.

Despite progress on many fronts, including the fact that the racial composition of colleges, once largely white, now mirror that of the population (McGrath, 2004), the introduction of a college bursary scheme in 2007 to fund the unsubsidised portion of fees and the recent legislative amendments effectively requiring Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to work more closely with TVETCs (DHET, 2012), the skills sector is facing many challenges. Taylor argues further that TVETCs have also failed to fulfil their envisaged role. Enrolment in TVETCs versus universities in fact constitutes the opposite of that which is found in well-functioning systems, which have a pyramidal shape with university enrolments, constituting the smallest peak. In contrast, South Africa's pyramid is inverted, with many more students enrolled in higher education than in TVETCs, at a ratio of 161:100. Furthermore, "enrolments in TVETCs and technical high schools combined constitute only 20% of total enrolments at upper secondary level. This is comparable to overall averages in Africa (20%), and Latin America (18%), but well below those in East Asia (35%) and Europe (48%)" (DHET, 2012, p. 8). This suggests that, unlike universities, TVETCs is given less priority as institutions for preparing labour. The approach is questionable, however, considering the role that TVET plays in preparing graduates with technical skills for industries, something that universities might not be doing.

According to the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2012), this relatively low enrolment rate, as well as the high drop-out rate discussed in the introduction to this chapter, are attributable to the fact that TVET colleges are mainly weak institutions. With their present capacity, colleges can neither absorb significantly larger numbers of students, nor achieve acceptable levels of throughput (DHET, 2012 p. 10). Challenges include "unclear institutional identities, poor human and infrastructural resourcing, inadequate financial resourcing, insufficient financial aid for students, and inappropriate funding modalities" (DHET, 2012, p. 10). The poor quality of academic staff is cited by the Green Paper as "the single greatest challenge [to] improving and expanding the colleges" (DHET, 2012 p. 24). The current mix of programmes and qualifications is complex to administer, difficult to understand, and often poorly quality-assured, and the vocational school leaving certificate

has failed to gain industry support while the old apprenticeships have been allowed to dwindle (Taylor, 2011).

SETAs too have failed to fulfil their role, with low numbers of studentships registered owing to their failure to partner with industry and with TVETCs. The result is that very little funding from the levy grant system has been used to train TVETC students. The then Acting Director General for the DHET complained in 2011 that 90% of SETA funds is spent on ad hoc crash courses (Taylor, 2011). A Report by the Ministerial Task Team on Performance of SETAs (DHET, 2013) details the problems in the SETA system, including: poor corporate and fiscal governance; poor oversight of the way the mandatory rebate is spent; lack of capacity to analyse workplace skills plans and align these with strategic national goals; gross negligence in some SETAs; lack of qualified senior management; poor performance management; and inability to properly account for performance.

However not all the blame can be laid at the door of the colleges, or the SETAs. “Racialised notions of student suitability” (McGrath, 2004, p. 150), gendered norms regarding technical skills (McGrath, 2004) and lack of employer commitment to studentships (Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005) limit that which even a well-functioning college system can achieve, while some employers have treated the skills levy as a tax and failed to engage with the SETAs, and training providers have abused it to further their own interests (DHET, 2013). Nonetheless, the government has acknowledged the failings across the entire skills system, and has put in place several policy frameworks to address these. All this places emphasis on the centrality of the TVETCs to the skills system and the consequent importance of increasing access to and quality of TVETCs. The scope of what is expected of TVET is however greater, i.e. to serve the community as well as regional and national needs, to offer a route out of poverty, to promote personal or collective advancement, to provide skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment, and to provide skills to develop the South African economy (DHET, 2013).

The post-1994 TVET policy in South Africa was developed in order address the racial disparities between white and black people, the effects of apartheid, i.e., poverty among a majority of the population, and to situate the country completely within a global economy. McGrath (2009) reviews the policies that the South African government crafted in response to the above aims. Firstly, the South African government established a NQF through enacting

the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in order to regulate all the qualifications in the country. Realising the high unemployment that the country is facing, the South African DHET sought to evaluate the extent to which its TVET policy framework was effective in achieving the expected goals. The establishment of SAQA was a mechanism, among other things, to ensure that TVET responded to societal needs (Allais, 2003). Secondly, the DHET clearly demarcated boundaries between universities and TVETCs, although TVETCs had overlapping functions with universities, the policy ensured that there were clear boundaries as TVETCs were established to concentrate on their core mandate. Thirdly, this also came together with the Department of Labour policies, i.e., the Skills Development Act of 1998, which is an act specifically addressing skills development in the country, and the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999, serving to create funding for skills development. These policies were adopted to address the shortage of skills in the labour market inherited from apartheid. For McGrath (2009) these policies aimed to align TVET to be responsive to societal needs, and to ensure coherence between education and training. What this literature emphasises is the challenge that South Africa faces in balancing the economic and academic needs of higher education.

Connected to policy issues, funding of TVET is another area on which research has focused. Gustafsson and Pillay (2009) analysed TVET funding in the post-apartheid period against a background where policy sets the provision of funding through the 1999 Skills Development Levies Act, which taxed private businesses to fund TVET. They noted that, despite 80% of the funding from the levies being paid to private companies for work-based training by the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), only a small proportion of the training in TVET colleges was targeted towards the NSDS (Gustafsson & Pillay, 2009, p. 1105). The study recommended a market-based funding system and an improvement in capitalisation by private businesses as a means of ensuring a quality TVET system in the country. Two points can be drawn from this review: the need to invest sufficient finances in TVET, including private businesses, and the need to align the TVET funding to the job market, especially in the private sector.

Following this, scholars have evaluated the TVET policy framework in South Africa, and found that it is geared towards production. This means that the country's TVET policy promotes the HCT approach (Ngcwangu, 2019). This corresponds with TVET globally, which aligns its policies

towards responding to the needs of employers. This being the case, South Africa has undergone deindustrialisation, and the country has seen many young people completing their higher education, including TVET (Ngcwangu, 2019). This prompted the South African DHET to commission research to specifically develop and establish a national policy framework for workplace-based learning that could achieve the goals of improved employability, transitioning from school to work, and enhanced learning. Armstrong (2001) shows that although the language used in policy documents was similar across these documents, the anticipated outcomes that emerged from those policies differs. In addition to that, policy seems to focus on labour-absorbing activities, while education practices place emphasis on workplace-based activities for purposes of enhanced learning (Armstrong, 2001). This has resulted in greater pressure on TVET institutions to solve the problems of youth unemployment, a job-scarce environment, and poverty. While Armstrong's study highlights the limitations of using a homogenous framework and same funding formulae to different institutions, the policy framework treats all the TVETCs as the same, where their specialisations, locations, and student compositions are different. This suggests that a policy framework that pays attention to different TVETC contexts and diversity of students is required in order to maximise the performance of TVETCs. This is true given that some of the colleges are in rural areas, where students might have attended poor schools, which means that their needs are different from those who would have attended better schools in urban areas. The implications of Armstrong's findings are that an approach to understand that TVET is sensitive to the different contextual factors preventing TVET from functioning maximally ought to be adopted in order to inform how these barriers could be addressed.

A significant amount of literature has focused on evaluating TVET in South Africa, emphasising the need for TVETCs to provide the skills for economic growth (Bhorat, 2004b; Bhorat 2005; Bhorat et al., 2013). Common among these studies is that TVETCs ought to focus on equipping individuals with economic skills required by employers. This perspective has therefore blamed the South African economic challenges on failure by TVETCs to provide appropriate skills which lead to more jobs. Other studies, for example, have questioned why a larger proportion of students enrol into universities when compared to TVETCs, which according to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) (DPME, 2013) is not sustainable if the skills needed by the economy and society are to be met. The emphasis seems to be on

skills development and there is less emphasis on the intrinsic value of education and on the attempt to provide individuals with the ability to recognise commercial opportunities and to be innovative in venture creation. Whereas this literature points to the importance of economic growth as a solution to society's problems, South Africa still experiences high levels of unemployment, poverty, and social problems.

There is generally literature exploring TVET policy, systems and institutions in Africa, due to the assumption that global policy trends on TVET will address the continent's challenges. However, considerable research has focused on issues of policy, systems and institutions in South Africa (Allais 2007, 2013; Kraak, 2004). These studies have examined the evolution of TVET policy, economic systems, and labour markets during and after apartheid. Nonetheless, there remains a need for more research on which skills TVET should provide for rural youth communities in South Africa.

### ***NDP and KZN development framework***

At national level, the NDP was also designed to stimulate rural economic development among other important dynamic economic factors of the country (See Chapter 6 of NDP). The main pillars that were identified for rural development include commercial agriculture and growth, a land reform that works, human development, building the economy of rural towns, and rural governance, among others. Nine years into the implementation of the NDP, not much has changed in terms of inequality, unemployment, and poverty in the country, and particularly in the rural population. According to Shava and Maramura (2017), the entrepreneurship discourse under the NDP is being overshadowed by contestations which emanate from under-financing, lack of entrepreneurial education and research culture, negative attitudes of the people, corruption, and red tape. To date, there has not been meaningful financing of rural projects, such as small businesses, cooperatives, and other rural development projects, which ought to be the government's key priority (Shava & Maramura, 2017). This study's position is that South Africa cannot achieve meaningful development without focusing on what TVETCs are producing in terms of graduate attributes. Education has ripple effects on the development of the rural economy, as well as the broader good of society.

The KZN population was overtaken by Gauteng in 2011, leaving KZN to take second place, with approximately 11.3 million people (Stats SA, 2019a). The province is rich in resources and has arguably unlimited potential for prosperity, but, a defining characteristic of its rural landscape is the limited economic and social activity, both formal and informal, which contrasts with its urban and commercial farming areas. More than 50% of the KZN population resides in rural areas, characterised in the majority by the elderly, women, youth, and children (Stats SA, 2019a). Out of the total population, just over 50% live in poverty (Bacus, 2013). It is also generally agreed that poverty and unemployment in South Africa are often rural phenomena, and given that, many of the rural communities are linked to agricultural activity.

To drive development, the province conceptualised a framework for rural development in 2011 entitled The Provincial Growth and Development Strategy. The strategy is a commitment of provincial government to address deeply embedded socio-economic deprivation, under-development, and inequities in service delivery (Provincial Growth and Development Strategy, 2011). The strategy, which has been revised, has seven goals. For purposes of this research, two of the goals are linked, and directly address issues of economic development and TVET.

Goal number 1: Inclusive Economic Development is aligned to the National Outcome 4, which focuses on more labour absorbing growth; increased competitiveness to grow the production base to withstand international competition to raise net exports, to grow trade as a share of world trade and to improve its composition; improved support to a variety of businesses, including small businesses; and reducing the costs of doing business (KZN-PGDP, 2019). Section 1.5 of Goal 1 promotes SME and entrepreneurial development. South Africa and the province notably have very high proportions of youth unemployment (those between the age of 15 and 34 years) with an under-representation of women in top positions. A closer look at the statistics show that serious challenges are being experienced in achieving the objective of enhancing decent employment, given the work conditions of those in informal employment (KZN-PGDP, 2019). The framework pays little attention to the way in which TVET supports what individuals want to pursue in order to flourish. The focus would appear to place greater emphasis on economic development only, as put forward by a capitalist approach. The picture painted makes it imperative that development efforts ought to put in place both macro- and

micro-structures in order to create jobs, empower the youth with entrepreneurial skills, and equip individuals with skills that allow them to flourish.

Goal 2 is Human Resources Development, and two of its objectives are: i) to support skills development to achieve economic growth, enhance youth and adult skills development and life-long learning; and ii) Support skills alignment to economic growth. These two objectives are foregrounded on the notion that development could be achieved through linking skills and the development needs of the province with economic sectors. The framework goes on to recognise that the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed by a robust and forward-looking economy will take place throughout the value chain of the education and training system (KZN-PGDP, 2019). The provision of post-school education to all young people in the province is, thus, an essential intervention. The provincial and political leadership state that young people, once they leave school, ought to be absorbed into, for example, TVETCs, where they will be given a chance to enhance their skills; learnerships and apprenticeships to learn job-related skills; and higher education in order to improve the knowledge-based of the province. However, what remains to be seen is whether the policy documents influence what is being implemented in TVETCs. Chapter 4 discusses the background to the rural TVETC selected for this study, and the district where it is located.

## **Conclusion**

Regardless of whether strategies for rural development have been implemented, there has been little success in improving the economy and livelihoods and addressing poverty and unemployment of rural dwellers. Although TVET is designed to address these challenges, the problems rural youth face persist. The chapter has revealed that the South African political economy constrains the functioning of a rural TVET system. The literature has exposed the gaps of South Africa's TVET system, especially in terms of its structure, co-ordination of the supply and demand, its labour market and qualifications, regulating occupations and the link between qualifications and occupations. There is also a gap of knowledge on the management of TVETCs, teaching and learning practices, students support, and curricula and pedagogical studies. Furthermore, the literature presented in this chapter signals the importance of adopting alternative approaches to address TVET in South Africa. Much of the approaches to conceptualise TVET in South Africa employed the HCT lens and this has yielded little to



address the society's economic and social challenges. An approach that focuses on the needs of rural students and communities as well as that considers the political and historical economy of the country is needed. The next chapter presents the CA theoretical framework that informed the study.

## **Chapter 3: Conceptualising TVET through the capabilities approach (CA) lens**

### **Introduction**

The preceding chapter synthesises literature on TVET and reveals that South Africa continues to face poverty and social challenges despite adopting a toolkit for restructuring its TVET system. Through the toolkit, the country promotes a TVET system that foregrounds economic growth and aims to equip students with skills for employment. Notwithstanding the adoption of the toolkit, youth unemployment has been high in South Africa for many years, and the country faces persistent social and economic challenges. This points to the inadequacy of the toolkit being used for understanding and restructuring of TVET as a way of addressing the country's socio-economic challenges (McGrath, 2012). More relevant is the question of whether the approach being embraced for TVET and colleges in the country focuses on training people to be employed, contributing to the creation of jobs, and producing graduates who are able to realise their potential in various spheres of their lives.

This chapter justifies the use of the Human Development Approach and CA in this study. It also outlines the CA's cornerstones, and shows its relevance in exploring TVET in rural South Africa. This is followed by an outline of the conceptual framework developed for this study as well as a critique of the CA.

### **Human development and the capability approach**

The Human Development Approach emerged as a critique of the HCT that foregrounds economic growth discourses in TVET. To reiterate what has been discussed in Chapter 2, TVET policies in South Africa have been informed by the HCT. This is clearly outlined in the DHET (2013, p. 11) document that points to the fact that TVETCs is aimed at inculcating knowledge and developing skills and attitudes essential for employment in the labour market among young school leavers. Underpinning the HCT is the assumption that growth in the economy benefits people's personal and social needs and, as such, investment in TVET ought to create profit in the economy. Whereas TVET policies have centred solely on training graduates for employment, South African unemployment, inequality, poverty, and other social challenges

remain widespread. To this end, HTC has been criticised for exacerbating social inequalities; neglecting vulnerable groups, and leading to social discrimination based on race and gender regardless of people being educated (Chiappero-Martinetti & Sabadash, 2014).

The human development approach (HDA) concerns the wellbeing of individuals, the formation of opportunities, and the choices people have for them to progress in their lives. Central to the HDA are choices, basic needs satisfaction, processes of achieving wellbeing, and participation and individuals taking responsibility for progression in their lives (Alkire, 2010, p 3).

Underpinning the human development approach is the capability approach (CA), which was first introduced by Indian economist and philosopher, Amartya Sen in the 1980s, and has been further developed by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum since. The CA offers an alternative and expansive view of wellbeing, and the processes, involvement and choices people ought to have for their wellbeing in a deeper and expansive way compared to the narrowly economic indicators like gross domestic product per capita growth (Walker, 2012). In his work, Sen (1992; 1999) criticises conventional economic models and evaluation measures, such as those based on utility and resources, as having small informational basis. For Sen, the conventional economic models focuses on only the subjective wellbeing or the availability of means for a good life as opposed to individuals' wellbeing. Sen (1999, p. 75) further argues that the conventional economic models are limiting, due to the fact that they lack what action we can engage in ('doings') and the type of people we can be ('beings'). However, it should be underscored that the CA does not dismiss the role of resources such as money and economic growth, but rather sees these as tools for human development, not end-all goals. The realisation that development is not entirely based on economic growth but is multidimensional is reflected in the United Nations Development Programmes' Human Development reports published since 1990. Within each of the Human Development Reports is the Human Development Index, and some of the dimensions of people's wellbeing articulated are knowledge, resources for a decent life, political, social and economic freedoms, guarantees for human rights, participation, dignity and respect for others, and being productive (Alkire, 2010). These human development dimensions are helpful when thinking about restructuring TVET in South Africa, and whether it is designed to improve the lives of graduates in the various dimensions of their lives.

The CA is a comprehensive and normative framework for the evaluation of individual wellbeing and social arrangements, and the design and policies and proposals about social change in society (Robeyns, 2017; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Sen asserts that the CA is about expansion of people's "positive freedoms" (Sen, 2009, p. 202). Sen's main concern was that individuals had to live the kind of life they had a reason to value. Thus, underpinning Sen's work (1984; 1999; 2009) is the notion of an individual's wellbeing, which is the ultimate aim of human life. Approaches that prioritise economic growth are thus limiting, since economic growth is only a means but not an end in itself, when considering individuals' wellbeing (Sen 1984, 1999, 2009;). Sen's CA has strong conceptual links with Aristotle's theory of political distribution, and his analysis of "human flourishing" (Greek: Eudaimonia), Smith's (1952) analysis of necessities and living conditions, and Karl Marx' (Marx, 1959) concern with human freedom and emancipation (Bailey, 1928). Clark (2005) further explains that the conceptual origin of the CA has been attributed to Sen's critiques of traditional welfare economics, which combine wellbeing with either wealth (income) or utility (happiness) (Clark, 2005). The approach is used to evaluate individual wellbeing, inequality, and poverty. In addition, the approach is used in various fields, particularly in development studies, welfare economics, social policy, and political philosophy (Robeyns, 2005). As such, the CA framework has the potential to address human wellbeing and presents spaces and principles for informing TVET policy and its practices in South Africa and elsewhere. Again, Clark (2005) affirms that the CA provides a framework with an evaluative space that is broad enough to capture all aspects of human wellbeing and development.

An important aspect of the CA that requires highlighting is the distinction between the means and end to wellbeing and development (Robeyns, 2005). This entails the need to identify what the means and the ends are when evaluating TVET. In this way, the CA is helpful to us in determining whether TVET students actually received relevant knowledge and skills to improve their lives in a multidimensional way through their studies. Capabilities such as critical thinking on knowledge and unfair practices ought to be developed, and if the means or circumstances for realising this is present e.g., relevant curricula and supportive teaching practices. Adherents to the CA are of the view that the fundamental flaw in the conventional economic approaches, including the HCT, is the failure to consider the opportunities that people do or do not have for maximising wellbeing. Such opportunities, which Sen terms

'capabilities', are those that enable human beings to be and do all that they value, which Sen terms 'functionings'. Sen (1992) argues that focusing on the ends rather than the means is vital, as individuals' relative capacities to turn opportunities into accomplishments are not the same. What this means is that if we are to make judgements about TVET graduates, we ought not only focus on the number of students who have enrolled or have completed their studies, but on the possibilities for individual students to access and participate in the studies to be assessed. The CA aims therefore to remove the 'unfreedoms' within TVET. For this reason, the approach is appropriate to this study as it interrogates if people have access to a TVET knowledge and skills that are relevant to the rural context, where, if graduates are able to participate in community and democratic processes, as well as having choices for their livelihoods in pursuing their goals. Put more precisely, its focus is on *opportunities to achieve*, rather than on achievement itself (Walker, 2012).

While the approach is used to evaluate individual wellbeing, inequality and poverty, it is used in various fields, particularly in development studies, welfare economics, social policy, and political philosophy (Robeyns, 2017). The approach therefore foregrounds the quality of lives people are able to attain. The CA is expansive, as it views human beings in a broader perspective. The approach goes beyond the notion of human capital by acknowledging not only the instrumental value of education in promoting productivity, economic growth, and individual incomes, but also the direct relevance that it can have in terms of individual wellbeing and freedom, as well as for social development (Chiappero-Martinetti & Sabadash, 2014). The discussion now turns to the limitations of the HCT approach and TVET in South Africa.

One of the benefits of adopting CA for this study is that it focuses on the wellbeing of individuals. Sen's (1992; 1999) focus on individualism is important, especially in the context of South Africa, where there are pronounced inequalities based on race, class, gender etc. This is because students from diverse backgrounds do not have the same opportunities in accessing and acquiring knowledge and skills they need from TVETCs, due to historical inequalities associated with colonialism and apartheid. More specifically, some students are marginalised through their economic backgrounds and geographical locations, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This positions CA as a more appropriate approach for examining and informing TVET policies and practices compared to the economist-aggregated measures such

as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Product (GNP) per capita (Sen, 1999). Thus, the CA presents a “...serious departure from concentrating on the *means* of living to the *actual opportunities* of living” (Sen 2009, p. 233). For example, CA acknowledges that not all people access, participate in and succeed in TVET equally, considering their varying backgrounds. This means that it recognises that individuals are unable to convert the same amount of resources provided by TVET colleges into success in order to generate the same or comparable benefits in life (Hart, 2012).

Another reason for using the CA in the current study is that it recognises the factors that respectively constrain and enable individuals to achieve wellbeing (Robeyns, 2005). It does this through identifying the interplay of conversion factors that serve to benefit some students in TVET, while disadvantaging others. For example, TVET colleges in rural South Africa might be offering less teaching support to students and staff compared to the urban ones, as they are marginalised in several facets, including poor funding and remoteness from urban areas where there could be more economic opportunities. In this case, teaching arrangements are a conversion factor that work together with others e.g., student poverty and poor schooling, to limit students from gaining the same benefits from those enjoyed by other students in the country. These conversion factors, when identified, could be relevant spaces for addressing equality and social injustice (Robeyns, 2017). In this study, the conversion factors could be used as a space to explore and improve TVET so that it addresses the needs of the society such as youth employment, poverty, social inequality, and integration.

### **Keystones in the capabilities approach**

The CA, rather, focuses on the opportunities and freedoms that people have that enable them to acquire appropriate and helpful skills and knowledge from TVET, which is what they value as students. What is ultimately important in this regard is that once students have the necessary freedoms, they can choose to exercise them in accordance with their own ideas of the kind of life they want to live during their TVET studies, and after graduating (Robeyns, 2005). The CA is focused on what people can do and be (their capabilities) and on what they are achieving in terms of beings and doings (their functionings). That is, it is not merely the formal freedom to do or be something, but the substantial freedom to achieve it.

What ought to be reiterated is that the CA is concerned with assessing the quality of lives students have in and through TVET education. This is through evaluating what individuals are effectively able to do. The quality of life is evaluated using the key concepts of ‘capabilities’ and ‘functionings’ (Sen, 1999 p. 75) and the peculiarity of these terms is important as each play a different role regardless of them being connected to each other (Robeyns, 2017). ‘Agency’ and ‘conversion factors’ are additional operational concepts of the CA when measuring people’s quality of life. These concepts are regarded by the proponents of CA as the most appropriate for interpersonal evaluations, and are expanded upon below.

### ***Capability***

A capability is “a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom” to accomplish or the “freedom to various lifestyles” (Sen, 1999a, p. 75). In other words, capabilities denote the various possibilities of what a person is able to do. Capabilities allude therefore to the freedoms people possess to undertake some of the basic activities required for their existence, or simply for them to have a quality life. As people value different things, this means that capabilities vary with each individual. Sen (1999a, 10) maintains that focus ought to be placed on expanding the individuals’ “freedom capabilities so that they lead the kind of life they have reason to value”. Similarly, when assessing TVET, Unterhalter, Vaughan and Walker (2007, p.1) remind us that we ought to ask whether social arrangements allow individuals’ capabilities “to expand – their freedom to promote or achieve ‘functionings; which are important to them”. According to Sen (1993), a person’s capabilities are determined by a number of elements, including personal attributes and social arrangements meaning the opportunities or freedoms that students have are affected by students’ biographies and arrangements at the TCET colleges. In the context of TVET, capabilities could mean one being able to access appropriate knowledge and skills, having access to finances for living, and being able to be employed or creating and sustaining one’s own business.

## **Functionings**

According to Sen (1999a, 75), "functionings," refers to a concept rooted in Aristotle's work and is reflective of the different things "a person may value doing or being" and might refer to participating in community activities or being respected. Put differently, functionings are the results obtained from capabilities on the various things individuals value (Crocker, 2008). Functionings also constitute one's wellbeing through them having achievements in the dimensions they value (Strydom & Walker, 2015). As functionings are related to the capabilities, this means that what the capabilities seek to attain are "...various combinations of functionings that we can compare and judge against each other in terms of what we have reason to value" (Sen, 2009 p. 233). These capability sets are the ones reflective of a person's wellbeing, for example, using the examples in the capability section above (page 73), functionings might mean students having accessed knowledge and skills relevant to their communities from TVET, having accessed adequate finances for their living expenses, and having gained skills to start and sustain their own businesses. Although the focus is on the capabilities in the CA, some capabilities might be difficult to identify (Sen, 2009). In this study comparisons of the set of functionings students have will be made to determine whether TVET is offering comprehensive knowledge and skills for them to have quality lives and flourish in the various aspects of their lives. This requires us to extrapolate capabilities from the functionings so that we are then able to establish the opportunities students have through TVET.

## **Agency**

Agency is central to CA, giving people freedoms so that they have capabilities to achieve functionings. Sen (2009, p. 287) explains that agency "encompasses all the goals that a person has reasons to adopt, which can *inter alia* include goals other than the advancement of his or her own wellbeing". Agency denotes the people acting to obtain their goals and fulfil their commitments and obligations, or to make choices so that they accomplish the doings and beings they value. This could mean their personal determination to learn, establish networks and be involved in community activities in and through TEVT. Moreover, agency relates to one's ability to act so as to bring about change either as an individual, or as part of a group (Sen, 1999a). In this sense, it alludes to their participation in dislodging injustices through



change. This can also be connected to the Fallist protests that took place in 2015 and 2016 in the South African higher education institutions, including TVETCs, where students called for the removal of tuition and questioned the kind of knowledge they received and its relevance to their society, respectively. With regard to agency, Sen (1999) gives the example of women who ought to have agency to challenge oppressive systems. This applies to this study in the sense that female students are perceived as having a role in challenging gender inequality within TVET colleges.

Agency is associated with one's wellbeing in the sense that one requires agency freedoms in order to have agency achievements. It is crucial to state that there is a complimentary relationship between agency and social arrangements. This requires us to identify "...the centrality of individual freedom and to the force of social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom" (Sen1999, xii). The point here concerns how individual student agency is affected by the social arrangements in (rural) TVET colleges. Consequently, wellbeing may result in more agency achievement, provided other conditions are present and considering that social arrangements affect agency, as well as capabilities and the amount of functionings. The aim of TVET should, therefore, be to equip students with agency that expands to ensure their wellbeing. There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between agency achievements and wellbeing. Sen (2009) observes that students who have managed to maintain their wellbeing are likely to exercise greater agency by which to achieve their goals, while non-wellbeing could lead to frustration and low levels of confidence. This is central to this study, as most of the students from TVET are from marginalised groups, and the need for them to exercise agency is critical.

### ***Conversion Factors***

A fourth core feature of the CA is that people have different abilities to convert resources into functionings. The different abilities refer to the conversion factors, i.e., those factors that determine the degree to which a person can transform a resource into a functioning. In other words, the conversion factors represent how much functioning one can obtain from a resource. Of importance is that all conversion factors influence how a person may be or is free to convert the resources into a functioning, although the sources of these factors may

differ (Robeyns, 2011). There are three conversion factors that either restrict or promote the transformation of resources into functionings, and these can be: (a) personal; (b) social; or (c) environmental. Personal conversion factors are those conversion factors which a person is endowed with, and which affects his/her very corporeality, including psychological make-up, gender, age, sex, and physical condition (Robeyns, 2017). Social conversion factors include gender practices in a society, social norms, social hierarchies, practices that unfairly discriminate, or power relations related to class, gender, and race. Lastly, environmental conversion factors originate from a person's immediate physical or built environment e.g., the provision of public goods such as parks, water supply, climate, and infrastructural facilities. These factors are all crucial in the performance of individuals' opportunities. It is important to note that these three conversion factors all emphasise that knowing the resources a person possesses or to which they have access is insufficient for assessing the wellbeing that he/she has achieved or could accomplish; rather, we need to know much more about the individual and the conditions in which he/she lives. This study therefore asks: what are the institutional, social, and personal arrangements that affect students, and how and why do they do so? In what ways should these arrangements be adjusted so as to nurture students' agency and promote the formation of their capabilities (Unterhalter, Vaughan & Walker, 2007). That is, by focusing on the personal, social, and environmental arrangements, CA's main goal is to promote the expansion of individuals capacities and their freedoms, so that they pursue what they have a reason to value (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009).

### **Engaging the Capability Approach with TVET in South Africa**

To reiterate, the normative position of this research is that TVET ought to equip students with skills not only limited to employment, but which extend to personal development and being socially responsible citizens. TVET ought to extend its focus beyond the economic needs of higher education, to include students' wellbeing, along with that of their societies, and in this case, the socio-cultural landscape rural settings. The CA assumes that the purpose of the 'capabilities' of education is both intrinsic, and instrumental (Walker, 2008), where the intrinsic purpose of education is to diminish a students' unfreedoms and vulnerabilities and to empower their agency so as to make informed decisions about valued functionings (López-Fogués, 2012). In terms of the instrumental purpose, Nussbaum (2006) states that "education is a key to all human capabilities" in the sense that it promotes reflexivity, nurtures citizens

of the world, and develops narrative imagination. According to Andrés and Chavez (2015), the CA appeals to a high-quality education system that is not only instrumental in nature, but is also intrinsic. An intrinsic education system assists students to attain knowledge, skills, and values, which are all required in order to function effectively within their communities (Andrés & Chavez, 2015). McGrath and Powell (2014) note that education leads to the 'capacity to aspire', without which freedom amounts merely to a choice between current available options. Education also enables valued functionings, which include knowledge, including knowledge of a subject and knowledge of economic opportunities; social relations; critical thinking; imagination and empathy; recognition and respect, both for oneself and for others; enjoyment from active participation in learning; autonomy; confidence to form and argue an opinion; active citizenship; deliberative dialogue; and economic opportunities (Walker, 2008). Further, education is considered to be instrumental in effecting social change, on the basis that "since a capability is power to do something, the accountability that emanates from that ability – that power – is part of the capability perspective" (Sen 2009, p. 19). Therefore, a capability constitutes an opportunity that brings with it a responsibility, and in the case of education, this can be understood to be to expand the capabilities of the poor and disadvantaged in service of genuine social upliftment (Walker, 2009).

Chiappero-Martinetti and Sabadash (2010) argue that something more than a mere market approach to educational outcomes is required, and this study suggests a CA that addresses the inherent needs of both individuals and communities. Walker (2012) argues, however, that the HCT is an impoverished model for education, because it reduces human beings to inputs in the production process, and fails to speak to human wellbeing, development, and equity. It requires a cost-benefit analysis on the impact of education for the economy, which may result in, for example, increased funding for early childhood development (ECD) development at the expense of the humanities in higher learning. More recent adaptations that recognise the role of social capital (networks), good health, and sustainable employment fail to buffer the approach from the criticism that these are merely a means to the same end of the traditional and neoliberal models, where human beings may be treated expediently in the pursuit of profit. Education in this approach is adaptive and individualistic, rather than transformative. In contrast, Walker (2012) argues that a capability-driven approach to education may produce individuals who value capability and so in turn produce a society in

which human flourishing is prized above all. Consequently, Walker argues for the CA to be a starting point for a policy approach to education that also takes cognisance of economic imperatives.

More recently, McGrath et al. (2020) argue that an orthodox set of theories and policies for vocational education and training do not work, as they misunderstand the current worlds-of-work and desires for human flourishing of individuals and communities, and are incapable of addressing the ways that these are likely to be shaped by the profound challenges of the near future. The scholars offer an exploration of a theoretical approach to TVET research and offer insight into how TVET education can be transformed in order to contribute to the wider transformation agenda around sustainable human development. At the heart of what they have termed the CCA-VET are eight key elements that they consider particularly important for richer theorisation of TVET: TVET students' experiences of multidimensional poverty, a gendered perspective, interaction with the political economy of skills account, a broad conceptualisation of work, a focus on flourishing, the centrality of aspirations, a multiplicity of decision points in vocational learning pathways, and an evaluative dimension. What is novel about their approach is that it places young people's voices at its centre and their backgrounds and future aspirations, particularly work (McGrath et al. 2020). While McGrath and colleagues propose CCA-VET in international vocational education, this thesis places emphasis on a more rural approach. This study argues for the need to repurpose South African rural TVET by considering other human-centred and holistic development approaches, such as the CA.

DeJaeghere (2018) also demonstrates the centrality of CA in promoting entrepreneurship in her study on youth and entrepreneurship in Tanzania. Aspirations, self-esteem and confidence, participation in economic and social life, affiliation, community care for the youth and autonomy to make decisions were some of the capabilities that youth valued for entrepreneurship (DeJaeghere, 2018). Despite the study not focusing specifically on youth in VETCs, it shows that the CA is a helpful framework for revealing young people's entrepreneurship capabilities.

## **The capability approach, entrepreneurship, and rural development**

According to Gries and Naudé (2010a), the CA can inform theoretical thinking on and measurement of entrepreneurship. The CA views entrepreneurship as a form of “human functioning that can be valued as an end, and not just as a means to other ends. It can enrich human capabilities if people’s complementary capabilities are expanded so that they can choose to be entrepreneurs” (Naudé, 2013, p. 10). Therefore this study regards entrepreneurship as a capability that TVET students ought to have for the expansion of the economy and for their livelihoods in addition to achieving other capabilities. The quality of entrepreneurial ability involves improving the skills and education of entrepreneurs and focusing on the innovative abilities of entrepreneurs (Naudé, 2013). This indicates that entrepreneurship is pivotal in the the context of South African TVET, where employment opportunities have not been seen to expand to accommodate the majority of the youth.

Wilson and Martin (2015, p. 161) define entrepreneurial capability as “the freedom of an individual to pursue and develop an entrepreneurial opportunity within his or her environment”. However, freedom is dependent on other capabilities that derive from the interaction of structure and agency. Entrepreneurial capabilities have been regarded as higher order combined capabilities, or as the “totality of the opportunities [one] has for choice and action in [one’s] specific, political, social, and economic situation” (Nussbaum 2011, p. 21). Gries and Naudé (2010a) explain entrepreneurship in terms of functioning as it relates to how people work, and notes that it can also be valued. For example, people can value being entrepreneurial for various reasons apart from material gain, such as having a sense of achievement, or being accepted. The authors further describe entrepreneurship as a potential functioning, as there can be situations where being entrepreneurial may not always be valued. This is evident in situations where individuals are forced to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities as a result of no other available labour market options. Overall, the CA provides a “fresh perspective on entrepreneurship policies: promoting labour intensity and wage employment and creating social security that is pro-entrepreneurship because it turns entrepreneurship from a potential functioning into an actual functioning” (Gries & Naudé, 2010a, p. 4).

According to Isaacs et al. (2007), education is critical to the development of an entrepreneurial culture. The authors further state that a strong entrepreneurial culture in education is reliant on various stakeholders including the state, educators and students. Thus, all stakeholders need to work together to create an entrepreneurial culture. Isaacs et al. (2007, p. 614) define entrepreneurship education as “the purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the student to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the student to survive in the world of business”. Thus, entrepreneurship education involves encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth and developing them to become entrepreneurs.

Van Vuuren and Nieman (1999) developed an entrepreneurship performance education model (E/P model) to guide syllabi and curriculum development of entrepreneurship education programmes. The linear model suggests that entrepreneurial performance results from three elements, namely: motivation, entrepreneurial skills, and business skills. Entrepreneurial performance is based on two concepts: firstly, the starting a new business or utilising an opportunity; and secondly, the growth of the business idea. Motivation refers to an entrepreneur’s need for achievement, such as persistence and determination. Entrepreneurial skills are those that differentiate an entrepreneur from a manager, such as risk taking, and creativity. Lastly, entrepreneurs also need to be equipped with business skills such as financial and marketing skills in order to be able to operate and grow their business; and hence, to improve their entrepreneurial performance (Ladzani & Van Vuuren, 2002; Pretorius, Nieman & Van Vuuren, 2005; Van Vuuren & Nieman, 2014). It should be noted that the model indicates that an absence of any one of the elements such as motivation, entrepreneurial skills or business skills, will result in low levels of entrepreneurial performance by students (Pretorius et al., 2005). Table 5 below provides additional examples of the three elements:

**Table 5: Elements of entrepreneurial performance**

Motivation	Entrepreneurial Skills	Business Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for achievement</li> <li>• Ability to aspire</li> <li>• Expectations of the higher achiever</li> <li>• Obstacles or blocks</li> <li>• Help</li> <li>• Reactions to success or failures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Ability to take risks</li> <li>• Ability to identify opportunities</li> <li>• Ability to have a vision for growth</li> <li>• Interpret successful entrepreneurial role models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management/Leadership</li> <li>• Business plans</li> <li>• Financial skills</li> <li>• Marketing skills</li> <li>• Operational skills</li> <li>• Human resource skills</li> </ul>

**Source: Ladzani and Van Vuuren (2002, p. 156)**

Overall, the entrepreneurial performance of an entrepreneur will be increased if the model is included in entrepreneurship education programmes (Van Vuuren & Nieman, 2014). However, further investigation and empirical research is required on the model (Van Vuuren & Nieman, 2014). This study explores this through using empirical data from students from a rural TVET in South Africa.

It is clear from the preceding sections that entrepreneurship is important, and that an entrepreneurial culture needs to be created in South Africa. Specifically, TVETCs are powerful institutions that can instil entrepreneurial thinking among the youth through the dissemination of appropriate knowledge pertaining to the following: risks and rewards; opportunity seeking and recognition skills; and creating and nurturing of entrepreneurial ventures (Mitchell & Co, 2006; Gwija, Eresia-eke & Iwu, 2014, p. 168). According to Isaacs et al. (2007, p. 627), “curricula development, together with entrepreneurship education will improve the quality of teaching entrepreneurship at FET level.” Furthermore, it is also important for TVETCs to incorporate into their curriculum entrepreneurial traits that can be taught and learnt such as creativity and innovation; and taking calculated risks. In addition, it is important for teachers to be qualified and skilled to be able to successfully impart

entrepreneurial thinking and attitudes among the youth. TVETCs also need to have the necessary resources such as computer laboratories and updated technologies and curricula, to be able to fulfil their responsibility of creating employable youth. Furthermore, the curricula in rural TVETCs ought to align with the needs of the rural community so that students can contribute to their community, and ultimately to rural development.

One of the major debates in the CA concerns whether to use the existing universal list of capabilities as proposed by Nussbaum (2002, p.78-79). Nussbaum proposes a list of capabilities that she regards as universal and that all human beings ought to have for them to have flourishing lives. The list is composed of ten central human capabilities, namely: life, bodily harm, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, other species, play, and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2002, p.78-79). Although Nussbaum claims that her list is broad and adaptable to specific contexts, and being philosophical, it was developed without being restrained by the context of a specific group. Even though Nussbaum's (2002, p.78-79) list of central human capabilities is helpful when thinking of ways of improving TVET in general, her approach to listing of capabilities has received criticism. Sen (1995) himself is critical of this approach, in that he believes capabilities ought as a rule to be drawn through a deliberation process of a specific group of people. This shows that Sen's (1995) approach to listing of capabilities is participatory, sensitive to context, and is in response to a specific research question. This study uses a bottom-up approach in order to ensure relevance to context, and to that end, extrapolates capabilities from empirical data from the experiences of rural South African TVETC's students.

The CA also calls for researchers to develop a list of capabilities from the individuals concerned, from which researchers can make interpersonal judgements. The extrapolation of a capability list from literature and deliberations with targeted groups requires one to be open-minded and objective on what that specific group of people value (Powell and McGrath, 2014). Robeyns (2005) outlines a criteria for selecting capabilities with the first one being "explicit formulation and justification," meaning the need for being specific and defending the capability list. The second one alludes to "methodological justification," which involves an in-depth discussion and justification of the method used in developing the list. The third is "sensitivity to context", which in turn requires researchers to be clear on how they conceptualise and draw conclusions on the list, so that it becomes sensitive to a context.



Fourth is the “different levels of generality”, an explanation of the ideal list and a pragmatic list. Finally, the principle of “exhaustion and non-reduction” requires researchers to allow exhaustive and non-reducible elements with minimal overlapping. Similarly, Walker (2006) is of the view that such a list ought to be developed following certain steps, viz.: extracting capabilities from the relevant policy texts, interviewing participants; engaging with other capabilities and debating the list with others. These steps inform the development of capabilities from data from TVETC’s students, which form the focus of this study.

A review of literature shows that some capability lists on TVET students were developed in South Africa (Powell, 2014; Matenda, 2018; Powell & McGrath, 2019a). It is necessary to identify and discuss relevant literature as this is instrumental in situating the capability list that this study seeks to develop within the context of others (Walker, 2006). The capability lists of Powell (2014) and Matenda (2018) are listed below in Table 6, and were chosen due to their focus on TVET in South Africa. While helpful to this study, Powell and McGrath’s (2019a) list has been excluded from Table 6, because it concentrated on exploring the “capability of work”. However, their study signals critical issues regarding the “capability of work” in the South African context in that TVET graduates value to be “meaningfully employed”, but fail to have this capability due to government’s inability to expand employment opportunities (Powell & McGrath, 2019, p. 15). As a result of “adapted preferences,” that is, adjusting to lower expectations and unjust situations due to containing situations (Nussbaum, 2000, p.114), most graduates only access formal and informal jobs in which they are underpaid, and which they perceive as survival opportunities.

Turning back to Powell (2014) and Matenda (2018), both lists share common characteristics in the sense that the authors drew their lists from students’ experiences in TVETCs. Regardless of that, Powell’s (2014) capabilities of active citizenship; senses and imagination; and confidence and personal empowerment do not appear on Matenda’s (2018) list. However, the capability of practical reason in Powell’s list would appear similar to confidence and personal empowerment from Matenda’s list. What Matenda added in her list, that did not emerge from Powell’s, are the capability to aspire, capability for voice, practical reason, and educational resilience. The discrepancies could be explained by Powell extrapolating her capabilities from TVETC students’ experiences in general, whereas Matenda specifically interrogates gender inequality.

One of the relevant capabilities is educational resilience that emerged from Matenda's (2018) list. This capability is important, considering the rural context of the students, where access to resources and services is limited. Educational resilience refers to the students' abilities to navigate through the TVET college in spite of the hardships students face. However, resilience capability can also be viewed beyond TVETC, when students persevere in looking for employment and becoming entrepreneurs (DeJaeghere, 2018). It also signals students' motivation and their ability to bounce back after failing either in TVETCs colleges or in their lives in general. Agency is central to resilience capability, due to students having the power to make decisions and take action to achieve the things they have a reason to value under difficult conditions (Sen, 1999). As opposed to viewing TVETCs as merely marginalised and powerless, resilience allows us to recognise that rural students who are disadvantaged also have some resources that they can use to attain functionings in the different aspects of their lives. It would be worthwhile exploring whether students' experiences reflect this capability for them to achieve their aspirational goals within the context of difficulties.

**Table 6 : Capability lists for TVET in South Africa**

Powel (2014)		Matenda (2018 )	
Capability	Functioning	Capability	Functioning
Economic opportunities that matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being fairly remunerated</li> <li>• Earning a living wage</li> <li>• Having employment stability and security</li> <li>• Having access to fair and equal opportunities to career progression</li> <li>• Being able to make a valuable contribution in the workplace</li> <li>• Being able to take pride in their work</li> </ul>	Capability for work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having access to fair and equal opportunities for career progression.</li> <li>• Being able to make a valuable contribution in the workplace</li> <li>• Having employment stability and security</li> <li>• Earning a living wage</li> </ul>
Active citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being included in political and institutional decision making</li> <li>• Having knowledge and understanding of the problems of their community</li> <li>• Being able to mobilise resources for change</li> <li>• Having a strong sense of their own effective agency</li> </ul>	Recognition and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being treated as a dignified human being, not being diminished or devalued because of one's gender, social class, religion or race</li> <li>• Considering another person's view in dialogue and debate in and out of class</li> <li>• Not being discriminated against for any reason including religion, gender, race, physical handicap and age</li> </ul>
Confidence and personal empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being encouraged to live a full life</li> <li>• Being able to encourage others to live a full life</li> <li>• Having a range of futures as possible aspirations</li> </ul>	Occupational knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the qualifications needed for entry into the labour market</li> <li>• Having skills to do a good job</li> <li>• Having the learning skills that allow for experiential learning in the workplace</li> <li>• Having the opportunity to learn throughout one's lifetime</li> <li>• Having the learning skills required for further study</li> </ul>
Bodily integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being free from attack and physical harm, including sexual assault, and from the fear thereof</li> <li>• Being safe from the psychological trauma of attack on your person</li> </ul>	Bodily integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to move freely from place to place</li> <li>• Being able to be secure against assault, including sexual assault from peers and lecturers</li> <li>• Making own choice about sexual relationships</li> </ul>

Senses and imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being free from attack and physical harm, including sexual assault, and from the fear thereof</li> <li>• Being safe from the psychological trauma of attack on your person</li> </ul>	Capability to aspire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the motivation to learn and succeed, to have a better life, to hope</li> </ul>
Recognition and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an understanding and love of the creative arts</li> <li>• Participating in and enjoying sport that promotes physical wellbeing</li> </ul>	Educational resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the ability to negotiate or persevere and succeed despite being faced by adverse conditions or circumstances</li> </ul>
Upgrade skills and qualifications throughout the life course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being treated as a dignified human being</li> <li>• Having self-respect</li> <li>• Not being discriminated against for any reason including religion, gender, race, physical handicaps and age</li> </ul>	Capability for voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the ability to express one's views and be listened to</li> </ul>
Occupational Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the opportunity to study and learn throughout their lifetime</li> <li>• Having the learning skills required for further study</li> </ul>	Practical reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being encouraged to live a full life</li> <li>• Being able to have choices, plan life after college, reflect, and have independence</li> <li>• Believing in one's abilities</li> </ul>

## **Collective Capabilities**

One way to think about how the capabilities approach could be used to understand the efforts of students as individuals and how they could collectively engage as a group is through collective capabilities. Scholars have sought to define collective capabilities (or group capabilities) in two different ways. Stewart (2005, p. 192) explains that group capabilities are “made up of individual capabilities — indeed they are the average of the capabilities (and sources of capabilities) of all the individuals in the selected groups”. Comim and Kuklys (2002, p. 15), however, view collective capabilities as more than simply the aggregation of individual capabilities. Collective capabilities are “those capabilities that can only be achieved socially ... because of social interaction” (Comim and Carey, 2001, p. 17). Evans (2002, p. 56) adds that “individual capabilities depend on collective capabilities” as the act of choosing the life that one has reason to value might be a collective rather than an individual act.

Collective capabilities can be defined as those capabilities exercised by a group or more generally by a collective subject –that acts “in order to secure a capability for the members of that group” (Robeyns 2017:116). Ibrahim (2006) define ‘collective capabilities’ as the newly generated functioning bundles a person obtains by virtue of his/her engagement in a collectivity that help her/him achieve the life he/she has reason to value. Ibrahim distinguished ‘collective’ capabilities from ‘individual’ capabilities. First, collective capabilities are only present through a process of collective action. Secondly, the collectivity at large and not simply a single individual can benefit from these newly generated capabilities. They are thus the new choices that the individual alone would neither have nor be able to achieve unless he/she joins a collectivity, such as a self-help group. Ibrahim advanced the notion that the poor are able to build collective capabilities that promote their individual and communal wellbeings. Communal wellbeing is defined as ‘the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish and live a fully, genuinely human life’ (Deneulin, 2004, p. 7). In addition to furthering what an individual values and has reason to value, collectives have potential to help individuals to reach what they aspire towards (Appadurai, 2004; Ibrahim, 2013). Individuals engage in collective action, not only to pursue their individual goals but also to pursue those things that are considered to be good (Ibrahim, 2013).

The expansion of collective capabilities not only requires the use of agency freedom (i.e. individuals pursuing goals other than their own), but also involves the participation in a collectivity. The main differences between individual and collective capabilities are therefore the process through which these capabilities come about and their potential of benefiting the collectivity at large. As posited by Ibrahim (2013), development of capabilities cannot be divorced from development of agency. Agency is intertwined with capabilities in the sense that whenever an individual or collective decide on what they value, they choose to take physical or mental action about it. An individual's perception of the good and ultimately, human agency, can also be influenced by what the group values. Ibrahim also argued that building individual capabilities is crucial for the success of collective agency.

Alkire(2005) notes that even if groups are highly important for human development, they do not provide a common collective capability for all the members. Ibrahim (2013) recognizes that collective capabilities provided by individual involvement in collective actions might not be shared equally between the different members of the group and that not all members are able to use these new capabilities equally effective.

The argument presented is that the poor are not passive, but rather actively undertake various mechanisms to cope and eventually overcome their challenges. If we take students enrolled in a rural TVET college, and from poor backgrounds, it is likely that they have limited access and possession of capital that could hinder them from individually realizing their capabilities. This deprivation could urge them to collectively initiate self-help projects<sup>14</sup>. The self-help initiatives allow poor communities to create and seize new opportunities and to collectively invest in their financial, human and social capital. It remains to be seen in this thesis if the notion of collective capabilities was considered.

Education is regarded as a core capability, one that is fundamental to enhancing other capabilities and wellbeing. But education scholars have long noted that education is not necessarily agency- or wellbeing-enhancing; rather it can often reproduce inequalities

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<sup>14</sup> Self-help initiatives are defined as any informal income-generating or social activity initiated by a poor community to achieve permanent improvements in their individual and communal wellbeings (Ibrahim (2006).

reflected in society (Saito 2003; Walker and Unterhalter 2007; DeJaeghere and Lee 2011). If we formulate a strategy on how the CA, and a specific capability analysis, can be used to disrupt inequalities and achieve greater social justice in and through education.

### Conceptual framework

This section proposes a conceptual framework used in this study. As discussed earlier under capability, the capability approach focuses on wellbeing and for TVET students to achieve that they should have the capabilities and agency in order to achieve functionings. In this case, functionings denote the wellbeing of TVET graduates (Robeyns, 2017). The availability of capabilities and the agency students have is, however, dependent on the conversion factors that may include TVETC’s resources, national policies and content of what students learn and how that is delivered to students within a rural context. Figure 1 below summarises the process of achieving wellbeing among TVET graduates using the capability approach framework.

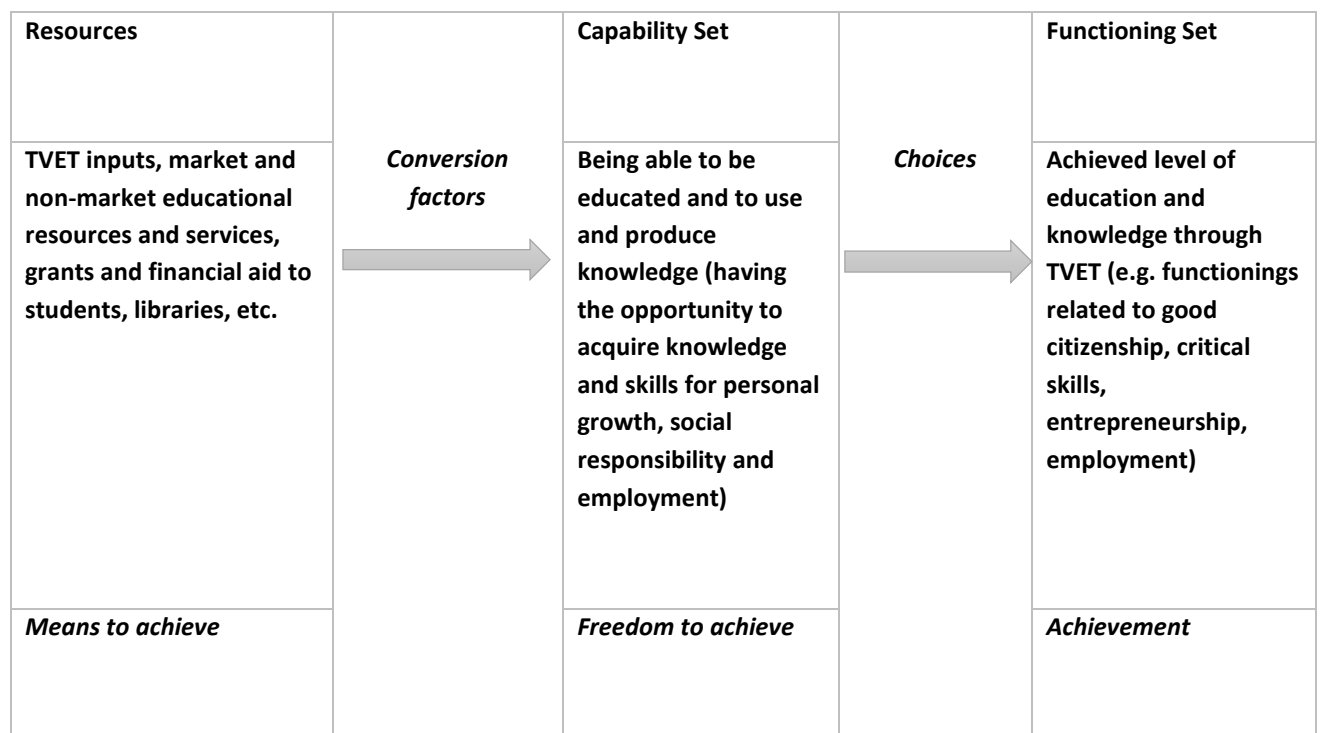


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the study

Figure 1 above articulates that what an individual can achieve with a given amount of means is dependent on numerous internal and external conditions, which ultimately determine that individual's capabilities to transform the means into a set of functionings, and through personal choices, into achieved functionings (Chiappero-Martinetti & Sabadash, 2012). This study draws from students' experiences and assesses the kind and amount of capabilities (capability set) that students have during their study in order to achieve functionings. This could be, for example, those capabilities that are linked to students' personal growth, social responsibility, and economic opportunities, either through being employed, or entrepreneurship. The conceptualisations thus allow us to extrapolate capabilities and functionings reflective of graduates being well-rounded, that is, who have skills that are beyond employment to good citizenship and critical mind to knowledge. This is emphasised by Nussbaum (2002, p.90), who advocates for a higher education that develops individuals' capacities to become "fully human", hence the need to restructure TVET towards that goal. By focusing on conversion factors, the study examines the extent to which students exercise their agency in becoming what they have a reason to value, through TVET. Conversion factors therefore present certain sites for interventions to be developed (Robeyns, 2017), for example, where TVETCs are not adequately supporting students, improvements are designed to address that specific challenge.

### **Critique of the Capabilities Approach**

While CA addresses several different challenges and can be applied in quite different ways as discussed earlier in this chapter, it has been challenged and criticised over the years. The CA has been criticised for not being explicit and lacking precision regarding how the theory can translate into policy. This is the case considering that policy makers prefer working towards certain goals that are objectively stipulated, such as in TVET (Agee & Crocker, 2013). Sen (1992) stresses the importance of the CA being translated into practice in determining the wellbeing and living standards of the individuals. However, the CA presents a challenge regarding how to practically implement it, as the goals between policy and that of the individuals on the things they value might differ (Agee & Crocker, 2013). The CA employs some terminology, such as "functionings" and "capabilities" and "freedoms" in assessing whether people have access to opportunities, and the extent to which they are able to achieve. Even Sen (1999, 24) acknowledges that such terms as "freedoms" might be difficult



to operationalise, due to their ambiguity. In addition to that, that which constitutes a capability and a functioning, and how it is measured, ultimately remains subjective (Alkire, 2002). The complexity of the CA compared to the resource-based approaches is reflected in the fact that fewer studies operationalise it (Chiappero-Martinetti, 2008).

As presented previously from Page 67 to 73, there is a debate regarding whether or not to use a universal list when operationalising the CA. Nussbaum (2000) drew a philosophical list of capabilities that she claims is universal, and which all humans ought to have. Sen (1999), on the other hand, does not define the capabilities, but leaves it to researchers to make relevant judgements. Thus, failure to define the list of capabilities makes the CA subjective and vulnerable to misinterpretation. CA is further criticised for not being a fully-fledged theory, and is inadequate in evaluating gender inequality (Robeyns, 2017). Due to this weakness, other theories can be incorporated to strengthen it, such as the use of feminist theories, combined with the CA in assessing gender inequality. Regardless of the criticisms, the operationalisation of the CA on VET has increased the world over, including in South Africa (Powell, 2012; 14; Powell & McGrath, 2014; 2019; McGrath & Powell, 2013; 2015; DeJaeghere, 2018; Matenda, 2018).

It has been argued that the ability to achieve the kind of lives that rural graduates have reason to value is problematic, as it tends to impose an external valuation of the good life. In response to this argument, Sen points to the variability in the rural graduate's ability to convert the same bundle of resources into valuable functionings. Sen argues again that a theory of justice based on fairness ought to be directly and deeply concerned with effective freedom and capabilities of actual graduates to achieve the lives they have reason to value in TVET, as indicated in Chapter 7.

Another criticism levelled against CA is that it proves too individualistic, and that it neglects the ways in which rural graduates' capabilities are interdependent. The most prominent critique is of Sen's emphasis on individual freedom being vague and failing to consider how each rural graduate's freedom may affect others in this case. Nussbaum points out that a just society requires balance and even limiting certain freedoms, such as the expression of racist views, where in order to do so, society must make commitments about which freedoms are good or bad, important, or trivial (Nussbaum, 2003).

While helpful in offering an alternative approach to the HCT, the studies do not explicitly mention how the historical structures associated with colonialism and apartheid can be disrupted, so as to expand the youths' freedoms to achieve what they value in their lives. Ngcwangu (2019, p. 9) explains that the CA experiences a limitation in addressing the political economy through failing to address the changing dynamic of work in the capitalist world, linking the youth to markets and the formal education, which was primarily designed to perpetuate inequality. More importantly, the CA pays little attention to power, by not explaining the structure where TVETCs exist, thereby articulating the notion of opportunity as if it is disconnected from power imbalances (Ngcwangu, 2019, p. 10). The government has failed to address inequality and poverty entrenched in the history of colonialism. For Motala and Vally (2014), such approaches are based only on the need for economic growth and are less likely to be effective, as the educational programmes ought to factor in the socio-economic context that promotes such inequalities. These limitations leave CA being instrumental in perpetuating the existing inequalities that TVET has already been promoting as opposed to changing the historical and structural conditions and power issues influencing TVET. To overcome this weakness, this study adopts the inclusive CA to rural TVET that foregrounds the wellbeing of individuals as opposed to economic growth, whilst simultaneously addressing the ills of the past that continue to haunt the TVET system and, to an even greater degree, rural TVETCs. DeJaeghere (2018) maintains that, through focusing on conversion factors i.e., environmental conversion factors, the CA takes into consideration the historical, socio economic and global factors that sustain inequality.

In the context of South Africa, McGrath (2012) argues for a human-centred approach that is built up from the CA and the human rights perspective for South African TVETCs. His approach is critical of the TVET toolkit that is used internationally, which had failed to address unemployment, personal development issues, and social challenges in South African society. Another study by Powell and McGrath (2019) uses the CA to understand employability issues in South Africa, while yet another study by Powell and McGrath (2014) evaluates the use of the CA in the South African TVET system, where issues of social justice, human rights, and poverty alleviation are central.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter presented an in-depth discussion of the CA framework used in the current study. It has noted that the TVET policies in South Africa are dominated by the HCT, where the aim is economic productivity, by focusing on skills development for employability. However, the theory has been criticised for its “one size fits all” approach to education and skills. On the contrary, engaging CA with TVET shifts attention away from the economy to the person and advances the notion of addressing the various dimensions of human life, as well as the need to pursue their life aspiration. This approach views TVET as a means for supporting the development of a range of capabilities that are conceived as opportunities to develop functionings that individuals, their communities, and society at large, all have reason to value (Walker & Fongwa, 2017).

## Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology adopted in the study. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of the interpretivist research paradigm, and reasons for selecting a qualitative research approach. This is followed by a discussion and justification of using semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. The chapter further justifies the choice of using a purposive sampling strategy to select the sample, namely, students and lecturers, and collecting data in three phases. In addition, the research procedure, and the ways in which the study ensured trustworthiness are explained. The ethical considerations of the research are explained, followed by a discussion on the data analysis procedure. Overall, the discussion of the research design and methodology is guided by the current study's problem statement and research question.

Several researchers have raised methodological concerns when applying the CA, such as how to operationalise the CA in empirical research (Hollywood, Egdell, McQuaid & Michel-Schertges, 2012). Specifically, some of the key concerns from literature relate to the lack of specification from Sen on how to conduct empirical research using the CA (Robyens, 2005). Further, there have been debates about which capabilities to use and whether there should be a particular list of capabilities (Robyens, 2005; Nussbaum, 2003; Cibangu, 2018). In addition, there have been concerns about how capabilities should be measured as opposed to simply measuring functions (Cibangu, 2018; Hollywood, et al., 2012). Robertson (2016) emphasises that, although there is no correct approach, the CA enables "heterogenous approaches" to research and capability assessment. Further, he suggests that people ought to be involved or consulted during the process of identifying capabilities.

The debate of lack of an operational explicitness of the CA is broad, and literature has dealt with the criticism in greater detail. Considering that the overarching aim of the research was to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by rural TVET students contribute to the economic development and the broader human development agenda, a qualitative research approach was the most suitable to answer the research question. A qualitative route was chosen in order to capture perspectives; understand the knowledge and skills that students feel confident they gained in their learning experience; and document the functionings and

hence capabilities that the student mentioned, valued, or achieved. Thus, the complex and in-depth issues that the education delivered to students in terms of knowledge and skills required the researcher to collect data through interviews from the parties involved, who were students and their lecturers. The reasons for the qualitative research approach are explained in detail under the qualitative research approach section.

### **Research questions**

The research aimed to explore how knowledge and skills acquired by rural TVET students contribute to the economic development and the broader human development agenda. The interview questions were developed based on TVET, and CA literature and the research knowledge and experiences of skills development in South Africa. External experts within the field as well as the researcher's supervisor reviewed the interview questions. Based on the feedback provided, the questions were modified and then finalised. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher conducted mock interviews and worked on improving her probing, listening, and field note-taking skills. The study set out to answer these questions:

- How do students understand the aims of the education, knowledge and skills they acquire?
- What knowledge and skills [functionings, and hence capabilities] do students have reason to value because of studying for a TVET qualification?
- What do lecturers aim to achieve with the curriculum that they implement?
- In what way can the CA contribute to the policy theoretical and practical development of TVET?

### **Towards an interpretative research paradigm**

The design of a research study begins with the selection of a topic and a paradigm and in this section, the researcher explains the concept of paradigms and justifies the choice of the qualitative research method. Paradigms have been defined as a set of basic beliefs and practices that guide researchers in their study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morgan, 2007). Thus, "a research paradigm sets the context for an investigator's study" (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 128) and it is the frame of reference through which any phenomena may be viewed (Edwards, 1999). Guba and Lincoln (1994) identify three fundamental questions or assumptions that assist with defining a paradigm for a research study. These questions or assumptions are

associated with ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108) and are further explicated below:

1. The ontological question asks, “What is the nature of reality”?
2. The epistemological question asks, “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known”?
3. The methodological question asks, “How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known”?

In the selection of a paradigm, the researcher was guided by Guba and Lincoln (1994), who identify four different paradigms, namely, positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism/constructivism, and critical theory. Guba and Lincoln’s table is heuristically useful, but oversimplified and most strikingly, its identification of post-positivism’s ontology as critical realist appears deeply problematic in light of nearly 30 years’ further discussion of critical realist ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The section below briefly describes each of these paradigms.

Positivists adopt naïve realism and believe that there “exists a world out there [that is] driven by natural laws” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). The ontological perspective of positivists “is that there is only one truth, an objective reality that exists independent of human perceptions” (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002, p. 44). Epistemologically, Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain that the investigator and the investigated are assumed to be independent entities. Thus, the investigator can study a phenomenon without having influencing it or being influenced by it (Sale et al., 2002). According to Perry, Riege and Brown (n.d.), a positivist paradigm is inappropriate when a study involves humans and their real-life experiences, as researchers detach themselves from the world they study. Hence, the objective of research conducted within the positivist paradigm serves to “measure and analyse causal relationships between variables within a value-free framework” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 as cited in Sale et al., 2002). Positivists usually adopt quantitative data collection methods, such as experiments and questionnaires, as these methods assume natural laws and mechanisms and aim to test hypotheses and/or theories (Perry et al., n.d.). Given that the current study

is anchored in participants' perspectives, a positivist paradigm was deemed to be inappropriate.

Researchers situated within a post-positivist paradigm adopt critical realism, where "reality is assumed to exist, but to be only imperfectly [understandable] because of flawed human intellectual mechanisms and the intractable nature of phenomena" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Furthermore, any claims about reality must be critically examined. The epistemological assumption is that the investigator is objective in their inquiry. Contrary to positivists, post-positivists use multiple methods (including qualitative methods) to falsify hypotheses as opposed to verifying them (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), post-positivists are required to conduct their inquiry into natural settings by gathering situational information.

The ontological assumption of critical theory is historical realism, whereby reality is assumed to be understandable, but is however formed "over time by social, political, economic, cultural, ethnic and gender factors" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Thus, critical theory researchers believe that knowledge is formed within a social context and that a phenomenon cannot be understood without taking the social context into account (Edwards, 1999). According to Edwards (1999, p. 78), the aim of critical theorists is "to empower or emancipate groups in society who are disenfranchised from the power system, whether political, social or economic." Marxists, feminists and action researchers, are all examples of critical theory researchers (Perry et al., n.d.). Epistemologically, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 110) explain that the "investigator and the investigated are assumed to be interactively linked, with the values of the investigator (and of situated "others") inevitably influencing the inquiry". Hence, the findings are value-based and not value-free (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The methodology of the critical theory paradigm require a dialogue between the investigator and the participants of the research to transform extant ignorance, misunderstandings, and social structures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Researchers within the interpretivist or constructivist paradigm adopt a relativism ontology, where reality is understood as multiple and is socially constructed, and is influenced by both history and culture (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Avramidis & Smith, 1999). In its epistemology, interpretivists or constructivists adopt a subjectivist approach. The investigator and the

investigated are interactively linked, such that the findings are jointly created within the context in which the research occurs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Avramidis & Smith, 1999). Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain that interpretivists or constructivists use a hermeneutic and dialectic methodology. According to Avramidis and Smith (1999, p. 28), “the hermeneutic aspect is used to re-represent individuals’ constructions, while a dialectic aspect is used to compare these constructions”. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 111) state that the aim of the research is to “distil a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions”. In addition, researchers within this paradigm use qualitative methodologies to understand the world, and to reconstruct it where it already exists (Avramidis & Smith, 1999).

Considering the above discussion on these respective paradigms, the researcher adopted an interpretivist or constructivist paradigm for this study. As stated previously, the study sought to understand students’ personal experiences and perspectives relating to the knowledge and skills acquired in the TVET education system. Ontologically, this research supports the idea that multiple realities, which are socially and experientially based, exist. Accordingly, the researcher approached reality from the participants in the study, who own their experiences, and belong to a specific group. Hence, multiple perspectives from the different participants exist to attain an in-depth understanding of a given phenomenon. Epistemologically, the researcher and the participants interactively link to create mutual findings for the study. As explained above, research undertaken within the interpretivist or constructivist paradigm is influenced by biases, beliefs, and perspectives of the researcher. The same applied to this research as the researcher has previously worked as a lecturer in a teacher training college and is currently a consultant for the DHET. As such, the researcher has extensive knowledge and expertise in the field of skills development, which may have implications for the findings. The next section explains why a qualitative research approach was used to collect data in the study.



## **Qualitative research approach**

Rocha (2004) posits that there are two methods of study that the researcher can select, namely the qualitative method, and the quantitative method. While there is much debate as to whether quantitative or qualitative approaches are to be preferred, Wilson and MacLean (2011) argue that the determination of whether a quantitative or qualitative method ought to be adopted is dependent on the phenomena under study.

Qualitative research “aims to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans’ lives and social worlds” (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002, p. 717). Focus is placed on using words and observations to express reality and to describe people in natural situations (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar & Newton, 2002, p. 19). On the contrary, numbers are used in quantitative research to represent opinions or concepts (Amaratunga et al. 2002, p. 19). Family Health International (2004) posit that the qualitative method is usually used to investigate an observable fact, while the quantitative method is utilised to verify a hypothesis about an observable fact. In addition to that, Creswell (2003) suggests that the qualitative method is better used in such case where the researcher requires in-depth details and narrative stories based on a small sample and the quantitative method is used in a situation where there are experimental designs based on a larger sample size. Hence, qualitative sampling involves the use of small, purposive samples to obtain in-depth information (Sale et al., 2002, p. 45), while quantitative research uses a larger sample size to ensure representativity to the population (Sale et al., 2002, p. 45). Qualitative research requires important skills, such as empathic listening, in order to bond and build trust with individuals so that they are more willing to share their views and opinions (Chetty, 2013).

There is an immense amount of research that differentiates between qualitative and quantitative research methods (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Sale et al., 2002; Morgan, 2007). At the same time, it is important to note that some researchers prefer to use mixed methods, which combine both the qualitative and quantitative method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The section below elaborates on some of the key differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

It is important to understand the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. The most common distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research are often made in terms of using words (qualitative) as opposed to numbers (quantitative) or using close-ended questions (quantitative hypothesis) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions) (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2007). In addition, whereas the focus of qualitative research is to explore and understand individuals, quantitative research strives to test theories by examining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2014; Hardhan, 2018). Furthermore, in qualitative research, the procedures are specific, and replication is rare; However, in quantitative research, the procedures are standardised, and replication is assumed (Morgan, 2007). In terms of analysis, qualitative analysis is mainly conducted by extracting themes from evidence and organising data to present a coherent picture, while quantitative research involves using statistics, tables, or charts to discuss how the findings relate to the various hypotheses (Neuman, 2007; Morgan, 2007). Accordingly, qualitative data is primarily descriptive, in the form of interview notes and documents, and are analysed inductively (Hardhan, 2018).

To determine the appropriateness of qualitative research methods for this study, it is essential that the broad advantages and disadvantages of using a qualitative research method are presented. Like any other approach, qualitative research has various advantages and disadvantages, all of which are acknowledged by the researcher. One of the main advantages of qualitative research is that data is usually collected through naturalistic settings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thus, researchers collect data from individuals in their real-world settings that are natural, and cannot be manipulated. Furthermore, according to Patton and Cohran (2002), and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), qualitative research methods enable researchers to gain rich detail that consists of participants' personal experiences and perspectives. Researchers can therefore explore an important case to vividly demonstrate a phenomenon to the readers.

However, qualitative research also have several disadvantages. For example, according to Sale et al. (2002), researchers may not be able to generalise the knowledge from qualitative research to other people or settings. In addition, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) explain that it is challenging to make qualitative predictions, where it takes longer to collect and analyse qualitative data as opposed to quantitative data. Qualitative research is also

criticised for being easily influenced by researcher bias. This is because researchers are part of the process of discovering meaning, and are immersed in the details of the settings (Chetty, 2013; Hardhan, 2018). Furthermore, the reliability of qualitative data is a challenge, as the data is based on a single researcher describing experiences. Accordingly, the researcher may not be objective during the process, due to their close contact with the participants.

A qualitative approach was employed for numerous reasons. First of all, current TVET policy, as discussed above, is generally underpinned by the HCT, and consequently, there is very little research available on what capabilities the TVET system is expected to offer, and what the student's expectations are. The outcomes of the education provided, and students' expectations can be better understood through collecting lecturers' and students' perspectives. Qualitative research helped the researcher to explain the factors that influence and inform TVET and its intended outcomes. The choice of using qualitative research to explore the CA is also supported by Zimmermann (2006). Zimmermann (2006) articulates a positive contribution that qualitative research adds when exploring the complexities of social issues.

A second factor concerns the focus of the human development theory concerning itself with 'opportunities' rather than 'achievements' as a measure of human development, and that these opportunities or capabilities are not absolute or predetermined, but rather ascertained by means of participatory processes involving a variety of stakeholders. The open-endedness of this determination would seem to fit better with a qualitative approach as it clearly explains how individuals and communities understand TVET. The qualitative approach also allows the researcher insight into the interactions between students, lecturers, and relevant stakeholders.

Third, the human development paradigm challenges the objectivist neoliberal approach to human development, which forms the basis of policies (including TVET policies) developed in and exported by the West. Accordingly, research on the human development approach appears to call for an approach that does not seek to categorise, measure, and normalise in the name of efficiency, but instead, for an approach that attempts to make meaning of experiences relative to context on the basis that knowledge is not value neutral.

Fourth, the importance of the participatory process regarding determination of valued capabilities requires explication and meaning making of this process, to which a quantitative approach would not do justice.

Fifth, the CA has previously been used in qualitative studies of employment and TVET (Powell & McGrath, 2014). In addition, the CA is known to focus on the individual; thus, qualitative research approaches are best suited for exploring individual motivations, attitudes, and deeper levels of understandings (Hollywood et al., 2012). Similarly, Nussbaum (2003) also supports the use of qualitative research to explore the CA, as she argues that, although numbers can be beneficial, they do not enhance one's understanding of what individuals are able to choose and accomplish, and would not do justice to the open-mindedness of the CA.

As noted previously, a qualitative research approach was adopted in the current study in order to gain a deeper understanding of students' and lecturers' views of TVET. The aim was to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by TVET students contribute to the national development agenda. A qualitative research approach is particularly suitable when one is interested in understanding the different dimensions of capabilities, including conversion processes, and what people value. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach aligns with the researcher's paradigm and is best suited to provide results that facilitate in-depth understanding of the challenges that rural TVETCs continue to face. As such, a qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to understand participants' personal experiences and perspectives relating to the knowledge and skills acquired in the TVETC. The researcher was, however, cognisant of the advantages and disadvantages of using a qualitative research approach and took this into account during the research process.

### ***Data collection method: Semi-structured interviews***

The researcher's choice of using semi-structured interviews to collect data was aligned with the researcher's interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research approach. Broadly speaking, the primary data collections methods fall into one of the following three categories: listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces and records (Reid & Gough, 2000). While the list is non-exhaustive, research methods in qualitative data include in-depth interviews; focus groups; and participant

observations (Sale et al., 2002). For the purposes of the current study, interviews were used to address the research questions and are briefly discussed below.

According to Berg (2006), an interview involves a conversation that aims to collect information about an individual's opinions, thoughts, and experiences. The three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through interviews include the following.

The unstructured interview is one of the most unique methods used to obtain qualitative data from a participant. Unlike other methods, Berg (2006) equates the method to an informal conversation. Thus, a researcher is given the liberty to ask questions on the spot depending on a given situation, without following any standardised guideline. At the same time, participants can answer questions freely (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Given these details, scholars including Berg (2006) and Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), postulate that one of the benefits of this method is that if the research interviewer is skilled, large amounts of valid data can be collected. However, Berg (2006) argues that this can also become a disadvantage; that is, an unskilled research interviewer may not be able to instinctively generate meaningful questions at that given point in time, where consequently, invalid data may be collected. Given these details, it is of paramount importance to ensure that such a method is used only in cases where the researcher is well experienced and is more capable of being systematic when collecting data.

The second approach is the standardised open-ended interview, which is a contradictory method of unstructured interviews. Berg (2006) indicates that this is a systematic qualitative method of collecting data, where all respondents are asked similar questions and then are given the freedom to answer the questions broadly. An advantage of this interview approach is that it enables participants to share detailed information and simultaneously allows the researcher to probe and follow up on responses. However, it can be more challenging and time-consuming to extract similar themes and codes from the interview transcripts, due to the open-endedness that allows participants to freely express all their views (Turner, 2010). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) posit that this is one of the most popularly used methods, as researchers can maintain consistency during fieldwork, and hence, there are fewer disparities in the data collected.

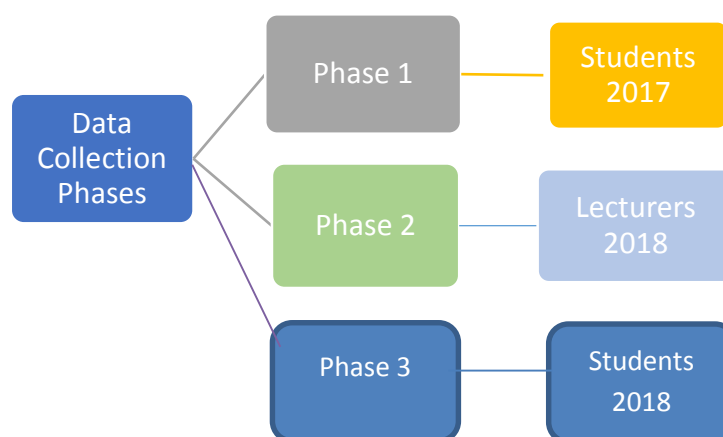
The semi-structured interview is the third approach, and is the one used in this research to collect information from participants. The semi-structured interview is a combination of both above-mentioned methods. According to Bryman (2004), semi-structured interviews involve a set of pre-set questions given to the participants beforehand, so that they may absorb the information and think about it. However, later, when the interview is conducted, the researcher may also ask some spur-of-the-moment questions, depending on the direction of the interview. One of the primary advantages of conducting a semi-structured interview is its flexibility. For example, semi-structured interviews enable researchers to clarify any unclear questions. In addition, this interview approach provides researchers with flexibility in phrasing their questions, and also gives participants the opportunity to speak and express themselves more openly than they might have done with structured interviews (Denscombe 2007, p. 176). Thus, semi-structured interviews enable researchers to gain more detailed information from participants. However, according to DeJonckheere and Vaugh (2019), a limitation of a semi-structured interview is that it may be difficult to engage participants in the conversation. Further to this, semi-structured interviews are also known to reduce a researcher's relative control over the interview process, and may take longer to conduct and analyse (Smith, Harre & Van Langenhare, 1995).

Given the nature of the current study, the researcher's decision to use semi-structured interviews enabled her to be flexible in collecting in-depth information from participants, and from delving deeper into their responses. Furthermore, the open-ended questions in the interview schedule provided the researcher with opportunities to probe by asking follow-up questions. Doing so, articulated the participatory dialogue underpinnings, or process freedoms, of the CA. The researcher developed an interview guide to gather the demographic information of the TVET students and lecturers, students' capabilities, and aspirations. The interview guide also enabled the researcher to interview all participants in a systematic and comprehensive manner, by deliberating issues and further probing responses. Prior to interviewing students as well as lecturers, the researcher explained the study objectives and details so as to ensure that they fully understood the study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted at the Esayidi College campus for the convenience of the participants as they were more comfortable in their own space. The interviews were conducted in two languages, namely English and isiZulu. The researcher allowed

participants, especially students, to select their preferred language. As a result, the participants were more relaxed during interviews, and were able to speak their minds freely. Thus, this enabled the researcher to build a good rapport with participants. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 to 60 minutes, and was audio-recorded for the purposes of allowing the researcher to pay full attention to the proceedings of the interviews. Recording also enabled deep interaction with the participants and provided the interviewers with the opportunity to obtain in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences. It should be noted that all the interviews that were conducted in isiZulu were later translated into English. The researcher is fluent in isiZulu, and as such, the data was well translated, and no details were lost during this process.

### Overview of the data collection phases

As previously mentioned, data was collected in three phases from two groups of participants, namely, students and their lecturers (see Figure 2 below). Due to time constraints, although the researcher was unable to conduct a longitudinal study on the students, she was able to gather information from students in two different time periods: firstly, when students joined the college; and secondly, when the same students completed their course. In addition, interviews were conducted with lecturers in order to understand their perspectives on what they aimed to achieve with the curriculum that they implemented, and whether they shared similar sentiments as students.



**Figure 2: Overview of data collection phases**

### ***Phase 1 Students***

The purpose of Phase 1 was to collect baseline data from first-year students who joined the Esayidi College in 2017. The baseline data included demographic information of students, such as their family background, reasons for enrolling into a TVETC as opposed to a university, and their choice of programme. Data was collected on students' perspectives on their dreams, aspirations, and their expectations upon completing their programme or registered course. The findings of Phase 1 are presented in Chapter 5.

### ***Phase 2 Lecturers***

During Phase 2, data was also collected from lecturers regarding courses or modules in three different fields, namely Business Management; Travel and Tourism; and Electrical Engineering. Focus was placed on their perception of the aim of the education they provided, how they implemented the curriculum, and the impact of the curriculum on students. Moreover, lecturers' perspectives were also sought in this study to compliment the student voices on the TVET system.

### ***Phase 3 Students***

The purpose of Phase 3 was to gather information from the same students after they completed their programme/course (both theory and practical) in 2018. The assumption was that the students would have acquired knowledge and skills during their learnings, and they would be able to share their learning experiences on issues probed during Phase 1. Thus, the purpose of Phase 3 was to capture students' perspectives on how the education they received met or did not meet their aspirations and expectations.

Having two phases for students, allowed the researcher to analyse and compare students' perspectives in terms of progression, and whether their dreams, aspirations, and expectations were met. The phases also enabled the researcher to understand deeply the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum from both student and lecturers' voices. The findings of Phase 2 are presented in Chapters 6 and 7.



### ***Participants: sample size and selection criteria***

According to Njie and Asimiran (2014), sampling in qualitative research is usually determined by the type of information that the researcher wants to collect, and the group of people or a location from which to obtain the information. As such, qualitative researchers tend to use non-probability sampling types such as quota sampling, purposive sampling, or snowball sampling (Neuman, 2007). For the purposes of this study, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals with specific characteristics that would enable the researcher to address the research questions of the study. This sampling strategy was based on the researcher's knowledge of the topic. Thus, the researcher pragmatically chose students and lecturers from a particular TVET in a rural area. A drawback of a purpose sampling strategy was that the sample was not representative of the population and, therefore, could not be used to generalise the ideas of the entire population.

The sample size in qualitative research is less important, as the aim is to obtain in-depth and quality information of participants' views of a specific situation or process (Njie & Asimiran 2014). Creswell (2003) emphasises that usually, the sample size for qualitative research is small. This is further explained by Fossey et al. (2002), who state that a small sample may be used and that there is no definite minimum number of participants required to conduct sound qualitative research; "however, sufficient in-depth information needs to be gathered to fully describe the phenomenon being studied" (p. 726). Njie and Asimiran (2014) propose that the sample size in a case study design ought to be at least one institution, but can also include more. As such, the current study included a sample size that enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information that was necessary to address the study's objectives.

As alluded to in the previous section, the sample of this study comprised students from the TVETC, specifically, in the KZN province. A voluntary recruitment strategy was employed to enrol participants, which essentially means that the researcher does not choose the participants, but participants volunteer to take part themselves (Alvi, 2016). Since this research was to be conducted on campus, the researcher approached the campus manager and explained the aim of the study, before he disseminated information about the study to students from the selected departments. As a result, 50 students from the selected

department volunteered to take part in the study. The students were pursuing their first year of study in 2017, when they were selected from the following departments: Business Management; Travel and Tourism; and Electrical Engineering. A follow-up session was again conducted in 2018 when the participants were TVETC graduates, which intended to capture their experiences and to also assess the progress on their aspirations they had voiced during the first phase of their interview. Table 7 below indicates the number of students selected from each department.

**Table 7: Number of students per department in Phase 1**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Number of students selected</b>
Business Management	N=17
Travel and Tourism	N=17
Electrical Engineering	N=16
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

The three departments were purposively selected, because their programmes would not readily give them employment in the area the college was located. For instance, students who studied Travel and Tourism would have experienced a challenge finding a job in the area in question, as there were no tourism activities in the area. Consequently, this would have led these students to either seek employment opportunities elsewhere in the country, or seek employment in a different field.

After the selection of the students, the 50 students were asked to participate in the study and were comprehensively introduced to the study details. The ethics guidelines were read out clearly to participants, and they were given a choice to either participate, or to decline being interviewed for survey. Out of the 50 selected students, 21 participants volunteered to participate, which constituted 42% of the total sample population (see Table 8 below). The research was conducted after lectures, which meant that some students could not volunteer to participate as they lived far from the institution and had to walk a long-distance home. In addition, a few students did not want to participate, even after the aims and objectives of the study were explained to them.

**Table 8: Students' biographical information: Phase 1**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Breadwinner</b>
Welcome	M	20	Business Management	Mother
John	M	19	Business Management	Mother
Susan	F	26	Business Management	Mother
Lucky	M	22	Electrical Engineering	Mother
Jack	M	22	Electrical Engineering	Elder brother
Zola	M	21	Electrical Engineering	Both parents receive grants and pension payouts
Nhlanhla	F	23	Travel and Tourism	Father
Grace	F	24	Electrical Engineering	Mother
Shorty	F	21	Travel and Tourism	Mother
JB	M	22	Electrical Engineering	Mother received grant
John	M	22	Business Management	Grandmother
Zozo	M	20	Business Management	Father
Noni	F	27	Business Management	Mother
Lolly	F	24	Electrical Engineering	Mother
Zakes	M	29	Electrical Engineering	Parents received old age pension. NSFAS paid tuition
Royalty	M	25	Electrical Engineering	Aunt
Harry	M	22	Travel and Tourism	Mother
Jabu	M	23	Electrical Engineering	Father
Kate	F	21	Business Management	Father
Megan	F	28	Business Management	Mother
Busie	F	20	Travel and Tourism	Father

The sample saw a good representation of students during both Phase 1 and Phase 3 of the research. The selection of students was purposive, and included students of different ages such as the relatively young, as well as old students, to ensure that diverse views were captured. The sample grids below clearly indicate the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 9: Student sample by gender**

Gender	Frequency
Female	12
Male	9
Total participants	21

**Table 10: Student sample by age**

Age	Frequency
19	1
20	2
21	4
22	3
23	3
24	3
25	1
26	1
27	1
Average age	23 years

Phase 2 comprised of the lecturers, who were selected based on the courses they taught and willingness to participate in the study. Thus, lecturers who taught Business Management, Travel and Tourism, and Electrical Engineering were approached to

participate in this study. Six lecturers were interviewed to capture perspectives on the outcomes of education provided at the college. As seen in Table 11 below, four lecturers have national diplomas, while two have B Tech Degrees. Most of the lecturers have between two and six years of teaching experience.

**Table 11. Lecturers’ biographical information**

Pseudonym	Gender	Position	Highest level of education	Years of teaching
Lulu	Female	Business Studies	National Diploma in Business Management National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE)	2 years
Zolile	Male	Lecturer in Electrical Engineering Department	BTech in Mechanical Engineering (UNISA) Higher National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering Diploma in Education Currently pursuing MTech in Mechanical Engineering	4 years
Mava	Male	Computer science	National Diploma in HR	3 years
Mandisa	Female	Lecturer in Tourism Department	BTech in Tourism Management	4 years
Babalo	Male	Senior Lecturer – Power Electronics and Electrical Machines and Protection	National Diploma in Electrical Engineering	4 years
Bulelwa	Female	Career Guidance Officer	Bachelor’s in Psychology	2 years

As explained earlier, Phase 3 involved a follow-up session that focused on 13 of the 21 students (see Table 12 below) using an expanded instrument to collect the perspectives mentioned above. The sample size for Phase 3 only included 13 students of the 21 students. The dropout was due to rural and socio-economic related issues such as distance, access to

students' villages both physical (travel logistical issues), and network (connectivity) issues when trying to get a hold of them. Some of these students were also unavailable on cell phones numbers they provided during Phase 1. The reduced sample size meant that the researcher could not gain an in-depth understanding of the eight students' journey after completing their course at the TVET college. However, judging from the data, the eight students dropping out seemed random, as they had similar backgrounds to the remaining 13 students; thus, the researcher is confident of her findings from students in Phase 3.

**Table 12: Students' biographical information: Phase 1**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Course
Welcome	M	20	Business Management
Lucky	M	22	Electrical Engineering
Jack	M	22	Electrical Engineering
Nhlanhla	F	23	Travel and Tourism
Grace	F	24	Electrical Engineering
JB	M	22	Electrical Engineering
Zozo	M	20	Business Management
Lolly	F	24	Electrical Engineering
Zakes	M	29	Electrical Engineering
Royalty	M	25	Electrical Engineering
Harry	M	22	Travel and Tourism
Kate	F	21	Business Management
Megan	F	28	Business Management

### Data analysis process

The data was transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of transcription. The data was transcribed, cleaned, and then exported to NVIVO. On the NVIVO database, thematic analysis was used. The researcher adopted the inductive approach to the analysis of data. The inductive approach means the themes that are identified are strongly linked to the data themselves raw data (Patton, 1990), without the restraints imposed by structured

methodologies. In this approach, the data was collected specifically for the research (through semi-structured interviews) the themes identified bore some relationship to the specific question that was asked of the participants. Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. In this sense, this form of thematic analysis is data driven. The inductive approach was guided by two main things:

i) Data analysis is determined by both the research objectives (deductive) and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive). Thus, the findings are derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher and findings arising directly from the analysis of the raw data.

ii) The primary mode of analysis is the development of categories from the raw data into a model or framework that captures key themes and processes judged to be important by the researcher (Thomas, D.R.(2003).

Considering the above, firstly, the researcher had to familiarise herself with data through reading and re-reading the transcripts several times. The second stage constituted coding which involved listening to the recordings for emerging themes and beginning to attach labels or codes to the texts that represented the themes (see Appendix L). The process also involved how the themes were patterned and the themes included economic opportunity, and family background. These themes were not predetermined but emerged from the data. The third stage involved displaying the data and that involved laying out or keeping an inventory of data that was related to a theme. In the process, the researcher noted the differences between individuals and sub-groups, organised data into sub-themes, returned to the data and examined evidence that supported each sub-theme. The fourth stage was data reduction, and this involved getting an overall sense of the data and distinguishing primary/main and secondary/sub-themes. Following the inductive approach that follows Powell and McGrath (2019) two phase approach was used to i) identify themes which became capabilities and thereafter ii) evaluating the functionings against the capability list. The fifth and final stage involved interpretation, i.e., identifying the core meaning of the data, remaining faithful to the perspectives of the study participants but with wider social and theoretical relevance.

The philosophical belief system in this study was that the social world's meanings are constructed from numerous social realities that are subject to social norms of time and location. As such, the assumption was that the rural TVET under investigation constituted students who had their own views, perceptions and meanings about TVET. As a result, the researcher co-constructed knowledge with students on their own understanding of the kind of knowledge they received from TVET. Consequently, knowledge was constructively understood between the researcher and participants such that participants' point of views within their rural context were explored. This philosophical approach aligns well with the CA used in this study that employ a bottom-up approach. A bottom-up approach in this case, means that the researcher interpreted the data and drew capabilities from participants' voices on which capabilities do matter for the rural TVETCs students. As previously explained, capabilities are not easily identifiable as the CA approach requires measuring the opportunity to achieve something rather than the actual outcome (Hollywood et al., 2012; Robeyns, 2005). As such, the researcher identified themes and hence functionings first before extrapolating the opportunities from them (Robeyns, 2017). Thus, the capability list that the researcher developed was based on the interviews conducted with students and lecturers and presented what graduates deemed to be valuable during their first year at college and after completing their studies. Specifically, Powell's capability list for TVET colleges was referred to in the development of capabilities list for this study. The researcher's approach to developing the capability list was therefore participatory and involved students and lectures. This aligns with Alkire (2007) in that the process was consultative rather than capabilities being imposed. It should however be noted that the emerged list does not imply that the findings represent the views of all students in the college.

The researcher acknowledged that her personal motivation to conduct this study coupled with her teaching and work experiences could have potentially influenced the findings of this study. As outlined in Chapter 1, this research is very close to the researcher's heart as she has spent a significant amount of her life in uMzimkhulu. The researcher was, therefore, cognisant of the challenges experienced by TVETC students and unemployed graduates. As such, it might have been possible that expectations of certain findings led to some bias in analysis in order to confirm or contradict her expectations i.e., confirmation bias. Several



steps were taken to reduce confirmation bias that could have existed; for example, constant self-reflection, objective analysis and interpretation was the order of the day. Transcripts were re-read several times to ensure objective interpretations. In addition, an independent colleague reviewed the research instruments used to collect data. Further, independent spot-checks were also conducted during the data collection, coding, analysis and interpretation phases. These measures assisted the researcher to separate herself from the data by remaining objective and reducing potential biases with the analysis and interpretation. On the other hand, the researcher had great insights of the context and the kind of participants that were being interviewed. The researcher could understand the words and actions of the participants.

In addition to being aware of possible confirmation bias, the researcher's social position, including age, gender and class, may have potentially influenced the findings. It may have been possible that students participated in this study and shared their experiences because the researcher was a well-known and successful businesswoman, who could link students to potential jobs, internships, companies and influential people. It may have also been possible that female students were more open to sharing their experiences than male students due to cultural norms. Similarly, students might have participated in the study out of respect for someone who seems to be a mother-figure to them.

### **Validity, reliability and rigour**

Reliability and validity are usually discussed in quantitative research. However, according to Neuman (2007), most qualitative researchers have accepted the principles of reliability and validity, although different terms are used and applied. In qualitative research, Golafshani (2003) explains that reliability and validity are not viewed separately, but researchers use terms that encompass both, such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985b) introduced the following qualitative terms to ensure trustworthiness that have been expanded upon by others:

- **Credibility.** According to Schwandt (2001), credibility “addresses the issue of ‘fit’ between respondents’ views and the researcher’s representation of them”. This criterion essentially determines whether the description is credible. The following strategies have been proposed to increase the credibility: member checks; peer

debriefing; prolonged engagements; and persistent observations in the field. The researcher in the current study used all of the above-mentioned strategies to increase the credibility of the study.

- **Transferability.** According to Tobin and Begley (2004, p. 392), transferability “refers to the generalisability of inquiry. In a naturalistic setting, this concerns only case-to-case transfer”. Thus, this criterion determines whether findings of the research can be transferred to another case. Creswell (2009, p. 191) suggests that transferability can be achieved by using “rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings”. As such, the current study ensured that transferability was achieved by using detailed and thick verbatim descriptions to represent participants’ views.
- **Dependability.** Tobin and Begley explain that dependability is “demonstrated through an auditing trail, where others can examine the inquirer’s documentation of data, methods, decisions and end products” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). The researcher ensured dependability through such an audit trail.
- **Confirmability.** According to Tobin and Begley (2004, p. 392), confirmability “is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination but are clearly derived from the data”. The researcher in the current study is cognisant of her personal bias and ensured confirmability through an audit trail and by engaging with other researchers. In addition, participants were invited to comment on the interview transcript and whether this accurately reflected their views.

Data was collected from three sources of information (documents, students and lecturers) to ensure consistency, where informed consent was implemented to minimise bias, and honest answers. The iterative nature of semi-structured interviews further informed questions. The literature, probes and data collection strategies offered an opportunity to clarify areas of agreement and divergence from stakeholder groups.

## **Ethical considerations**

Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani and Cheraghi (2014) posit that researchers should always consider ethical issues prior to conducting field work. Specifically, research involving people should always be conducted in an ethical manner (O'Leary, 2004). Some of the core ethical considerations include informed consent, risk of harm, anonymity, and confidentiality (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). With regard to informed consent, researchers must always ensure that participants are fully informed of what will be asked of them, how data will be used, and whether there will be any consequences (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). In addition, participants must provide signed consent to taking part in the study, and understanding that participation is voluntary, and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Researchers also need to ensure that the identity of participants is kept anonymous or confidential (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Further, participants must be informed of any potential risks that may emerge from taking part in the study.

Given this information, the Ethics Committee of the University of Nottingham, which ascribes to the British Educational Research Association's code of research ethics, granted permission and ethical clearance for conducting this study. In addition, permission to conduct this research and the use of the College name was sought and granted by the Chief Executive Officer of the College, due process was followed. Prior to the interviews, the researcher sought the participants' informed consent through an informed consent letter which was followed by an official acceptance letter from the principal of the TVETC. The contents of the letter were explained to the participants before obtaining informed consent from them. The interviewers also provided a detailed explanation of the nature of the study to each participant and assured them of both confidentiality and anonymity. Thus, participants had the right to choose whether or not to participate in the study. Importantly, pseudonyms were used throughout the study, rather than real names of the participants. In cases where certain details could reveal their identity, such details were altered to protect the participants.

Secondly, the participants were allowed not to respond to questions that they were not comfortable to answer. In addition, participants were given the right to withdraw from the

interviews if they felt uneasy during the session. Following this, the researcher also sought and obtained permission from each participant to use an audio-recorder. All interviews were confidential, and the respondents remained anonymous as the interview transcripts were labelled using pseudonyms. Furthermore, the researcher highlighted the benefits that the participant would obtain from research, which did not include finding jobs for the students. The researcher indicated that participants could be given a copy of the research paper after completion, should they want to scrutinise this.

The information would be safely kept at the college for three years after submission, should it ever be needed as a point of reference. After these three years, the information would be destroyed as it would no longer be used. This was all highlighted in the ethics form and participants were advised of such in advance of participation.

### **Limitations of the study**

Recruiting the appropriate students for the research was not an easy task. The researcher had to rely strongly on the campus manager to help select the sample. This might have contributed to bias, although the researcher made sure that the campus manager followed the criteria of recruiting respondents. A list with the participants' pre-requisite conditions was given to the campus manager prior to random sampling. Also, in order to ensure that all the necessary procedures were followed, the researcher was there to oversee the whole process.

Time was another factor for consideration in the study. TVETCs operate daily on a scheduled time frame and introducing research field work as an additional process is not easy. For example, students are required to do assessments and at times they are swamped with work. As such, the researcher made the field work flexible. The researcher interviewed most participants after their lectures. In addition, the researcher also pre-scheduled interviews with students to ensure that there were no clashes in between their work as well as the field work process.

As previously discussed, another limitation of the study was that the students' sample size in Phase 2 reduced to 13 students. Based on the data, there does not seem to be a pattern in the dropout of the eight students. Furthermore, the eight students have similar

backgrounds to the 13 students, and therefore the researcher feels confident of the findings that appear from Phase 2.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter re-emphasised some of the methodological challenges with operationalising the CA, such as which capabilities to use, and whether there ought to be a particular list of capabilities (Robyens, 2005; Naussbaum, 2003; Cibangu, 2018). In addition, the concerns about measuring capabilities were also raised throughout the chapter. Although there are methodological challenges with a CA, qualitative research has been cited as most appropriate to exploring it. Qualitative research has been used because a CA focuses on human development and focuses on understanding individuals' motivations and attitudes. In addition, the development of the capability list must be participatory and involve all participants in the study (Alkire, 2007).

Considering the above, alongside the current study's problem statement and research objectives, this study was guided by the researcher's interpretivist paradigm, where reality is understood as multiple, and socially constructed. In addition, a qualitative research approach was adopted in order to explore the knowledge and skills acquired by TVET students and identify a list of capabilities. A qualitative research approach is particularly well suited when one is interested in understanding the different dimensions of capabilities, including conversion processes, and what people value. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in two phases that involved both students and lecturers. The researcher ensured that the study was conducted in an ethical manner that included informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. It should be noted that the researcher's approach to developing the student capability list was participatory, and involved both students and lecturers. This aligns with Alkire (2007), who notes that the process was consultative rather than capabilities being imposed. The chapter outlined the trustworthiness of the study followed by a discussion on the data analysis procedure and process.

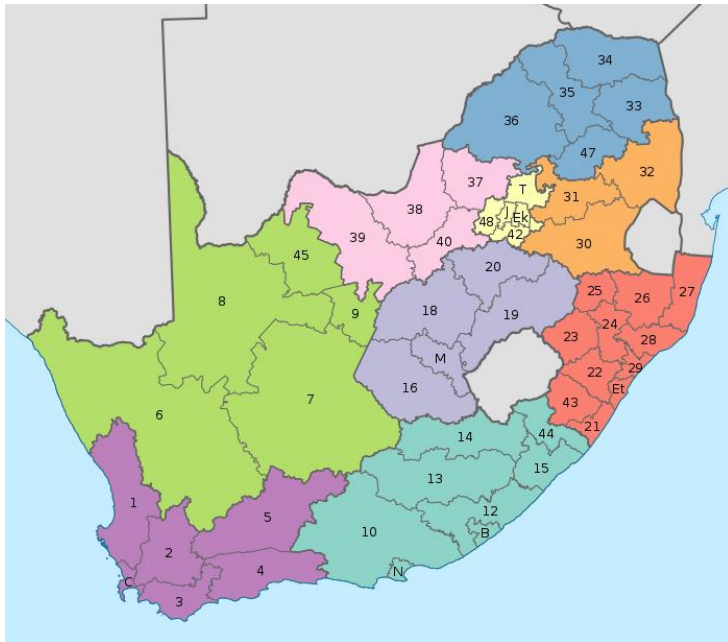
## **Chapter 5: Student perspectives on studying at a rural TVETC– Phase 1**

As outlined in the previous chapter, the current study was conducted in the Harry Gwala District Municipality, where students and lecturers on an Esayidi TVETC campus in the uMzimkhulu Municipality were pragmatically chosen. A qualitative research approach was adopted, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in two phases, from both students and lecturers. In addition, the challenges with operationalising the CA were discussed in Chapter 3; for example, whether there ought to be a particular list of capabilities and debates about how capabilities should be measured.

This chapter presents the data from students interviewed in the first phase of data collection. As previously mentioned, the purpose of the first phase of data collection was to gather information about the student's background, such as their family background; reasons for enrolling in a TVETC as opposed to a university; choice of programme or registered course; dreams and aspirations; and the expectations upon completing their programme or registered course. It should be noted that the data for Phase 1 sets the scene for Phase 2, which explains the students' TVET experience as compared to their expectations and what TVET colleges are expected to provide as informed by policy documents, literature, and the conceptual framework. As explained above, it is best to present the data of Phase 1 and Phase 2 as standalone chapters as this allows the researcher to document the expectations and aspirations of students and the nuances of what the students achieved through the education provided. In addition to student voices, the researcher presented the lecturers' perspectives as a standalone chapter. The three empirical chapters mainly provide empirical evidence, with minimal literature, and act as a build-up to the discussion chapter. The inclusion of minimal literature allows the data to speak with less influence by or reliance upon established voices. The discussion chapter brings together the empirical data, the literature, the conceptual framework, and the analysis, before drawing concluding remarks.

## Study setting and context

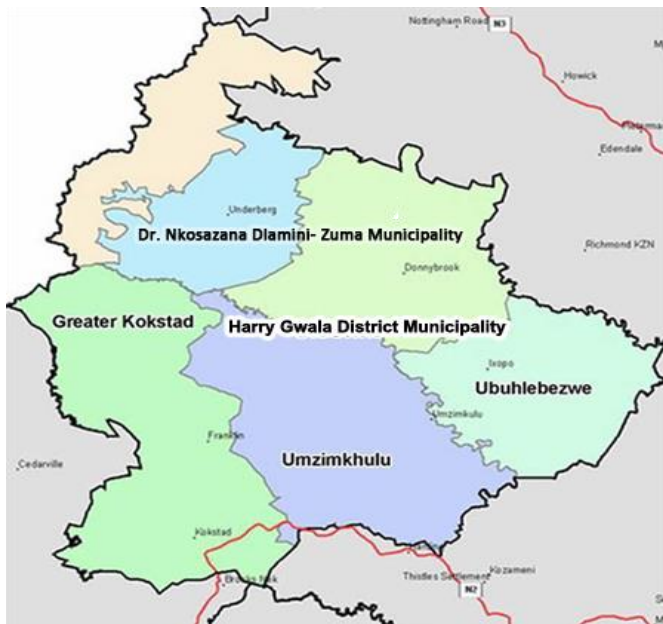
This study focused on a rural TVETC in KZN. KZN is one of the nine provinces in South Africa and is the province with the second largest population with 11.3 million people (Stats SA, 2019a). The province has ten district municipalities (see Figure 3 below, District 43), which are further divided into several local municipalities (Harry Gwala District Municipality, 2020).



**Figure 3: South African Municipal Districts map**

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts\\_of\\_South\\_Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_South_Africa)

For the purposes of this study, the focus is on providing context to one of KZN's District municipalities, namely, the Harry Gwala District Municipality, as this is where the selected TVETC is located. The Harry Gwala District Municipality is a rural district that extends part of the border between KZN and the Eastern Cape Province. As depicted in Figure 4, the Municipality consists of four local municipalities, namely, uBuhlebezwe; Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma; Greater Kokstad, and uMzimkhulu (Harry Gwala District Municipality, 2020).



**Figure 4: Harry Gwala District Municipality and the four local municipalities**

**Source:** Harry Gwala District Municipality (2020)

Harry Gwala is known for its natural environment and its progressive farming methods. Further, the Municipality’s most prominent employment sectors include wholesale and retail trade, catering, accommodation, construction, and manufacturing (Integrated Development Plan (IDP), 2019). According to the 2016 census results, Harry Gwala had a population of 510 865, with slightly more females than males (Municipalities of South Africa, n.d.). Of the 510 865-municipality population, approximately 154 114 residents are classified as living in poverty (IDP, 2019, p. 290). The Youth Development and Empowerment Plan Report (2015) reveals that, in 2013, the majority (67.7%) of Harry Gwala’s population earned between R400 and R6400 per month, while 13.69% had no income. In terms of households, 2016 statistics reveal that the majority of heads of households in Harry Gwala are female (61 926), while 40 344 are male (IDP, 2019).

The municipality has a predominately young population with 40% being children (0-14 years) and 38.9% being youth (15-34 years) (Stats SA, 2018). In particular, the youth age group (i.e. 15-34 years) forms part of the active labour group, and is also sexually active (IDP, 2019). Thus, the youth age group are most vulnerable to being unemployed, contracting HIV/AIDS and engaging in criminal and drug activity. In terms of racial classification, *Black Africans* constitute the majority (97.3%) of Harry Gwala’s population (Stats SA, 2018). Furthermore,



education statistics in 2016 revealed that 10.2% of Harry Gwala's population aged 20 years and older has no schooling, 23.5% reported to have achieved a Matric qualification, and only 6.4% has a higher education qualification (Municipalities of South Africa, n.d.).

In terms of unemployment, in 2016, Harry Gwala reported an unemployment rate of 25.4%, which is 4% higher than KZN's unemployment rate (21.9%) (IDP, 2019). The largest employment sectors in Harry Gwala include Community Services, Trade and Agriculture and Tourism (IDP, 2019). It is important for Harry Gwala to address the high unemployment rate, especially due to its predominately youth population, who are likely to experience negative effects including low self-esteem, marginalisation and impoverishment (IDP, 2019). In addition, the high unemployment rate affects citizens' socio-economic status and makes them more susceptible to diseases. Further to this, key findings from the Youth Development and Empowerment Plan (2015) report reveal that youth, especially young girls and women, are routinely mistreated and abused, which in turn negatively affect their self-esteem. Additionally, teenage pregnancy continues to be a challenge in the District (IDP, 2019). Gender inequality seems to exist within this rural-based municipality due to "negative cultural attitudes and practices and gender-biased educational processes including curricula, educational materials, teachers' attitudes and classroom interaction" (Youth Development and Empowerment Plan, 2015, p. 59). Furthermore, youth within Harry Gwala have limited opportunities to participate in decision-making relating to their Municipality (Youth Development and Empowerment Plan, 2015).

Harry Gwala is confronted with a high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate that severely impacts the quality of life of communities, families, and the economy (Youth Development and Empowerment Plan, 2015). Accordingly, HIV/AIDS further contributes to household poverty and affects the economically active population (Youth Development and Empowerment Plan, 2015). As previously stated, the youth are especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, which has further implications on their quality of life and education. Harry Gwala also experiences development challenges, as a large proportion of the communities are situated within "skewed and mountainous areas and are severely affected by poverty and service backlogs" (IDP, 2019, p. 17). Harry Gwala is a rural municipality and according to the IDP (2019, p. 80), many of the rural communities in South Africa are still characterised by poverty, inequality, limited access to basic infrastructure, underdevelopment, and lack of economic activity. In

addition, Harry Gwala's geographical location means that communities are located far away from employment opportunities, and citizens are required to travel far with limited access to main transport facilities (IDP, 2019).

In sum, Harry Gwala is a rural municipality that is confronted with various socio-economic, environmental and infrastructural backlogs, coupled with developmental challenges. The population is sparsely spread, and many citizens live in unacceptable conditions of poverty. The predominately young population and high unemployment rate means that the Municipality must collaborate with key stakeholders, including TVETCs and businesses, to create employment opportunities and/or to enable entrepreneurs to excel in their businesses. The high unemployment rate within the Municipality may further encourage youth to move away from their community to urban areas, where they may find employment opportunities to financially support themselves and their families. The contextual setting and demographic characteristics of Harry Gwala may potentially affect the findings. For example, cultural norms and practices (i.e., where the traditional role of a woman is that of a caretaker) may affect female students' participation in education and the workplace (McGrath, Powell, Alla-Mensah, Hilal & Suart, 2020). Accordingly, "these early life experiences lead women from withdrawing from education to take up low paid/skilled work and committing to long-term relationships/motherhood, which compounds the inequalities they face in education and work" (McGrath et al., 2020, pp. 8-9).

### **Outline of students' key perceptions**

As explained in Chapter 4 (under data analysis process), the data that was collected was transcribed, cleaned, and then imported to NVIVO. On the NVIVO database, the researcher familiarised herself with the data, and assigned preliminary codes to the data to describe the content. She also searched for patterns or themes in the codes across all the students' interviews. The themes were then reviewed, merged, and renamed before producing a report. The data analysis process enabled the researcher to identify the following core themes:

- Access and success
- Resources and student funding
- Knowledge and skills
- Teaching and learning
- Dreams and aspirations

Each of these themes and their respective sub-themes are briefly discussed in the preceding sections and they will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 (Students – Phase 2) and the theorisation chapter (Chapter 8). In what follows, student responses are cited verbatim.

### ***Access and success***

The first major theme that emerged from the data concerned “access and success”. Students were asked to justify their choice of enrolling into college as opposed to a university. The researcher wanted to understand the “pull and push”<sup>15</sup> factors that contributed to students’ decision of enrolling into a TVETC. The following sub-themes emerged:

- Financial constraints
- Student performance
- Course availability

One of the common reasons for students choosing to enrol at the College was due to the ease of access both in terms of distance and the application process. Many students expressed that the College was closer to home and required less travelling. For example, Busie revealed that the application process for the College was relatively easy compared to universities’ application process. The selected quotes below serve to support the above finding:

*I applied at this TVET because it was nearer to home. My mother could not afford bus fare for me to go and register at the nearest university. (Welcome)*

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<sup>15</sup> Push factors are used in this thesis to refer to those factors that forcefully push people into VET college, while on the other hand pull factors are those that attract people to VET college.

Some students enrolled due to easy accessibility:

*It was the nearest higher education institution, thus easily accessible and convenient.*

(Busie)

Susan's choice was influenced by a cost saving measure:

*It is affordable and closer to home, and I don't have to worry about travelling long distances to get an education. (Susan)*

Thus, one of the "pull factors" that led students to pursue their programme at the College was the fact that it was easily accessible and convenient. Most students were from poor backgrounds, and hence they could not afford to relocate to other regions where they would incur prohibitive transport and accommodation costs. Their choice in terms of selecting a college was, therefore, limited, due to their financial constraints. For example, John did not live near a TVETC, but it emerged as a nearer option than universities such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) or Durban University of Technology, which were about 170 kilometres away:

*Ahh, it was not easy for me to choose a university. For instance, I come from a place far away from a university. So, I decided rather than to say I didn't manage to go to a university, it was better I come to a TVET in KZN just here. I come from Antioch. So, I came to the TVET because the university is far. So, this TVET was easily accessible. It is not a matter of fact that I hate the university, or I love the TVET more, but it was an issue of distance.*

The majority of students ended up at the College by default for various reasons, chief amongst which were that it was easily accessible, and that they lacked the finances to move away from home. This implied that students' freedom to select a higher education institution was limited, and some of the students ended up at the College, which they did not really appreciate. All this has implications for students' learning experiences and perceptions of the curriculum.

Financial constraints emerged as both a "push and pull factor" that led students to enrol into the College. As previously stated, most students come from the surrounding rural areas and poor backgrounds. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 4, most of the students are

sponsored by NSFAS, indicating their need for financial assistance. In addition, Table 9 in Chapter 4 revealed that most families were supported by a sole breadwinner. As a result, students were pushed to attend the College, as TVETCs in general are considered to be more affordable than universities. Susan, who is being raised by her unemployed mother and could not afford university fees commented:

*University fees are expensive [and] my mother could not afford, so I was left with no choice but to enrol at this TVET.*

Lucky reiterated that his mother could not face the ever-increasing university fees:

*Besides, I had heard that universities charge registration fees, so I was not going to afford to register.*

Zola also qualified for university but could not enrol because of financial constraints:

*Firstly, I qualified for university entrance, but my parents could not afford the fees, so I had to enrol here.*

The university registration and tuition fees were regarded as expensive; hence, students' choice of pursuing their studies via a TVETC was partly due to financial constraints, which was reflected in their responses when they used terms such as "cheaper" and "affordable".

To further illustrate the financial costs involved in a student's journey to higher education, an example of a fees structure is depicted in Table 13 below. As observed, the fees for an electrical engineering degree at the UKZN were higher than the fees for an electrical engineering diploma/course at the College.

**Table 13: Comparison of fee structures**

Institution	Course	Annual fees	Minimum number of years to complete	APS Range
UKZN	Electrical Engineering	Average tuition fees: R31 710 Residence fees: R23 265 Meal allowance: R17 500 Book allowance: R5000 <b>Estimate= R 77 475</b>	4 years	33-48
TVET College	Electrical Engineering (NATED)	N1-N3 = R850 (per subject) N4-N6 = R950 (per subject)	18 months	Written admission test

The illustration above suggests that students face many challenges, such as not being able to afford leaving home and lacking information to seek alternative ways to enrol at universities. However, students also realised their financial predicaments and seemed to have accepted the reality of enrolling at the College. The fees debate has been topical for the past five years, with students in South African universities expressing their frustrations through the Fallist movements.<sup>16</sup> While the disturbances were mostly at universities, TVETCs and indeed all higher education institutions are always affected by increasing fees. For instance, due to student protests, the then President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, declared that there would be no fee increments in 2015. Subsequently, Jacob Zuma appointed the Hefer Commission of Enquiry, where the preliminary recommendations were publicised in 2017. They indicated that TVET should be free and that where necessary, stipends be made available to cover the full cost of study. However, tensions about fees were already rising as some universities, such as Stellenbosch University and North-West University, announced fee increments for the 2018 academic year, with no official word from government on the matter.

Other key issues that emerged from the data are that most of the students had poor matriculation results, and that they lacked information to pursue university education through avenues, such as the bridging courses.<sup>17</sup> Table 14 below shows the calculations of the APS (admission point score).

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<sup>16</sup> #FeesMustFall is a protest movement that emerged as a response to institutionalised colonialism and neoliberalism in higher education institutions in South Africa, arguing as part of a broad spectrum of related concerns (syllabus reform, dispensing with public displays of colonial symbolism, and the rapacious neoliberal labour mechanisms that included the outsourcing of staff), that reforming South African universities would be contingent on freeing students from the burden of having to fund their own higher education.

<sup>17</sup> These programmes enable students to ultimately enter the mainstream curriculum after completing the preparation courses. The programmes have been designed to allow a student whose admission point is lower than the point required, admission to a university.

**Table 14: College admission points**

Course title	Admission points	Minimum requirements
Tourism	Only average and above average students get selected during application	Must have Grade 12 Geography 50 Or History 50 Or Tourism 50 (Minimum)
Business Management	No point system	Matric certificate

Many students had low admission points and subsequently did not qualify for university:

*I registered with this TVET because I did not pass well at high school, and hence did not qualify for university. (Noni)*

Jack had wanted to enrol at university, but his admission points were low:

*I did not qualify for university because I did not pass my matric well, so I was left with no option but to register with this TVET. I just wanted to enrol at a university but unfortunately, I didn't qualify.*

Harry had no other option after he failed to secure a place at university:

*When I passed Grade 12, I thought that it would be enough to get me accepted into a university, however, due to my marks that I achieved, I was forced to enrol at a TVET after I was rejected by a university and stayed at home for six months.*

If Kate had passed her matric well, she would have preferred to enrol in university. Since she did not meet the minimum requirements to enrol for university, being forced instead to pursue a programme via the TVETC:

*Yoh, the real reason why I didn't get place at university is I didn't have enough points. Otherwise, I would have preferred to go to a university over a TVET.*

In short, interviews revealed that the majority of students ended up at the College by default, the most common reason for which being that they did not possess adequate grades to enrol at universities. The schools in rural and peri-urban areas are poorly resourced and hence their students do not get adequate support to excel in their studies. The students with low school qualifications end up enrolling at TVETCs; an issue constantly raised in debates about the quality of graduates being produced by South African higher education institutions.

The availability of the chosen course was another reason that many students decided to enrol at the college. A combination of responses was provided when students were asked to motivate their reasons for enrolling into their respective registered courses or programmes. JB, for example, enrolled into a course of his choice:

*I am enrolled for Electrical Engineering. I chose this programme because I wanted to do Electronics Engineering, but when I came here, I found out that there was no Electronics Engineering, instead they had Electrical Engineering, since they are similar, I enrolled in Electrical Engineering.*

However, there were a number of students who enrolled for a course or programme even where the College did not offer their initial choice. Although some students were disappointed, others accepted their predicament:

*I wanted to do Office Admin, but it is not offered here so I opted to do Business Management. (Susan)*

John had wanted to enrol for a teaching course, but enrolled into a Business Management course because a teaching course was not offered:

*The truth is that I wanted to be a teacher, and I still want to be one. So, when I came here, I didn't know that I would end up studying business management. When I found that teaching was not offered, I decided to do Business Management, because there were courses that were more aligned to the subjects I was studying at high school.*

Similarly, Harry wanted to study Drama, but enrolled to study Travel and Tourism:



*It was not my first choice; my first choice was to study Drama, because in high school I did Drama. Tourism was my second option, as they do not offer Drama.*

In conclusion, the theme “Access and success” revealed students’ choice of pursuing their programme at the TVETC as opposed to a university. The sub-themes identified within this big theme were easy access to the College; financial constraints; student performance; and availability of course. Notably, most of these sub-themes are pull factors that led students to pursue their programme at the College. It seems that the choice to enrol into the College was not necessarily the students’ first choice, as some would have preferred instead to enrol into a university.

### ***Resources and student funding***

The second big theme relates to “student resources and funding”. Students hoped that after attaining their qualifications, they would find work and earn enough money to live meaningful lives. Economic opportunities were viewed as a pull factor, specifically for the following reasons:

- TVETCs offer short-term courses and practical training
- Skills for employability

All students expressed valuing the importance of completing studies early and being prepared for the world of work through practical learning. The DHET (2013, p. 11) explains that the purpose of TVETCs is to “train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market”. Hence, it is not surprising that students chose to enrol in a TVETC with the expectation of receiving short-term courses, more practical training, and hence, employment (as discussed in the next section). The quotes below affirm students’ expectations of TVETC in general:

Nhlanhla indicated that

*University courses take a long time to complete. The programme I am doing takes 18 months. Most university courses take four years to complete.*

Grace and Nhlanhla shared that [they]

*chose to enrol here because [they] had heard TVETs offer practical lessons unlike universities which offer only theory. The courses offered at TVETs are shorter compared to the courses at universities.*

The assumption is that, through practical experience, the students become more competitive in the job market. The data also suggests that the students were not informed about learning at higher learning institutions, where there is very little vocational guidance at high school level to guide students towards their aspirations in future careers. Lolly commented on receiving some information from the Department of Education:

*We also heard from the Department of Education that when you go to TVET, you receive practical training; thus, it seemed a better option for me to go to a TVET.*

The practical experience was highly regarded by Jabu, and was a motivating factor for choosing a TVETC:

*TVET is a better choice for me, because in most TVETs, if you study about electricity, it's more hands on, and you receive in-service training. The courses they offer have a practical approach.*

While the extent to which colleges offer practice is debatable, the above quotes seem to suggest that students liked the short-term courses and hands-on practical experiences that TVETCs offer. This is another factor that “pulled” students towards pursuing their course at the College. However, the data did not indicate how the students thought they would fare in the job market when compared to graduates from other higher education institutions. More light will be provided on this in the findings from follow-up interviews in Chapter 7.

As discussed above, students chose to pursue their studies in a TVETC to gain practical, hands-on experience, which would ultimately help them to secure employment. This aligns with the traditional HCT approach that focuses on providing skills for employability. It is clear that students have the same expectations from TVETCs, from the quotes below:

Jack valued skills for employability, where there is a perception of ‘job’ readiness among the students:

*I hope to gain knowledge and get information so that I can get a job and be able to support my family.*

Students seemed worried about their career or the jobs they would find after graduation. There is emphasis on securing a good job, which is linked to higher wages. Upon reflection, the majority of the students who come from poor backgrounds intend to use education to move up the social ladder are black.

Noni said:

*I would like to get my qualification and get a good job.*

The desire to be employed is high, and students want to help their families financially. Grace hoped to find a job at a big organisation such as Eskom,<sup>18</sup> which rewards its workers well:

*I hope to get more practical experience so that I become more knowledgeable, and I hope to get my diploma. I hope I will get a job at one of the big companies such as Eskom or Transnet, that way I would be able to support my family and help my community using my electrical skills.*

The same goes for Zakes, as he commented:

*After graduation it is easier to secure employment.*

Lolly said:

*I heard the Minister of Higher Education and Training advising students to go to VETs as there is practical training that gives students a good start as companies require experience. In his speech, he also emphasised that, due to the fact that at VETs the studies are more hands on, students who graduate from VETs have a better chance of being employed. Because this information came from the government, it gave me assurance that I will become something since I will get experience. And if the*

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<sup>18</sup> Eskom is a South African electricity public utility, established in 1923 as the Electricity Supply Commission (ESC) by the government of the Union of South Africa in terms of the Electricity Act (1922).

*government says we can have a brighter future if we enrol at VETs, then I believe them, as I want the best out of my life.*

Similarly, students also hoped to gain an entrepreneurial career from attending the College. This was clear when students explained that they needed to acquire entrepreneurial skills to be able to open and run their own businesses. For example, Noni noted that:

*I want to get the skills to start my own business.*

Likewise, Zozo explained that he wanted to start his own business and, wanted to “learn entrepreneurial skills and how to effectively run a business”. Several students expressed their desires to become entrepreneurs upon completing their course at the College. This is further elaborated on in the aspirations theme.

In sum, orientation towards practical skills and to the world of work attracted students to enrol at the College. Students felt that the skills acquired at the college would secure employment and/or would enable them to pursue their own entrepreneurial careers. In particular, students expressed the belief that the short-term practical courses offered by TVETCs would enable them to secure job opportunities. The second phase interrogated whether they saw themselves as adequately prepared for the world of work, and capable of contributing to the good of the society. The next section explores how the College contributes to the preparation of graduates to participate in society.

### ***Knowledge and skills***

The third major theme was identified as “knowledge and skills”. In addition to gaining skills for employment, or becoming entrepreneurs, students expressed other key skills and knowledge that they have acquired thus far from the College. These included: i) communication and special skills; ii) personal development and relationship building; and iii) respect.

A number of students shared their ability to communicate and become more sociable from attending the TVETC. Zola in particular expressed how he had learnt to communicate with students from diverse backgrounds:

*I have learnt how to interact and communicate with other students since this college accommodates students from different tribes and cultures. I now perceive life differently and I am now more ambitious.*

Similarly, JB expressed how he had learnt to live in peace with other people and had also learnt to interact with different people.

*Since my start at the VET college, I have also learnt to socialise with other students that come from different backgrounds, including those that come from well-to-do families, unlike myself.*

In addition to learning how to respect and socialise with people, Royalty had also learnt to value the different cultures surrounding him:

*Socially, I have learnt to live harmoniously with other students and treat them with respect. I have also been able to socialise and interact with other students from different tribes e.g. Xhosa, I have gained an appreciation for their culture.*

A few of the students expressed how they had become more aware of themselves and had gained confidence. For instance, Zozo revealed how he had become independent and learnt not to mix with the wrong crowd. Kate articulated the importance of appreciating oneself and not trying to become someone else:

*I have learnt that you need to appreciate who you are, your roots and where you want to be. You should be original and not copy anybody.*

Similarly, Megan also communicated the value she had found in learning to be herself:

*I have learnt a lot, when you come from a lower middle-class family, you don't need to compare and see how other students live their lives. You do not need to compare yourself to them. You need to know where you come from. You just need to focus on what you want to achieve.*

Students also reported being able to form relationships during their learning experience at the College. For example, Kate expressed that:

*I have found a friend that I now look at as a sister and am able to talk to her about issues that I wasn't able to talk about at home, and we share a lot.*

A few students stated that they had learnt to respect other students, and also hoped to gain respect from their families and communities upon completing their registered courses. Harry, Royalty, and Jabu all communicated that they had learnt to treat others with respect irrespective of their background. Welcome hoped to gain respect from his community:

*After finishing my degree, I will gain respect. I will also gain respect from the community if I open my own business.*

John had gained respect from his family by sharing his knowledge:

*I would say the course had a positive impact on my family. I was able to tell them all about my course, and what we learnt about business. Since then, my family have started a business selling chips and ice, my grandmother says she now wants to sell potatoes.*

Overall, this theme presents an overview of the social skills acquired by students during their respective journeys at the College. In addition to gaining technical skills for employment and/or for becoming entrepreneurs, students have also acquired skills such as *communication and socialisation, personal development, relationship building, and respect.*

### ***Teaching and learning***

The fourth theme was “teaching and learning”. Students expressed their views about their learning experiences at the College. In particular, students shared their experiences about the quality of education received, and the inequality between rural and urban TVETCs.

The quality of education at the College seems to be a matter of concern for a number of students. This was articulated by students who emphasised the need to have more practical

experiences, more dedicated lecturers, and more resources. The section below provides a detailed analysis of such a concern.

The need for practical experiences and technical training was frequently raised by students. Students expected more from the College and indeed the government in providing technical training, which would ultimately give them the practical skills for employment. Harry explicitly expressed his disappointment in the College for not offering practical experiences in his course/programme:

*Firstly, this VET does not have anything to prove that it is a real college, because it has no practical [offerings]; because in colleges in general you have to do practical. They only offer practicals in Agriculture, but it's not enough. As part of Tourism, one is expected to travel, but at the college, we were not privileged enough to travel.*

Jabu felt that he had not acquired practical skills, as the College did not have a laboratory and there had not been any engagements with companies:

*Since I started my studies, I haven't gained much, because we don't have a laboratory. We haven't had any practicals, nor have we had companies coming to show us how electricity is generated. So, since we don't have a laboratory, it would be great if they would take us to field trips to gain experience from the companies that actually deal with electrical engineering. At least if that was being done, I could say I had gained, but now I have only gained theory - I also want access to in-service training, because we do theory.*

Like Jabu, Zola also recommended that the college build a faculty laboratory, and that there should be opportunities to engage with companies in order to gain technical training.

Lolly suggested that the government ought to offer more training as she had only acquired theoretical knowledge from textbooks:

*The government should provide us with an opportunity to do practical work. We do not know anything and not even one company has come to show us how it's done, nor to address us about electricity, we want them to take us to site visits. We learn about resistors [and] transformers, but we do not know how those components look... what is an inductor? We only know it in theory from the books in class. Practically, we know nothing.*

Zakes was particularly frustrated that they were first required to seek placements on their own before graduating and obtaining their diplomas:

*Like now, we will not get our N6 diploma, as we first have to go and get practical experience for a year and a half, but we don't know where from... but if government had companies together with municipalities through a workshop that would take students to help with practical experience, this would make it easier for us to graduate.*

Other key findings pertain to the shortage of lecturers, textbooks, and computer laboratories. Students revealed that there was a shortage of lecturers, but also that there was a need for more dedicated lecturers at the College.

Zola and Nhlanhla both communicated that the College needed to recruit more lecturers as there seemed to be a shortage.

The quality of lecturers also seemed to be of a concern, as shown by the following selected quotes:

*The Department of Higher Education needs to assist with lecturers. The lecturers are not effective and fully dedicated to their work as they are lazy in executing their job.*  
(Royalty)

*Lecturers don't seem to like their work. They only get serious when we begin a new term.* (Shorty)

Zakes in particular expressed that the government should invest in ensuring that the college employed “disciplined lecturers who are dedicated, as [they] have noted that some lecturers are ignorant [and] that this also has an impact on the students.”



The lack of resources in the College also seemed to have an impact on the quality of education received by students. This was also briefly explained by Jabu and Lolly above (page 135), where they both suggested the need for laboratories in gaining more practical skills.

In addition to building laboratories, students also recommended that the college ought to build a library and a computer laboratory:

*I think they should build us a library here and get us more textbooks because there is always a shortage. They should also build us a computer lab, because we don't have computers. Computers which are here are only for students studying computer courses.*  
(Nhlanhla)

Jack revealed that the college needed to get [students] more textbooks, as there was a “serious shortage”. In addition, he said:

*The textbooks that [they] have are either outdated or torn.*

Similarly, Shorty also felt that:

*The quality of tuition should be improved because [students] have been using old textbooks.*

Students also shared their views on the quality of education received at rural and urban TVETCs, and the impact that this had on finding employment.

Zakes specifically articulated that:

*The government should invest more in VETs in the rural areas as education in the rural areas should be the same as that in the big cities.*

Similarly, Lolly was frustrated at the government for claiming that they cared for students in rural areas when they did not incorporate training opportunities into their curricula:

*When they speak on TV and radio, they speak as if they care about us in rural areas and they speak as if they understand that our situation in rural areas can be tough and advise us to come to VETs, yet when we come here it is a different story, WE GET NOTHING!*

John explained that a student who graduated from an urban TVETC was more likely to find a job than a student from a rural TVETC:

*I then noted that the quality of learning that we get here in rural KZN is not the same as the VETs in the urban areas. For example, the quality of education won't be the same as the Johannesburg VET in Gauteng. So, since there is a difference in quality you might find that when the two of you are looking for a job, a student from the Johannesburg VET and you, they will end up taking that other student based on the VET location, not so much on your results and performance. They are likely going to think the other person has better ideas than us.*

In sum, this theme revealed students' experiences at the College. It is evident that students are concerned about the quality of education received due to the lack of practical sessions in class, placement, lack of resources such as computer laboratories, and the need for more dedicated lecturers. Furthermore, students also explained that TVETCs in urban areas offer higher quality education than those in rural areas. Students also emphasised the need for government to ensure that quality education is provided in rural areas and that more effort is put into providing technical training as opposed to only acquiring theoretical knowledge. Based on students' responses, it seems that more attention needs to be given to TVETCs in rural areas for them to be effective in fulfilling their mandate to "train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market" (DHET, 2013, p. 11).

### ***Dreams and aspirations***

Dreams and aspirations are formed and reformed, are dynamic, and represent the future. As such, TVETs are potentially highly valuable as an aspiration-making space. Furthermore, reviewing aspirations requires students to have both the capabilities to aspire (the opportunity) and the functioning (actual achievement) of aspiring to be in the evaluative frame. It is important that students have opportunities to aspire, but also to realise those aspirations and in turn form new aspirations. Aspirations can also reveal what is missing in each person's bundle of resources (e.g. economic freedoms), which may make it difficult for them to aspire or achieve their aspirations. In this research, both economic and social aspirations have been identified as being key to the students, as presented below.

One of these examples is that of Zozo, who indicated that:

*In five years, I want to fix my home so that people can see that my parents left a man who will rebuild the homestead. In ten years, I hope I will have a wife and within those ten years, I also hope I would encourage the youth to follow my footsteps by exploring entrepreneurship opportunities. Regarding my career, my dream is to own a big company and employ over 100 youth, and I will regard that as a great achievement and my actualisation.*

While Susan and Megan both reported wanting to open their own businesses, Lucky, Lolly, Grace, JB and Zakes saw themselves working for big organisations like Eskom. Shorty had dreams of working for big hotels abroad.

Similarly, Harry also saw himself getting a job while furthering his studies.

*When I get a job, I want to further my education by studying part-time with any university and get a degree because I cannot rely on a diploma only. At least I will be working, meaning I will be able to pay for my fees. I also see myself gainfully employed and providing for my family.*

Nhlanhla, who even during the second phase of data collection seemed highly motivated after having completed her 18 months of training, indicated that:

*Five years from now, when I finish here, I see myself as a consultant, but in my mind and at heart, I see myself getting a degree, honours and even a PhD. I always tell my father, that this is only the beginning as I see myself as a chief executive officer of my big tourism company.*

Royalty's dreams and aspirations were to own his own company one day.

*One day I would love to own my own electrical engineering company.*

Jabu indicated that he had always wanted to be an electrician:

*I have always wanted to be an electrician and I haven't changed my dream. When I grew up at home, I would always fix up electrical faults and that sparked my passion into wanting to study about electrical engineering.*

*I also hope to gain knowledge, based on engineering, I want to provide for my family, improve their lives and be a provider. I would also like to assist my community with their electrical problems.*

It is important to situate the discussion of dreams and aspirations on the agency and structure debate. We should note about what aspirations are, mainly about the degree of fluidity and the interaction between agency and structure. One might have will to act on important things but the question to ask is whether structure would allow that. As Appandurai (2004, p.68) notes, "...how human beings engage in their own futures....aspirations certainly have something to do with wants, preferences, choices and calculation....future oriented logic".

## **Conclusion**

Most of the students were enrolled at the College by default. Some students had low grades and did not qualify to enrol into university programmes that require higher grades. The few who qualified for university faced financial challenges, as they came from poor backgrounds. For example, Zola qualified for university, but he did not have the resources to pursue the programme that he liked. These two factors seemed to limit student choices in terms of what they could study. The choice to enrol into the College was not necessarily the students' first choice, as some would have preferred to enrol in a university (Powel, 2012). However, Powell & McGrath (2013) and Powell (2014) demonstrate that students enrol into TVET due to the perceptions of TVET offering social mobility, as well as the opportunity to do artisanal work, earn an income, and obtain skills to meet their family and community needs. The difference could be explained by the extent of marginalisation of the students in this study, who were constrained by an array of factors, including poor schooling, low qualifications to meet the admission points for university, lack of information of available options, and outright poverty.

The students clearly valued the TVET orientation to practical skills, which are also valued in the world of work. Whilst it is not clear how graduates at the College fare on the job market, students such as Jabu felt that the skills acquired at the college would assist them to secure employment and/or would also enable them to pursue their own entrepreneurial careers. While Psacharopoulos (1996) points out that conceptualising TVET in terms of HCT means

that colleges must focus on skills development for employability, he criticised that approach. His argument was that the acquisition of some form of training may not necessarily guarantee a job, although it is likely to increase these chances. This is becoming true when the practical component of the curriculum is weak, and when the demand for trainees in the labour market and the social rates of return are low.

The students clearly valued what they learnt and the knowledge they received during their time at the college. They described the way in which the knowledge they acquired enabled them to improve their communication skills, as well as enabled them to respect themselves and others, and they expressed hoping that their qualifications would help them move up the social ladder. For example, Welcome indicated that he thought he would gain respect from peers and community members after attaining his qualification. This is in line with Sen's main concern that individuals had to live the kind of life they had a reason to value. Thus, underpinning Sen's work (1984; 1999a; 1999b; 2009) is the concept of individual wellbeing, which is the ultimate aim of human endeavour. An important aspect of a CA is upholding the distinction between the means and the end to wellbeing and development (Robeyns, 2005). In the context of this study, this entails the need to identify what the means and the ends are when evaluating TVET. In this way, the capability approach is helpful in determining whether TVET students actually received relevant knowledge and skills to improve their lives in a multidimensional way through their studies.

Despite this, the students were also sceptical about the quality of education that they received. They wished they had more practical experiences, more dedicated lecturers, and had access to more resources. Participants revealed that TVETCs in South Africa did not offer quality education, and did not align with local needs. This signals that the expansion of real freedoms enabling them to live and act, may have become compromised. This concurs with the literature that highlights there is an assumption that TVET institutions are producing graduates who lack the relevant skills needed in the job market. In fact, TVET institutions were seen as being of low quality and low status (McGrath & Akoojee, 2009). The debate about the massive shortage of skills is complex, multi-layered, and linked to the point that the TVET sector is producing graduates who are not adequately prepared to join the labour market. This implies that low-quality schooling makes people unemployable, and hence causes them to be stuck in poverty. The assumptions paint a picture of readily available jobs,

which, in practical terms, might not exist (Allais, 2021). While this may be true, the concern of the quality of education remains, as Field, Musset and Galvarez-Alvan (2014) remark that the present mix of programmes and qualifications in the sector is complex to administer; frowned upon by the business sector; difficult for students and parents alike to understand; and often of poor quality.

In terms of quality, the CA appeals for a high-quality education system that is not only instrumental in nature, but one that is also intrinsic (Andrés & Chavez, 2015). An intrinsic education system assists students in attaining knowledge, skills, and values, which are all required to function effectively within their communities (Andrés & Chavez, 2015). In this context, what could be helpful is to prioritise formal subject or vocational training and working experience for a quality vocational programme, as postulated by Gamble (2013). This requires well-experienced and highly trained lecturers, so as to ensure quality outcomes from the TVETCs (Broad 2018; Billett 2011; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011).

The second phase (Chapter 7) sheds more light on practical examples of how the knowledge and skills acquired helped the students expand their capabilities and agency freedoms. Chapter 7 also differentiates between desired capabilities and those achieved (capabilities and functionings that students have reason to value, but which were not acquired). Chapter 6 presents the results for Phase 2.

## 6: Lecturers' perspectives on rural TVETC: Phase 2

The previous chapter presented Phase 1 baseline findings from first-year students who joined the selected TVETC college in 2017. As previously explained, the purpose of Phase 1 was to obtain demographic information of students and to understand their dreams, aspirations, and expectations upon completing their programme or registered course. The findings reveal that most students enrolled in the College by default, where for example, students received low grades that compelled them to enrol at a TVETC as opposed to a university. The findings further show that students valued what they learnt, in particular where this included practical skills. However, students wished that the VETC offered more practical experiences, and had dedicated lecturers.

This chapter presents the perspectives of lecturers from the rural TVETC in South Africa that were gathered during Phase 2 in 2018. The perspectives of six College lecturers were sourced from qualitative interviews that were conducted at the College. Lecturers' perspectives were sought in this study to compliment the student voices on the TVET system, and in particular to capture their perspectives on the broader purpose of the education that they provided, and the intended capabilities these would confer to students. As explained in Chapter 4, the lecturers' selection criteria were based on some of the following factors: the position held; number of years teaching the course under discussion; and the courses they taught.

In conjunction with the CA discussed in Chapter 3, this chapter seeks to answer the following research question:

- What do lecturers aim to achieve with the curriculum that they implement? This chapter is organised according to the key themes that were derived from the lecturer interview responses, as explained in Chapter 4. The specific themes are:
  - Resources and funding
  - Knowledge and skills
  - Employability
  - Practical learning and internship
  - Curriculum

- Teaching and learning
- Geographical location of TVETC

The lecturers' biographical information is presented in Table 11.

### **Outline of lecturers' perceptions**

The key codes that emerged reflect the lecturers' perceptions about the education provided in different fields at the TVETC. The focus is on the whole process of providing education, and the outcomes in terms of student capabilities, i.e., their freedoms to do the things they have a reason to value. The chapter starts by discussing the key themes and ends with a conclusion section, which will bring together the main points of the chapter.

### ***Resources and student funding***

This section examines funding challenges that TVETCs face in running and providing quality education.

All lecturers, just like the students, mentioned that the College had inadequate resources, such as computer laboratories and textbooks. Mandisa stated that the College did not have a library, nor computer laboratories, despite her numerous attempts to draw the Campus Manager's attention to the matter. She further expressed her frustration at the College and the DHET for constraining students from graduating by not offering the required practical computer course:

*We don't have a library. When we came here in 2014, we [had] four subjects and there [were] no computers. In 2017, we heard that [the] Gamalakhe Campus had received computers. I wrote a letter requesting that we also have an Introduction to Computer Practice and gave it to Lulu, Head of Department and she took it to the Campus Manager. But it's now 2018, and we still have no computers. Something came out that even our graduates, those who are doing in-service training, they will not be able to graduate, because they don't have computer practice, although we had taken the initiative ourselves to ask for computers and they did not give the college. Now they are telling us that our [students] will not graduate because they don't have computer practice. That's the department and the college we are in.*



It is evident in the above that lecturers are concerned about the lack of computer practice and that their request for the introduction of computers did not receive a positive response. In the context of increased use of information and technological systems, it is of concern that students miss the opportunity to acquire ICT skills, where it could be argued that a graduate who is not technologically informed will be uncompetitive in the job market. A scan of most job advertisements in the South African reveals that the market requires prospective employees to be computer literate. The above quote also raises social justice concerns, where students are treated unfairly, where they fail to graduate due to circumstances beyond their control. The students ought to be provided with the necessary support and equipment to acquire the required knowledge, skills, and technology training. The students ought to be equipped with technological skills, and this can be enhanced through the provision of a well-equipped laboratories and libraries.

It is the norm that TVETCs provide core textbooks to students. However, it was reported that the provision of textbooks to Tourism students had always been a challenge. Mandisa further mentioned that the Central Office at the College had control over the issuing of textbooks. The book issuing system did not work well, and her students were not provided with or did not have access to their prescribed textbooks:

*In Tourism, core textbooks are not provided on time and some not provided at all. The central office seems to prioritise other courses. What makes matters worse is that our admission staff are interns and just a few who are permanent, hence the poor service. Despite this, my subject's pass mark is 70% (class average), but I don't even have a textbook. When I ask the Campus Manager to lend the class a textbook from some of the campuses so I can make copies, they sometimes do not give permission as copies are not allowed in the academic field.*

The provision of textbooks to students in rural and remote colleges is critical to success. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, most of the students come from poor backgrounds and they cannot afford to buy these books or even access reading material on the internet. The lecturers argued that their job was to teach, and it was the duty of the College to provide the necessary support, as mentioned by Bulelwa:

*The college administration must play their part of providing books on time and lecturers do their job.*

If the College provides adequate student support, students will then be expected to use the available resources to achieve what they value, in this case the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which are important for work, life, and the good of society. However, the way in which students perform also depends on their talent (intelligence) and agency. It is not a straight path that, if resources are provided, they would succeed.

Mandisa also mentioned that students were made to share books. This is a noble idea, but issues of tribalism/ethnic backgrounds seemed to exacerbate the sharing of books.

*But then, I will have to make copies for my students so that they will be able to study but then you get no answer. As lecturers we know each other from other campuses so, fortunate enough, one lecturer from another campus gave me a book so now when I am doing a particular chapter, I make copies and then I give them to the students. Now, they are going to be writing trials and there are no textbooks. Then, we are going back to this prioritisation of other campuses based on tribe. In 2017, I ordered textbooks for this other subject of mine. It's sad, because two of my subjects do not have textbooks, I only have one where I make copies for my students. From 2017, I have been requesting from different interns, because interns come and go, asking about textbooks. I am also tired of going to these different interns, and not getting a positive response. But then you find that, when we talk with other lecturers from other campuses, they will tell you that they have the textbook that we need in the library and they are not using it. So, I look at it that I have been requesting for the textbook and this person has not done his or her job, that is why the textbook is packed in the library. The sad part is that the campus manager that side will not release those textbooks.*

The location of the College contributes to unfair discrimination on the distribution of resources. The College is geographically situated at the border of KZN (an area with predominantly AmaZulu inhabitants) and the Eastern Cape Province (an area with predominantly AmaXhosa inhabitants). The student population comprised students from

both provinces, and Mandisa reiterated that on occasion the black campus managers sabotaged students:

*I always say, that when we were in high school, we used to have apartheid, blacks fighting whites, but now we are fighting each other, the Zulus and Xhosas. It's also happening here, as a campus manager you cannot release the textbooks that you are not using to another campus, why? So [students] do not have textbooks, we make copies.*

Lecturers pointed out that there was a funding problem in the South African TVET sector. Since the availability of textbooks was a challenge, lecturers tried to find alternative ways to deliver knowledge and skills to students, and Mava singled out YouTube as a useful resource:

*For now, because we have limited resources, I am downloading videos from different lecturers on YouTube and other sites. I compile them together and form somewhat a curriculum that is relevant to them. They have three streams – the general stream, economic stream, and physical science stream. So, I started with Maths I am going to follow up with the other subjects just to make teaching and learning much easier. I give tips rather than being stuck with a textbook the whole time, like when I was doing my high school there. They didn't have much of an option, they didn't have a library, they didn't have anything other than a textbook and I feel that that is not enough. So that's why I am doing what I do.*

While the use of YouTube allows students to learn how to do almost anything, the availability of WIFI and prohibitively high data costs remain an obstacle in most developing countries, including South Africa. In addition, not all students have laptops or cell phones, and hence have to rely on lecturers who teach using the video-sharing platform. As such, Bulelwa emphasised the need for additional resources:

*The College itself needs to have enough resources. Let's talk about computers, they need to have the physical teaching equipment to show the students, but I don't have the capacity to tell them that.*

This suggests that education at the college is shifting from more traditional methods of learning through text and lesson plans to more technological methods such as YouTube videos and other virtual platforms. This calls for the reimagination and reconfiguration of not only the content, but also the teaching methods used in the TVET curriculum and pedagogy.

The college lecturers raised several issues relating to student funding through NSFAS.<sup>19</sup> Mandisa was of the view that there were limitations with the NSFAS system that possibly stemmed from a centralised process that seemed to be biased towards universities as opposed to TVETCs:

*So here in VET sector, the Department of Higher Education funding does not cover everything, whereas in the university sector, everything is sorted for residence, teaching and learning. [However], here, it's only for teaching and learning. The students who have NSFAS is only for teaching and learning and then [those] who have residence they do, but you will find that a student is renting out and there is no money for them to pay for food, so there is a problem somewhere, somehow. We do not know what is happening in the Department of Higher Education, as with the College Head Office regarding NSFAS. We are on the dark side. We would prefer that NSFAS would give money straight to the students loaded on their cards; we don't know whether they give money to the College Head Office. As I am saying students who are renting out are buying their own food.*

Student funding is an important theme that emerged from the interviews due to the implications it holds for students' financial capabilities and the choices that students subsequently take. It may be possible that financial constraints inhibit students from enrolling into TVETCs and universities and may also force them to drop out from their courses, as illustrated later in this section.

Most of the students reside off-campus as only a small portion of the students can be accommodated on campus. The students struggle to raise accommodation fees as the

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<sup>19</sup> National Student Financial Aid Scheme for South African students.

college and/or NSFAS leave that responsibility entirely to them. Bulelwa shared her concerns regarding the NSFAS process system:

*The process of NSFAS falls behind. They need to be prompt in the sense that when the student comes to college like in the first or second month, say February, they are already accommodated for; [however], it's not like that student pays for themselves. So now, when NSFAS pays, they are going to pay the landlord directly including that for the February month. So how are you going to refund me for the money that I have paid for February and March? So, there are those processes or dilemmas that we are facing, but that's how it works, but anyway the student must deal directly with the landlord. We as the College don't have access to that information. We just help do the necessary applications or the profiles that are necessary for NSFAS for them to be able to access those funds.*

The findings show that NSFAS delays disbursing funds to students in time. As indicated in Chapter 1, most students come from poor backgrounds and consequently cannot afford to sustain themselves at college, while still waiting for these funds. If the students are not offered college accommodation, they have to find alternative accommodation near the College. The accommodation is usually available, but the owners of the houses demand payment upfront before they offer students a place to stay. If the NSFAS funding is not available to students on time, a majority cannot afford the usually exorbitant rates expected from them. What complicates this is that some of the students only find out on opening days that they are not eligible for NSFAS funding for various reasons, that include previous debts, lack of support, etc. Lulu explained some of the challenges that students faced with NSFAS funding:

*It's difficult to get [the bursary] sometimes because of the documents. Other students don't have all of the required documents, so sometimes they will fail to register, but sometimes they will register and the NSFAS don't pay. For example, like students who were studying last year, even today, we didn't get the money. NSFAS didn't pay, our students are suffering, like today two students came to collect their certificates, but they are owing the College and we can't give them the certificates, because they didn't pay, but they say they registered for NSFAS bursary and it's them who didn't*

*pay. We called NSFAS and they said, yes, they didn't pay for students for last year and then we gave them the certificates, because it's not their fault its NSFAS's fault.*

She further commented that NSFAS tried to improve its registration process. However, it seemed that students were not comfortable with this process as they lacked the necessary IT skills to apply online, let alone the fact that they do not have access to computers or cell phones.

Lulu reiterated that:

*They tried to improve the registration of NSFAS. They said students must register themselves on the NSFAS system, but with that, the students don't know where to start.*

Bulelwa articulated the example below and further emphasised the limited IT skills that students had, and hence, their inability to successfully apply online for NSFAS:

*What happens is the students don't understand, they get an SMS from NSFAS on their phones, the schedule on their form on particulars, "please sign", and they are supposed to give them the link; but most of them are not computer literate or they don't have digital phones, so they come to a lecturer for assistance. I ask them for their ID number, I log on and they get a one-time pin on their phone and then their information is displayed on the screen showing how much NSFAS is going to pay them, e.g., Say they are giving the student R48 000. So, the student wonders my course is R12 000 so where does the money go to, but they don't understand.*

Considering that the students came from families with limited resources who in most cases lived in rural and remote areas with no electricity, and consequently limited exposure to ICT, the need to support them when they apply online becomes key. It seems that NSFAS assumes that everyone can apply online, but the evidence shows the contrary. This is where the struggle of rural students starts, as they apply for training even before their registration. The same pattern continues as the College does not provide computer practice as a course to enable rural graduates to access this very important skill for the world of work and most

importantly for their own wellbeing as technologically savvy youth in the twenty-first century.

Bulelwa also pointed out that students did not fully understand how the NSFAS system worked:

*[NSFAS] is just giving [students] the allowance that this is how much NSFAS are going to fund – this is a kept amount and anything above that, NSFAS are not responsible. Usually most of the students fall below that amount, and so students think that the surplus is due to them. However, that's not how it works, because the amount is for tuition. Tuition is paid to the College, and anything else is sent back to NSFAS. There is an allowance that is given for transport and accommodation for those who stay outside, NSFAS is the one responsible for processing that fund.*

Bulelwa also emphasised the need for a funding system that was tailor-made for rural students:

*I don't think the [NSFAS] system is tailor made. I think it's a general system that applies to most people. It can be more effective in certain parts of the country, maybe in urban where people have resources like computers. Even here it could be effective if the college had the necessary resources to assist the students. Sometimes you find that, like last year for example, we were doing online applications, it was introduced for the first time. It's convenient in the sense that there isn't a lot of paper that piles up and documents missing, what you just do is that you apply and scan your documents and send them directly to NSFAS but sometimes you don't have the network to assist all students and there is a closing date as well. So, if your network is jammed for one or two days, you can't proceed and sometimes they don't extend that closing date. So, I don't think it's tailor made, it looks good on paper, but it is neither convenient nor tailor made.*

Overall, lecturers pointed out that students did not understand or appreciate the NSFAS system. Being from a rural background, students lacked the computer skills to apply for NSFAS, and had little knowledge on how the electronic application system worked. Together with that, some lecturers indicated that most students did not have adequate resources for

student learning, and they could not conduct practical sessions as a result of lack of equipment such as computers, laboratories, and textbooks. These factors have implications for students' learning and acquiring skills and knowledge that they value for work, life, and the good of the society.

Equally significant are the administrative issues at the College. The administration of the College is centralised at the main office (which is 90 kilometres away) and this makes their uMzimkhulu site not accountable for students' internship placements. Bulelwa was reluctant to comment on the issue of centralisation, due to her limited knowledge and role within the College. However, she shared that usually, the heads of department within the College would have access to some information:

*Sometimes the Head of the Departments are the ones who are aware, who have relationships with the Central Office. I just give them logbooks and placement letters. This is what we do; we take the letter that comes from the students' prospective employer then we give students a logbook and then we send that to the Central Office. Hence, they are the ones who capture all that information on their system.*

The College, therefore, does not have an internal system that keeps track of student internships and placements. As such, the College also cannot make its own decisions to improve what students learn, their performance and welfare. The College is heavily reliant on the DHET to access any information. In addition, it also appears that the Central Office prioritises other campuses more than the rural site of the College. According to Mandisa, the curriculum was also centralised, and there also seemed to be a lack of motivation among lecturers:

*We basically use the curriculum that DHET has given us and then we try and make examples. Also, us as lecturers or staff members, I don't know, maybe we are not motivated enough due to what is happening at the DHET and the Central Office. Perhaps if we could have a motivated individual who is responsible for arranging mini-trips where students have to pay and go visit the various sites that are relevant to what they study, the morale would improve dramatically. Even though we are located in a rural area, things are improving and there are now tourism facilities. So,*



*as I am saying, we also lack that motivation and we resort to just going to class and do whatever.*

Overall, the data reveals that there is no system for the College to monitor the placement of students for internships and employment. No statistics were kept at the College on students who had gone for placement. College staff perceived centralisation of the system as disabling as the critical information was known to the officials at the head office only. Often, there was lack of co-ordination between the Head Office, College and students regarding the securing of internships for students.

### ***Knowledge and skills***

Lecturers acknowledged the importance of students acquiring entrepreneurial and social skills. Although lecturers encouraged students to become entrepreneurs, the curriculum did not seem to stress this component. It was up to the students to exercise their agency and to use the knowledge they had gained from the TVETC to start their own business. For example, Lulu wanted her students to become entrepreneurs, and for those who were not able to, she wanted them to find decent jobs. However, she felt that there was a need to change the curriculum to include practical computer training. She further expressed her confidence that her students could become entrepreneurs. However, one of the key limiting factors could be their low-income background, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 5.

*Maybe [students] won't have the per capita to start their own businesses. I don't know if the government can support them but according to the skills that they have, they can open their own businesses. They do have skills, but because of resources I don't think they will be able to do it.*

Thus, according to Lulu, students were adequately equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to start their own businesses. However, financial constraints may limit students from starting their own businesses. It is not clear whether the Business Management courses introduced students to the different funding options that were available, or whether the Department allocated resources to communicate the options to colleges and students.

Mava explained that the College did not have an entrepreneurship programme to encourage students to become entrepreneurs. Students' attitude towards work was emphasised:

*As soon as [students] leave college, or even before they leave, they will tell you they don't want to go and work for anyone but want to start their spas for R10 000. Students then mention that they will make R11 000 next year, and in the next ten years it will be R11 million.*

Although the above shows students' positive attitude towards becoming entrepreneurs, it also seems that students perceive the entrepreneurial journey to be an easy one. However, they are unaware of the high failure rate of entrepreneurial business, and the amount of work involved in sustaining it. The fact that students do not want to work for someone else might be attributed to the perception of poor pay and exploitation, and negative experiences they encountered.

Mava further emphasised the role of society in influencing students' attitude towards work and entrepreneurship:

*We are taught that if you finish your Grade 12, you have to go to varsity or college and do a number of courses. Normally they will tell you which course to do, maybe nursing, or these general courses that are known to them. There are [however] other courses that are not known to the communities. So that's the first challenge – its limited exposure to knowledge, which is putting our students at a disadvantage.*

Mava's sentiments show that students are influenced by society and that there needs to be an emphasis towards entrepreneurial thinking and motivating students to pursue an entrepreneurial career.

Zolile explained that entrepreneurship was offered as a separate subject and not necessarily taught in other courses. He further emphasised the lack of social skills in the engineering course:

*Like you are saying, at the end of the day students will be going out to the world of work, that means being around people, students should be able to communicate well with everyone. We don't have anything in our engineering course that teaches us this.*

The responses shared by lecturers show the will to develop entrepreneurial skills in students. However, this is limited by lack of practical experience, society's role in influencing students' attitudes towards work and entrepreneurship, and the curriculum. There is little evidence that the College fosters agency and skills among students to start businesses. In addition, Mandisa questioned the lecturers' attitude towards improving student performance.

Lecturers noted two important focus areas: the critical need for students to learn to apply social skills across the board, and of equal significance, being able to acquire and apply communication skills.

While lecturers appreciate the importance of soft or social skills, there seems to be very little focus on concrete methods for developing these. Babalo reported that students seemed to graduate without much awareness of caring for others, and having social responsibility as contributing citizens.

*Social skills are very important, not only in the community, but at the workplace. You need to form and maintain relations and practically that social aspect is very important, but we don't have it here. We were just talking about the restructuring of the curriculum, where something like that can be implemented, can be integrated so that the students can get the social aspect too.*

The results seem to suggest that, while some students gained skills such as entrepreneurial skills, there is little evidence to suggest that critical thinking, the ability to make autonomous decisions, and working independently were intentionally developed. The curriculum seemed not to inculcate a sense of social responsibility for students. Babalo added that:

*Some of the critical areas that students acquire from studying at a college are supposed to be the ability to make autonomous decisions, working independently, and critical thinking. Not just independence in terms of what you do at school, but you develop that sense of freedom, that sense of free choice.*

*Our youth is supposed to be more independent, but they don't see it that way because of the society they grew up in. Like myself, for example, eNtsikeni we were taught that if you finish your Grade 12, you have to go to varsity or college and do a number of courses. Normally they tell you which course to do, maybe Nursing, or these*

*general courses that are known to them, there are other courses that are not known to the communities. So that is the first challenge, its limited exposure to knowledge which is putting our students at a disadvantage.*

*Furthermore, we were told that to live a good life you have to be a worker. So now when you tell a student that you have to be independent in a way to succeed you are speaking a different language to them. What they know is that I have to be employed and focus more on the government. There is a payslip called Persal, so if somebody has a Persal then that's enough.*

Additionally, according to Mava, the skills imparted to students also depended on the lecturers' approach to teaching and ultimately it was the student's responsibility to develop such skills:

*Well, now it really depends on each subject and the lecturer – how he/she teaches that subject. I may be doing more, but you may find that another lecturer is not as they are focusing more on completing the syllabus. So, if I got the job done, then it is up to a student to grow further or not.*

Information Communication Technology skills are important, especially with the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with these skills having become requisite in almost all sectors of industry, particularly since the global pandemic. As discussed previously, there are indications that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is likely to significantly disrupt labour markets, introducing new skills that are required for different occupations that may not yet even be known. As such, it is important for TVETCs to equip students with IT skills, so that they are as prepared as possible for these disruptions to traditional labour. However, lecturers expressed the need for the College to include courses that teach students how to use the internet and computers. The lack of knowledge and experience in using IT is also a limitation – especially for students who are required to submit online applications for bursaries through NSFAS:

*It would make sense for NSFAS to have an option of manually filling in the forms and not use the internet because most of them can't. Some of them don't even have phones so for them to register on the system, or check progress and even to receive*

*messages, because they used to send them messages to email documents to them, they can't because they don't have phones so it's difficult. They must just go back to the old system, where they used to fill in the forms, then they will capture the information, bring back the templates for them to sign, and then give them the money.*

Lulu's quote above provides an indication of the lack of IT skills that students endure, and the financial implications that this can have if students are unable to apply for bursaries online. Students need to be equipped with advanced IT skills to be able to apply for jobs online, to advertise their businesses, and to be able to do jobs that require IT skills, e.g. developing a PowerPoint presentation, writing technical reports using Word, or inputting data into an Excel document.

The travel and tourism sector in South Africa and qualifications in this field open up opportunities to work in the accommodation sector, in a hotel or restaurant, or as a catering or fast-food manager. This is possible if the students are equipped with the right knowledge and skills. Mandisa strongly emphasised the need for students to be computer literate due to the nature of their course:

*They need to be computer literate. As I said, it's a service and bookings are done on the computer, so they need that. They need to be energetic – someone should be able to approach them and they must be capable of making conversation. You know that when foreign people come, they will be asking questions about your country, so you need to be open-minded and be confident enough to ask and answer questions. The most important one is the computer and to know your stuff and the organisation you are selling.*

The findings indicate that the students lack basic soft skills and IT skills (hard skills), which can give them a competitive advantage in the job market. According to Mandisa, a typical student should have good social and IT skills.

*You will be surprised that since 2013, we have only got communique from the DHET beginning of this year, of which it's something I have always questioned and written to the Central Office, that how can our students who are doing Tourism, whom we*

*are teaching to do reservations, not have computers as a subject. We only got the communique from the DHET this year to say the students will not be given diplomas if they do not have a computer course.*

*As you are elaborating, I am thinking, I am even imagining myself in class, because there is also a certain section that I teach as PR people in the tourism industry, how they are supposed to look like and how they are supposed to behave. Firstly, our industry is a people orientated industry, therefore, our students need social skills to be able to cope well in the industry. So, what we teach them is that they need to learn that as human beings we are very much different. Number two that, the tourism industry is broad, that culturally, you will meet people that have different cultures and you need to learn that as people. You need to learn their languages. Myself, I don't know if you heard me speaking my vernacular, I don't know which language I am speaking. So, one of the skills I teach them is that culturally we are different. Like I am saying, there is a student who was learning here in KZN, but now works in another province, Polokwane, so it is very important that you learn other people's languages. Like I am saying, I don't know which languages I can speak, I can speak six or seven South African languages. You need to be flexible, like to say you can't relocate from KZN, because KZN is your home.*

It is assumed that the lack of practical experience offered to students inhibits their ability to develop effective communication and social skills. It is not clear as to whether lecturers include other activities to enhance their students' communication and social skills. In sum, there is an attempt to equip students with various work-related skills. However, little emphasis is placed on developing soft skills, IT skills, and human development attributes. Moreover, all the lecturers emphasised the importance of employability skills, with little or no mention of human development skills such as critical thinking. In so doing, lecturers could empower students with relevant attributes that can make them function effectively in a developing nation.

## ***Employability***

Three claims can be drawn from the collected data: firstly, there is little evidence that employability skills are being developed; secondly, students are acting on things that they value and creating opportunities for their self-employment journey. Thirdly, even those students with skills struggle to find employment.

One of the instrumental roles of higher education is to equip students with employability skills. The engineering field, such as electrical engineering, empowers students with skills that allow them to work in manufacturing industries, but also in the community where they remain relevant, since equipment such as stoves and other home electrical appliances need to be maintained.

The lecturers are not confident about the skills that their students are acquiring. In fact, there is greater emphasis placed on knowledge acquisition than on skills creation. A lecturer from Business Studies was somewhat optimistic about the skills that the students acquire, and he went on to say that the students were adequately equipped with knowledge and skills to be employed and to become entrepreneurs. Lulu commented on sales management skills:

*Students can sell anything. They can even open their own businesses, because they know how to sell a product. They can be a good asset to an organisation, because they know everything. They are doing Accounting, so they know how to balance books and to do bank reconciliations. They know about Entrepreneurship, Business Management, they know how to market and how to sell the product. They can be sales representatives.*

She further expressed that the combination of theory and practical experience offered to students prepared them for the workplace. In fact, upon probing whether her graduates were able to do the work in organisations, she confidently expressed that they were, and that she had managed to place about 15 students to work in an organisation in Durban.

*I think it's important, because we teach them theory and practical, which means they can learn theory on how to do things and then go to the workplace and do what they have learnt.*

It should be noted that Lulu was one of the few lecturers who mentioned that her course offers a combination of theory and practical experience, and who was confident about her students' future being bright.

*They can do balance sheets, which means they can deal with finance. I have about fifteen graduates who are all working with the same organisation in Durban.*

On the contrary, Babalo wanted his students to become technicians in the mines. However, he explained that there were no manufacturing or mines around the College in KZN. Due to push factors, students migrate to urban areas to search for work or find employment in other fields.

The lack of experience contributed to the challenges of finding meaningful work. Babalo pointed out that a lack of working experience was a big challenge for the students:

*It's going to be very difficult for students to actually leave the College with theory only. Students tell me that they want to start their own business, but they know nothing about doing house wiring.*

Mava explained that not all graduates obtain an equal opportunity to be employed or to be placed as interns, due to the limited opportunities:

*We have limited opportunities around KZN. We also have limited government department offices. Approximately 100 students graduate each semester of which about 40% get placed, while the remaining 60% seek for employment opportunities elsewhere. Again, as students graduate in the following semester, there are no places for them to work.*

This also highlights the constraints associated with a rural college, which could differ from an urban college. Despite the limitations, Zolile shared that three students had their own small businesses, and that he was assisting them with house wiring:

*It's going to be very difficult for them to actually leave here with just the theory and tell me that you want to start your own business where you know nothing, like doing house wiring. It's going to be very difficult, because you are going to be exposed to anything, but I would encourage them. I have three of them who already have their*



*own small businesses, doing house wiring, I am assisting them. So, I would encourage them to do so.*

Having practical experience seems to be integral for employment, although some students are able to make use of available resources to utilise the knowledge and skills that they have acquired. It is also clear that some of the lecturers are willing to assist their students with their businesses.

Babalo also explained the lack of practical experience was an obstacle for graduates to find employment. In addition, the challenges of not finding employment led students to take on opportunities in other disciplines:

*There is a girl who did Farm Management, who was supposed to be placed in a farm work practical position. However, at the end of the day, she was in a B&B somewhere doing secretary work as an intern, which is not practical. She was supposed to be in the farm – working as a farm manager or assisting in the farm.*

The above demonstrates that students adapt their preferences due to the limitations within their contexts. As discussed previously, this makes it even more important for the College to form relationships with companies so that graduates find internships and employment within their area of study.

Overall, the results indicate that lecturers aim to equip students with employment skills with little or no mention of the intention to develop other skills, such as critical thinking. The lecturers indicated that the curriculum was also designed to equip students with employment skills, but admitted they were struggling to achieve this. The lecturers also reported that their students found it difficult to secure employment, due to a lack of practical experience. In addition, the lecturers suspected that the failure of rural TVETCs to compete with urban TVETCs and universities also contributed to students struggling to obtain employment. From an analytical point of view, it seems the College was not doing enough in preparing the students for workplaces and employment. The findings reveal that the lack of employment is attributable to employers' perception of poor quality of training and lack of practical experience offered by the lecturers as part of the qualification.

### ***Practical learning and internship***

The three main issues that emerge from this section are: i) lack of on-the-job training and internships; ii) lack of networks and connections with industries; and iii) administrative issues hindering smooth placement of students.

As discussed in Chapter 1, TVETCs aim to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that they need to find employment, to be self-employed and to be good citizens in society. Emphasis ought to be placed on equipping students with practical skills to embark on a career within their chosen industry. However, the college lecturers reveal that to the contrary, their students graduate with insufficient skills due to the lack of practical sessions and internships. For example, Zolile clearly expressed that students left their College with theoretical knowledge only. He further expressed his wish that the College ought to build a laboratory for students to do practical work:

*From us as the College, students just leave with the theory. Students [then] just go and they do the practical aspect where they get employed. The College can even build a practical lab here at the Campus just to show [students] the physical components: how it works; how it looks; and how it is connected. [Students] can only read it practically but nothing more.*

This reveals an alignment to theory at the expense of practical knowledge, which raises questions about whether the graduates have skills relevant to the industry upon graduation. For example, Zolile emphasised the need for practical sessions in order to enhance students' employability skills, and to also adequately prepare them for the job market. He further recalled how one of his good students failed in doing practical work during her internship programme:

*I had a student who went to Eskom for an internship programme – she was a very good student. Currently, she is at the university. She went for an interview and did very well but when it came to [doing] practicals, she could not cope. This clearly pointed out the need for practical experience here at college before heading out into*

*the world of employment. She was an excellent student such that if we had an opportunity, we would have appointed her as a lecturer.*

What seems to emerge is that students are equipped with only theory. Although internships are important, some lecturers believed that employers accepted students as interns on the basis of cheap labour and did not take the time to nurture the students during their internship. As Mava suggested:

*Students get exploited as interns as a way of cheap labour. I wouldn't say that the employers add much value; they don't.*

These comments would suggest that there is exploitation on the part of employers if Mava's claim is true that they offer students little in terms of learning or on-the-job training. It could be further argued that student capabilities and opportunities are hindered by the lack of practical experience offered by the College, let alone the internship, once they have left. Most lecturers were of the view that students mainly graduate with theoretical knowledge, without necessarily being able to apply the acquired knowledge in the workplace. The lecturers attributed the lack of practical experience and internships to numerous factors including the following: the curriculum; lack of networks and connections with industry; location of the TVETC; and a centralised and flawed placement system. These factors are each discussed in detail below.

Inadequate knowledge and experience to improve the curriculum appears to be a major constraint, as noted above. Bulelwa raised similar thoughts:

*I would recommend the decentralisation of office work, so that colleges can make their own decisions based on their needs. With regards to NSFAS, what would happen is that their solutions need to be tailor made. I don't think they have enough capacity to do research to check what they need to do in institutions like these. Maybe the system doesn't need to be so holistically modernised, we need to have a combination and/or a phased-in approach, they also need to be in touch with the institutions.*

Although the above relates to the administration of the TVET system, the effectiveness of the systems depends, critically, on the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms, workshops, laboratories, and other spaces in which education takes place. Without a well-

crafted internship programme, the lecturers are working in vain. It is expected that TVETCs form meaningful networks and partnerships with diverse industries that have similar goals. This will enable employers to provide students with valuable internship opportunities that are aligned with their respective course. It seems, however, that there are no initiatives taken by the College to link students to industries for internships:

*So far, I have not seen any link between the College and the industry out there. I think that even the College here in KZN, Management should be able to link with them so they can give our students the opportunity to do practicals. (Zolile)*

Similarly, Bulelwa also emphasised the need for the College to put greater effort into building collaborations with prospective industries:

*We can build better relations; the College needs to take it upon themselves to make sure that a student is guaranteed placement. It might be difficult to implement that, but as an institution we need to ensure that when the student goes out there, they are guaranteed that they are going to go somewhere.*

Student opportunities for obtaining meaningful internships are hindered mainly by the college not being able to network and form collaborations with industry. Students are therefore unable to secure valuable internships, which could have further enhanced their skills and knowledge. Although it is important for the college to network and form collaborations with industries, they may be restricted to do so merely on account of their location in a rural area.

## **Curriculum**

Several lecturers explained that their course curriculum was out-dated and they questioned the relevance of it for today's generation of students. Lulu commented that the curriculum was out-dated and was not aligned with the needs of students and technology.

*Lecturers implement the curriculum; they are more important. They can see what and where it is lacking. As I said, there is a need to add some relevant areas somewhere. Sometimes the curriculum is very old, for instance, sales is old, it's for 1995 but still relevant because selling is selling, but then for other subjects some of the things must*

*be removed and they must add something new. Like, as I said, in computer practice class, they need to add presentations, internet, and PowerPoint and Access.*

As a result, students' learning opportunities are limited, as the knowledge they acquire may not necessarily be applicable in today's world and society. Moreover, students are not equipped with the technological skills that are essential in today's world of work.

Mandisa expressed similar sentiments about the curriculum being outdated:

*In VET colleges, everything is a mess I must say. Firstly, the syllabus of a subject, as I said I started in 2014, but the syllabus we are using was first used in 2005, [and] now it's 2018.*

It also appears that the curriculum is developed with limited input from the actual rurally located lecturers, who are experts within the field of study. This was articulated by Mandisa, who was frustrated about not being involved in revising the curriculum for one of her subjects:

*You were interviewing Lulu, [who] is a senior in our Department. She does not know anything about my subject as in what happens in Travel Office procedure. She has her own subject, but she was the one who was invited to go and revise when they were looking at the differences of that syllabus. So, you will look at how they are revising the syllabus of a particular subject, but they are inviting someone who does something different, so we don't understand what that person will contribute. If they were inviting people who are teaching, we would have given them what do we find easy and challenges that we face when we are teaching.*

The above questions the College's process of developing their course curricula. The fact that lecturers are neither consulted in order to provide input on their curriculum may demotivate them from offering quality teaching. In addition, lack of input from subject matter lecturers could hinder students from acquiring relevant and updated knowledge and skills that they deserve for both the world of work and society at large.

Babalo also indicated the need to revise the syllabus:

[The syllabus] *is very outdated, it was last revised I think in 1994. It needs to be revised.*

In addition, he mentioned that the syllabus could be completed within two weeks. As a result, he only went to the College two or three times a week:

*So, I go to [College] on Monday, do a chapter and finish it, then on Tuesday, I don't go and just submit what we call class work, then whenever [students] have challenges, I go to the [College]. I will go back on Wednesday and do another chapter, then Thursday and Friday is classwork, revision on what we have done. So, I don't have to go [College] every day, because two weeks down, the syllabus will be done.*

It is apparent from the quote above that the Electrical Engineering course curriculum needs to be reviewed, and that the College must ensure that there is adequate content to cover through the semester. Babalo indicated that:

*If they can just learn basic computer practice, such as typing reports, as this is something they may come across in the field. Computer experience is what is lacking in our syllabus. This is why, many times when the students get into the field, they struggle to cope, because they lack the practical experience.*

In sum, some lecturers pointed out that the curriculum needed to be improved. The current curriculum was viewed as constraining to students, as it was either outdated or too short. Some lecturers expressed the need for the curriculum to be aligned with the current technological changes, which would be more attractive to employers. Accordingly, the curriculum needs to be reviewed so as to ensure that the needs of students and employers are met. With regard to teaching styles, most lecturers seem to use traditional teaching methods. The findings also reveal that some lecturers lack motivation to fulfil their roles, and responsibilities, all of which have implications for students' learning experiences at the College.

The lecturers indicated that the knowledge delivery lacked a practical component, which in turn limited them from conducting practical sessions. It would appear that most of the course curricula do not provide students with an opportunity to acquire practical and technical skills, such as using computers and the internet, and developing PowerPoint

presentations in class and laboratories. These are critical skills that need to be incorporated into respective course curricula. According to Lulu, IT skills were particularly essential for students to be able to successfully sell their products to customers:

*Students don't do slides like presentations or PowerPoint, which is an important skill to have. [Students] must know how to create slides, because they are doing sales management. where they are going to sell products. The curriculum [also] doesn't have internet, [students] don't know how to fax, email or do [any of these] things.*

It is expected that in a course like Travel and Tourism, the curriculum would include a practical component that involves working in the tourism industry. This ensures that students are well prepared to face the world of work as an employee in the tourism industry. However, Mandisa revealed the contrary to be the case, as students were not exposed to any practical sessions or trips. As such, students graduate with gaps in their knowledge as they only gain theoretical knowledge, without seeing and understanding how basic entities such as hotels, travel agencies, and airports, work. Mandisa clearly shared her frustration in her response below:

*The most frustrating issue in our teaching and learning is that we are doing Tourism. When they were starting this VET sector, they said they were doing something which is practical, because they were aiming at people who do not have Matric. So now in order for you to make sense, and you're teaching someone who didn't pass Matric well, one has to get practical tourism, there are no trips. I am talking about a travel agency, a hotel, but students don't know anything about a hotel. They always ask what a travel agency does. Students only know a plane when they see it in the sky, but they don't know what an airport is and what it does.*

In other courses, such as Electrical Engineering, the curriculum structure made it challenging to complete all topics while offering practical workshops to students. This was expressed by Babalo:

*The structure of the curriculum – specifically the Engineering aspect, makes it difficult to complete teaching in three months (January to March). As a lecturer, we are supposed to complete the syllabus, even though there is a lot of information to cover.*

*However, we don't even have time to finish all topics before students go and write exams.*

Reportedly, the Electrical Engineering curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure that lecturers are able to cover the entire syllabus on time. The pressure to complete the curriculum may also limit the practical sessions conducted by lecturers. Thus, students are at a disadvantage when they are expected to write examinations with knowledge acquired from only a part of the course curriculum.

### ***Teaching and learning***

Students' learning opportunities may be enhanced or inhibited by teaching methods, staff motivation, and the curriculum. The main teaching methods used by lecturers included chalk board, PowerPoint, and reading from the textbook. For example, Babalo used the board to draw diagrams and calculations. He also did the following:

*Sometimes, I just sit down and they do the writing on the board, and I just coach them and correct them where they are wrong. They all participate.*

Babalo used visual aids to support his teaching style, and encouraged his students to actively participate by giving them the opportunity to do the calculations on the board.

Lulu used an innovative teaching method of using the internet to compile a curriculum, and using teaching methods other than a textbook:

*For now, because we have limited resources, I am downloading videos from YouTube and other sites. I compile them together and form somewhat of a curriculum that is relevant to them. They have three streams – general streams, Economic stream, and Physical Science. So, I started with Maths and I am going to follow up with the other subjects, just to make teaching and learning much easier. I give tips rather than being stuck with a textbook the whole time, like when I was doing high school. They didn't have options, they didn't have a library, they didn't have anything other than a textbook, and I feel that is not enough. So that's why I am doing what I do.*

Other than Lulu, it seems that most lecturers follow a traditional teaching style. It is evident that Lulu had gone the extra mile to make learning easier for her students. Although Lulu did



not have a choice, it is commendable that she was using a combination of teaching styles to enhance students' learning rather than simply reading content from textbooks. As previously discussed, the lack of textbooks sets students up for failure and also inhibits lecturers from doing their jobs. The quality of teaching has an impact on students' success in obtaining the required skills set for the workplace and society in general.

When it comes to teaching practices, Babalo, for example, mentioned the need for workshops, while Mandisa attributed her lack of motivation to only facilitating lectures, and not initiating plans for student trips.

*Workshops for lecturers are very important for discussions regarding the syllabus itself. You know, these workshops where you are told that this year, this is going to be the examiner, and this is the prescribed textbook that will be used to ensure that every lecturer is on a par.*

Staff motivation and development are important for lecturers to be able to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In terms of staff development, Babalo recalled how a powerful man from the DHET had mentioned the requirement of a degree qualification in order to be a lecturer at a college. He further articulated how lecturers were not putting in the necessary effort to upgrade their skills and qualifications:

*There is a system where lecturers here are not putting an effort to upgrade themselves, the College should give them a deadline that, from this year, if they have not acquired a degree, they will no longer remain in the institution, because one must have some level of vocational knowledge and qualification before you teach in a vocational college.*

It seems that some of the lecturers were demotivated by the lack of initiative taken by the College to improve students' learning experiences.

*No, with us the demotivation, like I said, is that we just go to class, teach but then we do not take that initiative to assist the students with practical experience. The college also does not take the initiative to improve the students' learning experience due to funding challenges.*

In addition, it also appears that there are lecturers in the college who do not have a degree or qualification, and who are also not compelled to become qualified by the college. As such, this also calls into question the calibre of recruited lecturers, and whether they are indeed qualified to teach in a vocational institution. In the current study, the lecturers' profiles outlined above indicate that most of the lecturers had a national diploma and degree, but that most of these qualifications are not relevant to the courses they teach, and nor are they from a vocational teaching and learning environment. Lecturers' lack of motivation and staff development are likely to negatively affect students' learning and experiences of the course for which they enrolled, and of the College in general. It is possible that lecturers are demotivated by other factors such as poor remuneration, work environment and lack of opportunity to develop and grow within the DHET. This has negative implications for the quality of their teaching and students' success.

### ***Geographical location of TVETC***

Environmental conversion factors, such as geographical location, have an impact on the extent to which an individual is able to make use of the available resources in order to create capabilities or opportunities. As discussed in Chapter 4, this study is based on TVETCs in rural KZN. Compared to urban areas, TVETCs in rural areas are more likely to experience challenges with infrastructure and resources, and this has implications for students' abilities to make choices. In addition, there are limited companies in rural areas that could offer students internships and employment, as expressed by Babalo:

*The exposure is quite another challenge because [students] are not exposed [to] industries. Here in rural KZN, we don't have any factories – [this] is a challenge because we are in [a] rural area.*

Mandisa commented on the DHET's unnecessary spending and the location of the College that had limited the lecturers' ability to offer students practical work experiences:

*The Department has a lot of money. However, they are just using the money for irrelevant things, because now they were saying that they will be introducing some skills course. I am not sure what this will entail. One of the lecturers argued that the Department cannot give students opportunities to acquire reception skills at a hotel*

*in the College area, because we are located in the bush, and that students will have to go to a more urban area. I thought this lecturer was making sense because even now as we are doing Tourism, it's very difficult for our students to get in-service training.*

It is apparent from the quotes above that the rural location of the College limits student access to the manufacturing industry. The growth point is mainly constituted of grocery shops and the few State-owned enterprises such as Eskom, the Post Office, and the local Municipality, that has little economic production taking place. Students end up seeking internships in retail shops such as Shoprite, and performing duties that have nothing to do with the courses that they are studying.

Thus, would seem that TVET graduates in rural areas have unequal opportunities to access the job market when compared to graduates in urban areas. Accordingly, the rural location of the College makes it critical for the respective course curriculum to be aligned with the needs of the rural areas, where students have more opportunities to convert their resources into capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the following key themes were identified from the interviews conducted with the college lecturers: Resources and state funding, Knowledge and Skills, Employability, Practical Learning and Internship Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Geographical location of TVET. The interviews conducted with students during Phase 1 revealed that most students chose to enrol at the college to gain practical experience, which in turn, would secure their chances of gaining employment. However, according to the lecturer interviews, students were mainly equipped with theoretical knowledge, as the College offered little or no practical opportunities. As discussed, most lecturers viewed the lack of practical experience as a hindrance for students to obtain internships and employment. If learners struggle to access practical workplace training, that meant that many would fail to complete their qualifications and qualify as artisans.

Furthermore, the quality of teaching and knowledge received may also be compromised by the curriculum, which means that students may not necessarily acquire the relevant skills and knowledge for the world of work, and for their personal development (Walker, 2006).

The findings also reveal that students are not adequately equipped with IT skills, social skills, and entrepreneurship skills, most of which lecturers perceived to be important for students to succeed in the workplace, for their wellbeing, and in their communities. Much of these limitations affecting TVET in South Africa are not new. For example, Van Wyk (2010) identifies that a lack of financial and human resources, workshops, and internet facilities affect the performance of TVET in the country.

The data seems to suggest that the education acquired by the students and knowledge provided by lecturers do less to enhance functionings and hence capabilities, as advanced by Nussbaum (2000,) Sen (1999, 2009), and many others. The capabilities that can be identified include, among others, finances, economic opportunity, personal change, voice, and aspirations. The functionings (or lack thereof) include having critical thinking skills, being an entrepreneur, being socially responsible, etc. While lecturers did identify and mention the functionings, there is little evidence to show how students achieved them. Conversion factors that influence these outcomes include schooling, funding, college infrastructure, and adaptive preferences, where there was lack of choice. While there are few examples of agency (the ability to act on things that one has reason to value), development potential can be picked up, however there is less evidence to show the intention to nurture and develop it further.

Lecturers seem to appreciate the importance to develop employability (education for instrumental value) and entrepreneurial skills (education for entrepreneurial skills), but there is little evidence to reveal their intention or plans to develop these skills, despite these being highly valued by students. The need to equip students with social skills is also less pronounced from the data. Lastly, the lack of internship exposure, practical experience and infrastructure exacerbates this. Only two students confidently claimed that they had acquired these, and this is cause for concern.

## **Chapter 7: A reflection of students' journey from and beyond TVETC: Phase 3**

This chapter presents the results from Phase 3, which constitute findings from the follow-up interviews conducted with students. The overarching aim of the research is to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by TVET students contribute to the economic development and the broader human development agenda.

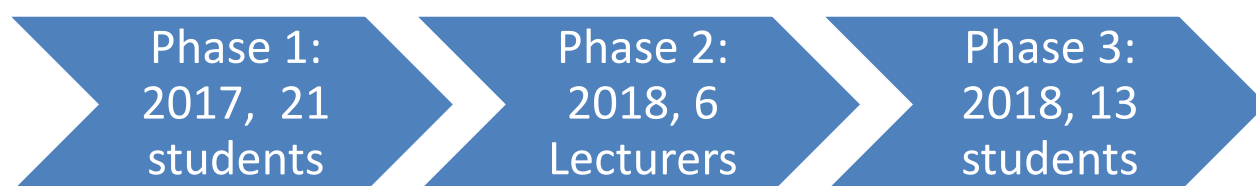
In conjunction with the CA discussed in Chapter 3, this chapter seeks to answer the following research questions: how do student perceptions and experiences of TVET change over time from their first year to their final year? Put differently, the chapter focuses on what the students have become, and what they wished they had become, since the beginning of their higher education journey. While addressing this question, the chapter also examines how students understand the aims of the education, knowledge, and skills that they acquired. It does this through exploring the knowledge and skills (functionings and hence capabilities) students have reason to value through studying towards a TVET qualification. Ultimately, the researcher focused on the different ways in which knowledge and skills acquired by TVET students contribute to enhancing or constraining their capabilities to live meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Phase 3 was a follow-up session focused on 13 of the 21 students (see Table 15 below) using an expanded instrument to collect the perspectives mentioned above. The sample size for Phase 3 dropped to only include 13 students of the 21 students who participated in Phase 1, due to rural and socio-economic related issues, such as distance, access to students' villages, and both physical and network issues when trying to contact them. Some of these students were also unable to maintain their cell phones, due to unemployment. This chapter adds nuance to student voices cited in Chapter 5. Phase 3 data was collected after the students had left the college, unlike Phase 1, where they had just started their courses and had their dreams and aspirations to fulfil.

**Table 15: Students' biographical information: Phase 3**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Course
Welcome	M	20	Business Management
Lucky	M	22	Electrical Engineering
Jack	M	22	Electrical Engineering
Nhlanhla	F	23	Travel and Tourism
Grace	F	24	Electrical Engineering
JB	M	22	Electrical Engineering
Zozo	M	20	Business Management
Lolly	F	24	Electrical Engineering
Zakes	M	29	Electrical Engineering
Royalty	M	25	Electrical Engineering
Harry	M	22	Travel and Tourism
Kate	F	21	Business Management
Megan	F	28	Business Management

An overview of the data collection timeframes is presented in Figure 5 below:



**Figure 5: Overview of student data collection timeframe**

The table below summarises the main themes identified in Phase 1 (Chapter 5). While there is a common thread in these themes, the chapter will show how some of the themes were expanded. The discussion is linked to the findings in Chapter 5 and, where possible, also tracks individual growth and change. The themes are discussed as stand-alone, but they do overlap.

**Table 16: Phase 1: Student themes**

<b>Student perspectives in Phase 1</b>
Access and success
Economic opportunities
Student experience
Education and knowledge
Dreams and aspirations

## **Overview of students' key perceptions**

The Phase 3 data analysis enabled the researcher to identify and group themes, using the same process explained in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 (Introduction). Thus, the themes were not predetermined, but were derived from the collected data. The themes are:

1. Knowledge and skills
2. Resources and student funding
3. Practical learning and internships
4. Transformative role of education
5. Teaching and learning
6. Dreams and aspirations

The following section discusses each of the above themes and their respective sub-themes in detail.

### ***Knowledge and skills***

Most students referred to attaining theoretical knowledge through completing their respective courses at the College. Students also mentioned acquiring other skills, such as communication, punctuality and entrepreneurial skills, from the college.

Megan stated that she had obtained knowledge on the requirements for opening a new business:

*I gained knowledge on how to open a business and that you need to have a vision, a mission, and capital. We were also taught to use a computer and how to approach customers. Also, we learnt about cost management and the need to calculate the income and the expenses when you have a business. I have learnt that I can open my own business and run it or I can open it then hire someone to run it for me.*

The quote above shows that the College did indeed provide students with basic entrepreneurial knowledge. However, as previously discussed, students were inadequately equipped with practical skills that are necessary for both seeking jobs and becoming entrepreneurs.

Similar to Megan, Jack was also acquainted with the notion of becoming an entrepreneur, whilst mainly receiving theoretical knowledge:

*I got theoretical knowledge about electricity. I only had a little knowledge before joining the College, but now I have a lot of information. My lecturer used to tell me that if I am qualified, I would be able to register a company of my own, and have a team that will work for me. I will be the boss.*

Jack also commented on attaining communication and teamwork skills:

*I also developed communication and teamwork skills as I worked with different people in class.*

Grace articulated that she had not received any knowledge or skills from the College:

*As I told you before, there is nothing I know. I can do wiring in small houses, but I can't say that it is a skill I got from College. I learnt how to connect and do wiring in small houses when I was in high school – I have learnt nothing from this College, I won't lie.*

Grace's response shows some disappointment and frustration at the College for not equipping her with the new knowledge and skills that she expected to receive.

Lolly shared that she also had acquired punctuality skills, and had learnt to be dedicated in her work:

*Punctuality is a skill I learnt as I was told that you must be on time and everything you do you must give it your all and be dedicated to what you are doing. I think these are skills I acquired.*

Nhlanhla was one of the few students who was confident in the knowledge and skills attained from the college:

*I have knowledge about travelling and I know how to work in hotels and B&B. I also know how to communicate with people, how to treat visitors from outside.*

It is clear that most students had mainly acquired theoretical knowledge from the TVETC. Nonetheless, students shared that they benefited from the education received from the



college, from gaining knowledge to being able to communicate with people. However, the benefits of the education received were not fully realised due to challenges relating to employment and limited skills:

*So far, I have benefited a lot, but nothing that can give me money yet. I can fix stuff at home due to the knowledge attained so my parents don't need to call an electrician.*

Zakes

*I benefited from one-year experience, because I was a semi-skilled electrician. If you get a job, the skills from education are not enough and that's why I want to study further.*

Royalty

Students were asked whether they had acquired entrepreneurial skills and if they would open their own business. Similar to the responses obtained during Phase 1, students expressed the desire to become entrepreneurs, where, while some were confident, others were uncertain of the process. Only two students, namely, Zozo and JB, were confident about becoming entrepreneurs. The quote from Zozo below is one of the key examples. He felt empowered by the College as he had been given an opportunity by the campus manager to start his own business on campus:

*I felt empowered, because we were given an opportunity by the Campus Manager to start our own business on campus. I remember he allowed me to start; I was selling popcorn at College. I had a popcorn machine that was running at College and was guided by the entrepreneurship EPM lecturer. There were other students who were selling sweets and who also started their own business. With this opportunity, I was able to meet people, approach customers, and convince customers to come and buy from me. It was sort of a practical experience. I was also training myself on how to meet customers and how to approach them, because business also involves social aspect and being able to communicate. My lecturer taught me and guided me on a lot of things when I was selling popcorn. He taught me skills and shared knowledge on how to defeat competitors within campus such as the students selling sweets and other items. So basically, it was a good initiative and I would make R100 with that popcorn machine and with that money I would also buy more popcorn and material.*

The quote above is a rare example of how a student from a Business Management course at the TVETC was given an opportunity to start his own business, and the guidance he received from his lecturer. This experience enabled Zozo to open his own business:

*As I have mentioned before, entrepreneurs can create employment for other people. So, I went so far that I opened a company. I opened this company though it has not started operating yet but it is registered. So, it was a decision that I made after doing Business Management at the VET College. It is successful, it is registered, and it will operate, but in terms of maintaining a business, you need more capital, so I am still trying to acquire more money, I will continue with the business and operate it very well.*

As per the quote above, Zozo expressed confidence in his ability and entrepreneurial skills. He gained insight into entrepreneurship, which appears to be attributed to his Business Management course at the College:

*I decided early in life that my background will not determine my future. And I managed to change my own mindset and dedicate my life to my career. This was all motivated by me wanting to change my life for the better. I have confidence and I am generally highly motivated.*

On the contrary, as mentioned in the previous section, some students lacked the confidence to become entrepreneurs due to insufficient entrepreneurial information and knowledge. For example, Jack expressed that his lecturer had informed him that he could become an entrepreneur, but due to insufficient information, he was not confident to do so:

*I don't remember much, but my lecturer used to tell me that if I am qualified, I would be able to register a company of my own and have a team that will work for me. I will be the boss. In my course, if you are qualified, you can own your own company. My lecturer did not give me more information and so I am not confident – I don't have much information about how to start and earn money. All I know is how to work in a group.*

The quote above shows that Jack did not receive sufficient information on how to become an entrepreneur, and was also not taught to work independently.

Royalty shared that the entrepreneurship knowledge he had gained was insufficient for him to start his own business:

*In Travel Office Procedure, they taught us about creating a tourism establishment, what things are needed to open a tourism establishment, and the offices. However, I cannot say I can do that. As I have said, we were only taught theory, and which did not help me a lot. I received information about opening a business, but I can't open a business as the information was very basic.*

In Phase 2, Royalty still communicated the limited skills acquired from the college and commented on wanting to study further in order to enhance his skills set.

Overall, students acknowledged that, to some extent, they had acquired knowledge about their fields, in addition to receiving a wide range of skills from attending the College, such as entrepreneurship, computer skills, communication, and teamwork. However, some demonstrated a lack of skills related to the transformational role of HE, e.g. only a few of the students indicated having practically started their business given the centrality of having entrepreneurship skills in an environment where job opportunities remain limited. If the TVETC was inadequately equipping students for self-employment, then it was not sufficiently playing its role in the economy. Still, students maintained that they had limited skills and confidence to start their own businesses after graduating.

### ***Resources and student funding***

The issue of resources was mentioned in Phase 1. It must be noted that there was a change in funding higher education policy for universities and TVETCs. However, the policy changes only came into effect in March 2018, and did not have implications for students who were already enrolled in college and these students did not benefit from the #FeesMustFall movement. Hence, most students were still experiencing financial constraints. In Phase 1 students briefly shared their views on the College's resources and student funding from NSFAS. In particular, students briefly cited some of the following challenges pertaining to the College's resources, namely shortage of qualified lecturers, and lack of textbooks and a library. These are important resources that are critical for students to acquire knowledge. Students further elaborated on some of these challenges in Phase 3, which are discussed in depth in the following sections.

### Lack of textbooks and library

Students across all three courses continued to express their dissatisfaction with the lack of textbooks and a library at the College. Selective quotes from students across all three courses are presented below, and all seem to indicate the possible implications that this limitation may have had on their learning experiences at the College.

Megan indicated that the College did not have books and a library, which resulted in her having to use the library in town:

*There were no books or a library where you could look for information to do assignments. We had to go the library in town, which when we got there was usually full.*

Upon probing why she did not use the internet, Megan commented:

*At the College there are computers, but they don't allow us to go there. They said we must go to the library and there is no internet there, maybe they closed it, they don't open the internet.*

With no access to the internet, some students devised ways of accessing the reading material through photocopying. Lolly also revealed that there had been shortages of textbooks in some of her subjects and that they had used photocopied books:

*In other subjects we didn't have books, because they said there was a shortage of books, so they made copies. The lecturer would photocopy the whole book and give it to us.*

This seems to have resolved the students' concerns regarding access to reading material, which were raised in Phase 1. However, Lolly shared her discomfort with using photocopied books, and questioned why the College had not given them any, as these had been paid for by NSFAS:

*Photocopied books easily get lost, and sometimes the copies were blurred so I couldn't see very well. With NSFAS, we signed that we would all get books – so how come NSFAS paid for our books but we ended up getting copies? Also, sometimes lecturers would*

*say that the books are not here but in the storeroom. They just didn't want to give the books to us because they said students would lose the books and not bring them back.*

It is clear that the lack of textbooks was a serious challenge the College faced, and which had implications for students' ability to acquire knowledge that was relevant to fulfilling their course. This also further inconvenienced students, who had to travel to town to use a public library, placing further strain on their time and finances. Textbooks being in the storeroom and not being distributed to students is a matter of concern that needs the attention of the College staff. However, it is notable that students exercised agency by devising a means to access the reading materials as opposed to working through their modules without adequate materials. This factor did not emerge in Phase 1, where students had expressed their disappointment about the shortage of reading material, but had not acted to improve their academic lives.

#### Shortage of qualified lecturers

The issue of shortages of lecturers at the College was briefly raised during the Phase 1 interviews, but emerged strongly during Phase 3 interviews. Lecturers play an important role in imparting knowledge to students, and for some students they even serve as a role model. The College needs to address the shortage of lecturers in order to fulfil their commitment to offering quality education to students. The quotes below reveal that the College seemed to have had experienced a shortage of lecturers, specifically within the Electrical Engineering Department.

Lolly mentioned that the College had had a shortage of lecturers, and that the same lecturer would be responsible for teaching the different levels of the same qualification:

*There [were] very few lecturers. This meant that [the one lecturer] had to be in N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, and N6. There were in fact only two lecturers who were on contract and who left us because they were not paid.*

The quote above reveals that the College was inadequately staffed and funded. It was speculated that the College was not paying their lecturers, who had subsequently resigned and had left students at risk of not attaining the knowledge that they had expected to acquire.

Harry commented that the College lacked qualified lecturers:

*According to me, you cannot teach a student who is doing a diploma when you as the lecturer also have a diploma. When you ask question to the lecturer, they would say they don't know – so what is the College for if you don't get an answer? In a way, this could lead to students being more capable in doing research and learning how to do his/her own work.*

During Phase 1 interviews, Nhlanhla also shared her concerns relating to the College's lecturers. She again reiterated similar sentiments pertaining to the lack of qualified lecturers at the College:

*The College has limited number of facilities and materials for students. You will find that there are only four lecturers from N4 to N6 and they don't have enough time to teach students – this is why some students fail and break down. We only suffer from lecturers, and there are no lecturers for calculations. Sometimes the lecturer doesn't know so you will have to do an activity on your own.*

The College seemed to have had experienced challenges with recruiting and attracting quality lecturers. In addition, there seems to have been a shortage of lecturers to teach the different courses to students. The data did not shed more light on the areas of professional continuous development of lecturers and their areas of specialisation, which could be the reason why some lecturers failed to provide specialised knowledge in adequately answering students' questions. It could also imply that the lecturers were not adequately trained to teach and/or that some might not have possessed relevant industry qualification. All of this means that the college resources are a conversion factor constraining students from accessing education resources as students' opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills that they envisioned gaining from the College were diminished.

Realising that a shortage of lecturers was a persistent challenge, students were proactive as they opted for other methods of learning that were not dependent on lecturers.

Lucky did not receive adequate support from lecturers and that made him independent and responsible for his own learning:

*Lecturers did not attend class at all on Fridays and therefore, we were left alone to find our way. We ended up organising amongst ourselves that whoever understood the*

*topic at hand would take over and share information with the whole class. This also helped us to build confidence and to be independent.*

Royalty also learnt to form study groups in order to impart knowledge to and from one another:

*We decided to form study groups to assist each other on topics that we could not understand beyond the classroom.*

Although the preceding accounts show the College's unfair treatment of students, students did not lose their motivation. Because of their determination to achieve what they valued at the College, they were proactive in organising themselves and sharing information. This shows greater intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve. Students benefitted from learning in groups through the development of deeper understanding of learned material, particularly when students research, participate, lead, and become independent agents in their learning. This reflects growth in the students, who did not mention that they had well organised study groups during Phase 1.

#### Other resources

Similar to Phase 1, students cited classrooms and furniture as some of the resources that were lacking. For example, according to JB, the College seemed to have had a limited number of classrooms and the classrooms were small and unable to accommodate all the students:

*They were short of classes. Most students were rejected, because the classes were few and were full. You would find that the classes were full to the extent that students would even stand on the steps.*

Harry commented that the College needed to invest in a projector and that there needed to be a better class seating arrangement:

*There should be a projector, because you can't just sit at the front because you have an eyesight problem. There should be a projector to enable students who sit at the back to also see. You will find that students are making noise just because they don't see what is written on the board. A projector could improve the teaching. Also, the seating arrangement is not right, because anyone who wants to go out of class will make other*

*students stand up and disturb their concentration. The seating arrangement doesn't enable students to go out of the class without disturbing other students.*

This shows that the College infrastructure was a perpetual challenge that HE authorities had not addressed since the students had enrolled at the college. The above evidence suggests that the lack of resources is worsening, and this is negatively affecting students in achieving the skills and knowledge that they ought to be achieving. In this case, students seem to have adjusted to the situation in what Nussbaum (2000, p. 43) refers to as an 'adaptive preference', when individuals accept undesirable situations due to the absence of options.

### ***Practical learning and internships***

For most students, one of the main reasons for enrolling in a TVETC was to gain practical experience. However, students shared their disappointment at only acquiring theoretical knowledge, detailing the challenges they experienced when trying to find in-service training opportunities. Their aspirations to be prepared for work and to improve their skills for use in a workplace were not provided for.

#### Lack of computer/IT skills

During Phase 1 interviews, students briefly expressed their concerns relating to the lack of computer laboratories at the College. This was further elaborated on during the Phase 3 interviews, where students were able to explain how this had placed them at a disadvantage when it came to applying for NSFAS funds, applying for jobs online, and doing research for their assignments. Their hope was that, as they progressed with their studies, that they would be introduced to advanced specialised technical skills, including computer skills, which are important for both personal and professional development. The selective quotes below express some of the students' sentiments on the lack of computer laboratories, and the implications that this had on their learning experiences.

Kate stated that she had only received theoretical knowledge and no practical workshops. She further stated that she did not know how to apply for jobs online, as she was not taught by the College. She was seeking assistance from other people.



*I am still looking for people who can help me apply online – but it is tough to find them.*

Kate was acting on things that she valued, hence seeking assistance to acquire the relevant IT-related skills that she needed to apply for jobs online.

Royalty mentioned that the College did not have enough computer laboratories:

*There are no computers, which we need, because when job posts come, this indicates that you must be computer literate.*

Royalty's comment reveal that he did not feel adequately prepared for the world of work, given that the College had not equipped him with computer skills that he needed for both applying for jobs, as well as when on the job.

Nhlanhla also commented on the computers not working and not being fixed by the College:

*The other thing is the computer; you can find that you are writing exams and the computer is not working. The College doesn't fix and they don't mind if it's not working, they just say wait.*

It appears that the College did not equip students with basic computer and internet skills to search and apply for jobs, as Harry noted:

*To look for in-service training, you need to have an email address, have the basic [knowledge] of the computers, of which we were not taught in college. You have to go through the internet and look for the vacancies which are there and apply. It's so hard because even at school they did not help us find any opportunities.*

It seems clear that students were not adequately equipped with computer skills, which are important in today's world of work. This is the result of inadequate access to resources. The failure by the College to equip students with ICT skills means that the institution is not adequately preparing students for most forms of 4IR employment, which ought to be a primary objective for a contemporary TVETC. Most students anticipated learning practical skills during internships, but there is a disconnect between students' practical aspirations and what the College is offering. Students did not mention taking on additional computer classes,

yet they perceived this to be a factor limiting them from being employed. It could be argued that their rural location avails them of limited exposure and resources to seek computer training. It is important to note that students are unique, and hence that they possess different bundles of resources. This means that the College requires information about each person's bundle of resources and their commodities, which constitute their means to achieve. In this instance, the College could identify those who required basic computer training and offer it to them. In doing so, the College would have explored the personal and social conversion factors that shape each student's freedom to achieve, as well as understanding the choices and values that convert these freedoms into actual achievements and realise agency.

#### Lack of practical workshops and internships

Although students had expected to acquire practical skills during their internships, internship and placement opportunities were not available within workplaces. Lolly only received theoretical knowledge and believed that she still did not know anything about electricity. In addition, she further questioned the differentiation between a TVETC and a university and she expressed the lack of practical experience in the course as a disadvantage to finding employment:

*I was doing Engineering, and we didn't do practicals. All we did was theory, and I think lecturers spent 25% of their time lecturing us. It's been hard. Usually, they say the difference between a VET student and a university student is that we do more practicals and they do more theory. This was however not the case. So, when you go to a company to ask for a job, they say we are at an advantage, because we do practical, but when I go to a company, I don't know anything. I have completed my N6, but I know nothing about electricity.*

Lolly was still struggling to find employment even after graduating. She attributed this to the lack of practical experience and not having access to her certificates:

*Since I finished last year, in January I was supposed to start my in-service training because it's 18 months. However, I am struggling, because I haven't got any in-service training. The other thing I don't have is my certificate with me. If I remember very well, I only have N1, N2 and N4 certificates, I don't have N3, N5 and N6. The reason being*

*that I have an outstanding balance of R10 775, 00 and I don't know how come, because NSFAS paid me, so they said I couldn't get my certificates because I owe the campus that amount of money. I will get my certificates once I have paid the R10 000 of which I don't know how I am going to get that R10 000 as I am not working.*

The quote above shows the lack of coordination between NSFAS, the College, and the student. This placed great strain on her while still seeking employment.

Zakes was also of the view that he needed an opportunity for in-service training in order to find employment. He took the initiative to reach out to his networks to find an opportunity; however, he was still waiting for a response:

*There is someone in my community who is working at Eskom in Bizana. I went to him and told him that I was doing N5, and I now want to do in-service training, and he said with Engineering you can do in-service training with N3. So even that time, I was ready, and he asked me to send all my documents to him, so I am still waiting. The other person I know was at Mpumalanga at Medupi Power Station, he told me that I must complete N6 first.*

Zakes was one of the few students who was trying to network and find an opportunity. During the Phase 1 interviews, Harry also had expressed his disappointment in the College for the lack of practical skills they offered. He again expressed his sentiments:

*I expected to travel as I was doing the travel and tourism course. I expected that there would be a bus so we could use it, like in N6 I expected that we would be travelling a lot and do practicals on how to book and do things. If you can take me to the office and say book Ekuphumuleni Lodge, I can't even do that because we were not trained. We were not put in practical situations. I think those were my expectations until I came out.*

Nhlanhla explained that she had worked for three months at *Bizana Bed and Breakfast* and then returned home, as her father wanted her to first find an in-service training opportunity. At the time of writing, she was seeking an in-service training opportunity and was experiencing challenges with the process:

*I am looking for in-service training in Durban, King Shaka Airport, Ocean River, and all of them said I must come with my lecturer, or the College has to go and place the students. They said the College must come with the number of students for placement, but the College said that they didn't look for training.*

She attributed her challenges in finding an in-service training opportunity to the insufficient skills acquired at the college, and the fact that the companies preferred to hire university graduates rather than TVET graduates:

*The only thing I think is that I am not done, I am still suffering from the lack of training. Also, because I came from a VET College, some companies don't like to take students from VET colleges.*

Overall, most of the students reported that they thought the College had not trained them sufficiently to compete in industry, due in large part to a lack of practical sessions and lack of computer/IT training. This view was prominent for all the students across all three disciplines. More importantly, the students noted that the sessions they had received were only theoretical, where there were no practical sessions to augment what they had learnt in class. None of the interviewed students had internships. They perceived having internships as being crucial to preparing them for employment and blamed the College for failing to link them to the working industry. During Phase 1, the students had expressed a lack of internships as one of their fears during their studies. Interestingly, during Phase 3, students confirmed that they were struggling to compete for employment in the industry after their graduation, because they lacked relevant work experience. Absence of internships was thought to diminish their effective opportunities of gaining employment.

With the escalating unemployment rate, which stands at above 26% (Stata SA, 2019a), TVET ought to be playing a significant role in cultivating skills among its students for them to compete in the industry. What these findings show is that the graduates are failing to achieve one of the key goals of TVET, i.e. preparing students with relevant skills to participate in the economy. This has implications for the role that TVET is playing in preparing students for employment, and linking them with industry and other stakeholders, so as to ensure that students attain what they value most in their education. The argument presented here is that students must be placed in internships if all things are equal. As it stands, the South African

economy has been struggling for the past few years and it is also not clear whether employers are trained regarding how to manage and fund the internship processes, how to recruit suitable candidates, and how best to offer meaningful workplace experience.

### ***Transformative role of education***

The transformative role of education entails a discussion on students' social responsibility post their education, their confidence and participation during class, and the acquisition of social skills.

#### Social responsibility

During the Phase 1 interviews, only two students (Zakes and Lolly) expressed the desire to acquire knowledge and skills in order to give back to the community. The sense of social responsibility did not emerge strongly among students during Phase 3 interviews. However, some of the students were assertive enough to engage in other responsibilities that had nothing to do with their studies, but instead, had everything to do with their wellbeing and contributing to their communities and the society at large. Royalty, for example, indicated that:

*Although my own dreams have not yet been realised because I have not yet found an internship opportunity, I decided to focus on teaching maths to high school students. I decided that the challenges I am experiencing will not hold me back from assisting my community.*

Zozo added that:

*As much as I don't have a full-time job for now, I have resolved that I will put my time at use by assisting in an old age home and providing children with IT opportunities.*

Some of the students demonstrated high levels of commitment and confidence and as a result they were able to secure internships and jobs on their own without any assistance from the College. Zozo was one of those highly motivated graduates who had a reasonable bundle of resources as well as support and motivation from his family, although he came from humble beginnings:

*I decided earlier in life that my background will not determine my future. And I managed to change my own mindset and dedicated my life to my career. This was all motivated by me wanting to change my life for the better. I have confidence and am highly motivated generally.*

Nhlanhla echoed the same:

*I also decided to take the initiative to motivate myself and come up with initiatives that would take my career forward. I travel a lot; as a result, I can interact with positive people who help me to go forward in my career. I am still trying to gain wisdom, though.*

On the contrary, there were students who felt that they were not adequately skilled to give back to society due to their own challenges of finding their path. Jabu, for example, was constrained by his own financial challenges:

*No, I am not involved in any social responsibility activities, as I am still trying to engage in my life financially.*

Similarly, Nhlanhla also had not had a chance to engage in social responsibility activities due to uncertainties:

*I am not staying in one place. However, when I go back home, I will do something.*

Very few students commented on acquiring social skills from their education at the College. Lolly shared that she had improved her interaction skills with people from different African cultures:

*There is this thing of Zulus and Xhosas not seeing eye-to-eye, so I got to experience how they live and interact with other people. They also taught me if you want to be something you can be something and nothing can stop you from what you want to be. So, I think spending time with different people, you get to see things differently.*

JB explained the importance of having people around and being able to understand others:

*Sometimes we need people but good people. We need people to get somewhere, sometimes people are the ones who provide us with lots of information. You will need*

*somebody else who knows something that you don't know, you can exchange information. That's what I learnt most here at College, to live with people and understand people and be able to share information with people. Even in classroom, it doesn't mean you just have to be talking about what the teacher talked about yesterday - you can talk about life in general.*

Although JB understood the importance of having people in his life for sharing information in order to reach a goal, it is not clear whether he had acquired the necessary social skills to do so.

In conclusion, the transformative role of education did not emerge strongly during the interviews. However, as discussed above, Jack revealed that he would share the knowledge gained from his studies with community members. In addition, Zozo was one of the most confident graduates who reported doing charity work, such as donating clothes to poor people in his community. The preceding section has shown that, although the students valued taking care of others in their communities, some were not taking any action related to social responsibility. This, however, cannot be blamed on the TVET system, since the graduates indicated that they valued taking social responsibility. Due to high unemployment, it seems the graduates were concentrating on improving their economic wellbeing before focusing on others.

### Confidence and participation

Of the thirteen responses in Phase 3, only Zozo clearly expressed that his confidence enabled him to access an in-service training opportunity as a result of the learning acquired from the College:

*As I have told you, I am a business-minded person, and when I approach people, I don't hide my boats. The reason why I came so far was that I was not scared to pave my way and I approached one of the biggest businessmen in town. I went to him and told him that I am a business person, I have acquired this qualification at this VET College and I want to further my experience so would you give me an in-service training. Then the person read my mind, and gave me the job, so I was fortunate in that way, and because I went to College and they taught me the real business management and how to follow*

*the business steps. They taught me very well. Even at work I have no challenges in sales management; I know how to sell. In a period of three months, I have sold three assets already and he is happy with this. So, to go to a VET College, it's a good thing, I won't lie.*

Zozo's achievement in both acquiring in-service training and performing excellently at work is evidence that some students are able to act on things that they value. Further, he acknowledged the important role that the College had played in his success and appreciated the College for teaching him well.

Some of the students reported lacking confidence due to their introverted personalities and also due to negative attitudes from their lecturers. For example, Kate mentioned that she had not been confident in College and had been scared of her lecturers:

*I was not confident; I am a person who is shy and sometimes I feared my lecturers and was scared to raise my hand. I was scared because some of my lecturers would shout at us and if you say a wrong answer some students would laugh, so I was afraid of those things.*

Similar sentiments were also shared by Grace, who expressed that she had not been confident to ask questions during class, but rather had preferred to work in groups:

*I loved working in groups, because I am very shy, I don't have that confidence to ask questions in class, so I worked in groups.*

The above indicates that, since Phase 1, some students had experienced fewer changes than others in terms of being confident. It seems the teaching arrangements continue failing to nurture confidence among disadvantaged students who went through poor quality schooling in the rural communities. This is the opposite of what College ought to be doing, i.e. building confidence among the students so that they are able to have a voice, make independent decisions, and take actions to achieve their goals.



## ***Teaching and learning***

Teaching and learning had implications for students' capabilities to pursue their goals. Although some students seemed to be satisfied to some extent with the teaching and learning they had acquired from the College, others had anticipated a more participatory and hands-on experience. Some students took control over the situation by taking the initiative to learn from their peers, and people within their community.

Zozo had a somewhat positive attitude towards the teaching methods employed by his lecturers:

*Lecturers explained everything and they tried that if you don't understand or need clarity somewhere, they explained to you deeply so you could understand the information. I would say all the lecturers there did their job during my time there. In N4, I had a lecturer who was reading from the book, and it was a problem for other students. You would find that some students got tired, slept, and lost concentration. The other lecturers were doing their job – they used to write on the board. For example, the cost and management accounting lecturer would write on the board each and every day. He used to participate and call students to come and write their answers on the board. We would debate, talk, argue and correct each other.*

The participatory teaching method adopted by lecturers encouraged students to actively participate and share their views, argued Zozo.

Megan mentioned that lecturers would use different teaching methods:

*Some lecturers came with the textbook, read it and explained. Other lecturers came with a book or question papers and asked us to do the questions then they asked us if we understood or not.*

Jack claimed that the college had unqualified lecturers who were not necessarily doing their jobs:

*I don't know why, but there were lecturers which did not seem to be qualified, which meant that they were not the best at their jobs. There were some qualified lecturers*

*who loved their jobs and wrote notes using different textbooks; others just used to come with the textbooks and were unprepared, because they simply read from the textbook without further explaining and providing examples. Some lecturers would also insult students; they need to be taught how to communicate with students and treat them fairly.*

Grace expressed similar comments and claimed that their lecturers had not taught them, and as a result, they would take the initiative to ask their senior peers to explain the course contents:

*To be honest, our lecturers didn't teach; we learnt all these things from other students who were doing the next levels. If we didn't know anything, we would go to them and ask them to tell us more about the subject and they would explain what they understood about the subject. Our lecturers were lazy to come to class to teach us. They came to class and gave us past question papers and would tell us the questions to answer and nothing more. They just used to say 'do this' because they are lecturers and not teachers. Lecturers must do their jobs and be prepared.*

It is clear from the quotes above by Electrical Engineering students that reading directly from the textbooks, without providing any examples and explanations is insufficient and does not add much value to student learning. Students such as Grace were resilient and took the initiative to learn from their senior peers. Another example is Zakes, who shared that he and his friends would take the initiative to visit technicians and electricians in the community to see how they worked:

*Most of the time, we were with a group of students at school who were just going to other people who are working with these things and ask to see them.*

Harry had mixed experiences regarding his lecturers, where, while some were good, others appeared to lack the interpersonal skills and knowledge of a qualified lecturer. However, the lecturer limitations empowered Harry to be independent regarding his own learning:

*Some of our lecturers were very emotional, and I was not comfortable asking a question especially when I was doing N5 and N6. In N4, we could work as a group, but N5 and N6 you could see that everyone was doing for his or her own best. Our lecturers were not right when*

*we were doing N5 and N6. Sometimes the lecturer came in a week and even that affected us, but also empowered us to be serious, and not depend on the lecturers. Also, the quality of lecturers needs to be improved, because a lecturer with a diploma cannot be teaching a student who is studying towards a diploma. You would find that when a question was asked, they did not know the answer.*

This seems to show that students' experiences had not changed much from Phase 1 to when they completed their studies at the College. The teaching methods included PowerPoint, reading from the book, and group work. Whilst some students enjoyed classes, some indicated that the learning environment was not conducive for effective learning to occur because of the teaching methods employed by the lecturers. Moreover, some teachers failed to motivate students and were often absent for the lectures. The negative attitude of some lecturers was also reported on. The student experiences reflected some differences in their involvement in the learning process; whereas some participated, others lacked confidence to do so due to lacking proficiency in English. In fewer cases, it was reported that students were not confident with what was being taught, because some of the lecturers were thought to be under-qualified. However, it should be highlighted that some students took the initiative to teach others or learn from their peers, considering the constraining factors that disabled effective learning at the College.

### Dreams and aspirations

The majority of interviewed graduates had not achieved their dreams and aspirations, taking into consideration that most of them attended a TVETC with the view that they would receive certificates, do their learnerships and/or apprenticeships, and ultimately get employment and/or be entrepreneurs. The majority of the graduates that were interviewed in Phase 3 had not undergone an internship, nor been employed.

Susan was still struggling to find an internship and therefore she was unable to explore opportunities as an entrepreneur. She was thinking of studying further. Susan was one of the students who had hoped to open her own business when she chose business management.

*I am still at home with no internship done. As a result, I am now looking at going back to college in 2020 to study further. I do not have a job.*

Zozo's confidence was again shown in both his decision to study Forex Trading, and his positive attitude towards the future:

*I studied business management because from an early age, I have always wanted to be an entrepreneur. I am still working towards my dreams and I am positive that I will get there. After finishing my studies at College, I did not get the internship that I was looking for, then I decided to study Forex Trading. I am also using my knowledge of communication and computer skills that I studied at College in my studies that I am now busy with. I look forward to be a successful entrepreneur in the future, but for now I am still unemployed.*

Zozo was one of the students who had chosen to study business management with the hope of opening up his own business and dreamed of being a very successful entrepreneur. He was one of the few students who had been able to access an opportunity to do his internship, regardless of all the odds, and his determination and confidence had put him in a very strategic position to be able to fulfil his dreams as pre-empted in Chapter 5.

Grace's frustration at not being able to secure a learnership or a job is clear in her response below:

*I have not been able to realise my dreams at all; my life has turned out to be a disaster after all the hard work at College. I have not been able to secure neither a learnership, nor a job. I am sitting at home and depressed. I've been to apply for a learnership from all the adverts that I have laid my eyes on without any success. If I had the means, I would go back to school to pursue my studies rather. Even though education is free, I would still need financial support if I go back to school. I will try both next year (2020), this year is almost over now, I don't think I can get anything now.*

Grace was a young graduate who had envisioned herself working for a large organisation, such as Eskom, when she chose to study Electrical Engineering, but the situation had turned negative because of the conversion factors that were beyond her control.

Similarly, although Lucky was still seeking opportunities, he was engaged in community work that was not associated with his field of study:

*I am still struggling to find an opportunity for in-service training. I am very patient because I don't have an option for now. At the moment, I am doing community work that is irrelevant to what I have studied, but I am getting a stipend.*

Lucky's dream was to work for Eskom and be promoted to the highest level possible but the situation that he found himself in had not allowed him to realise his dreams and aspirations.

Lolly's dream had always been to be the first engineer in her family, as she thought that it would assist her and her family to improve their wellbeing. Her professional aspirations had not been realised due to a couple of conversion factors, including funding and internships, but even so, that had not discouraged her from achieving her social aspirations.

*Although my own dreams have not yet been realised, because I have not yet found an internship opportunity, I decided to focus on teaching maths to high school students. I decided that the challenges I am experiencing will not hold me back from assisting my community.*

Nhlanhla had completed in-service training and was further expanding her skills set by taking a computer course:

*"I did my in-service training, but because I didn't do any computer course at the College, I have taken the initiative to study a computer course. I am not earning anything at the moment and am unemployed."*

Nhlanhla was one of the few graduates who demonstrated dedication and commitment to both her career (professional aspirations) and her community (social aspirations). Although she had not managed to achieve all her dreams, for her there was light at the end of the tunnel, as stated below:

*Five years from now, when I finish here, I see myself as a consultant, but in my mind and at heart, I see myself getting a degree, honours and even a PhD. I always tell my father, that this is only the beginning as I see myself as a chief executive officer of my big tourism company.*

Harry aspired to get a job immediately after the internship, whilst simultaneously studying part-time to enhance his opportunities to enable him and his family to climb the social ladder.

He had equally acquired good soft skills in preparation for the world of work and the society at large (social aspirations).

*I have learnt to live with other people and I have learnt other cultures, because at the College there were different people with different cultures. I now perceive life differently and I am eager to learn more.*

Royalty had also not been able to obtain a learnership opportunity and was still unemployed:

*"I have not been able to get any opportunity for a learnership, therefore, I have not been able to use my electrical engineering skills."*

The situation that Royalty was in indicated that he had not been able to use the skills that he was supposed to have gained from the College, e.g. confidence, determination, or employability.

Jabu seemed somewhat optimistic about the future in spite of the challenges experienced during his learnership:

*I am doing a learnership with a private company that is funded by the construction SETA, but I have been home for two months, and we have not been paid a stipend for three months. I have not yet finished my learnership, but I am very positive for the future. I am not involved in any community work, as I want to focus on assisting myself, so I can later assist others, because for now, I am unemployed.*

Zakes was still searching for internship and employment opportunities as he was still working towards achieving his dreams:

*I have not been able to achieve my dreams yet, because I am still trying to find an opportunity where I could do my internship. I finished my studies at the College in April 2018 and I am now in Durban searching for an opportunity, but I am still unemployed, but I haven't given up on my aspirations.*

JB had also not yet achieved his dreams, but succeeded in obtaining a learnership that provided him with a stipend:

*I have not yet realised my dreams, but at least I have managed to get myself into a learnership in one of the Government departments. I do receive a stipend, which is very useful to support my family. The environment in the Department is very conducive to learning. I have learnt a lot already and I am working hard to try and secure a full-time job.*

Across all courses, i.e., Business Management, Electrical Engineering, and Travel and Tourism, it was notable that there was a lot of interest and motivation in becoming entrepreneurs/business owners. Most students saw TVET education as a channel towards more job creators, and less job seekers beyond internships.

Our interviewees felt that their programmes had provided a golden opportunity for them to adequately engage with theoretical content in their subject areas. However, the majority of students complained about the knowledge they had obtained from the College was mostly theoretical, with little or no exposure at all to applications or practical learning and skills development, let alone the internship, which is a requirement for them to qualify.

TVETCs provide pedagogical spaces for students to value the formation of human development values and for experiencing and valuing student diversity but, without sufficient employability opportunities, they end up not meeting their professional dreams and aspirations.

Overall, most students had not achieved their dreams upon completing their studies. Some of the students had realised that they might not be able to realise their dreams early enough and immediately opted for alternative pathways instead. For example, Lucky received a stipend from his community engagement work, which was completely different from what he had studied. Lucky seemed to have had accepted his circumstances until he found a learnership. Similarly, Zozo and Nhlanhla also tried to deal with their circumstances positively by taking up other initiatives such as a Forex Trading and computer courses, where they had acquired enough confidence to pursue other alternatives. Students' dreams and aspirations did not seem static, and were changed, due to their respective circumstances. This indicated that their aspirations were not static but were rather formed and reformed. Students had the option to adjust what they looked forward to do in line with their

environment. This shows perseverance and tenacity from students, despite the barriers they encountered.

## **Conclusion**

Most graduates interviewed had not achieved their dreams or aspirations, taking into consideration that most attended a TVET college with the view that they would receive certificates, do their learnerships and/or apprenticeships. and ultimately gain employment and/or be entrepreneurs. However, the data reveals that it is difficult to fulfil professional aspirations due to limited practical experience. which effectively limits the possibilities of acquiring employment opportunities. Although they have aspirations, circumstances may limit young people in achieving these aspirations (Hart, 2012; Powell, 2012). It appears that students from all courses were insufficiently equipped with practical skills. According to most students, this was the biggest challenge they were faced with when trying to find employment opportunities. This is despite students valuing being gainfully employed after graduation (Powell & McGrath, 2019). The majority of the graduates that were interviewed in Phase 3 had neither undergone an internship, nor been employed. It also appeared that the College was not doing enough to support students to find these opportunities. The results point to the fact that TVET colleges ought to establish working relationships with industry so as to expose learners to practical learning early in their studies (Allais & Fleisch, 2019).

One thing that could be absent from the beginning is understanding learners' aspirations for choosing the courses they enrolled for. Lecturers, curriculum developers and policymakers should consider students' aspirations and provide an education that puts what students value at the centre. McGrath et al. (2020) suggest an approach that places young people's voices, backgrounds and future aspirations, particularly work aspirations, at its centre. Despite the study not focusing specifically on youth in TVETCs, the CA remains a helpful framework for revealing young people's entrepreneurship capabilities.

Furthermore, in addition to limited opportunities around the College, it also seemed that companies were not willing to invest in TVET graduates and would rather appoint a university student. Thus, students saw themselves as having limited chances of getting employed due the training they had received. The major weakness of their training was the lack of practical sessions and internship that could have equipped them with practical experience, which ought



to provide competitive edge for TVET graduates. Only a few of the students indicated having practically started their business given the centrality of having entrepreneurship skills in an environment where job opportunities are limited. DeJaeghere (2018) underscores that students should have confidence, self-esteem and social networks, which the students in this study did not attain through TVET, to successfully establish businesses. If the TVETC was inadequately equipping students for self-employment, then it was not sufficiently playing its role in the economy.

Allais (2019) clarifies the complex issue of understanding the importance of acquiring practical experience, noting that the narrative that there is a significant shortage of skills and a significant number of jobs waiting for applicants may misrepresent the case. Wheelehan (2019) argues that the problem of skills mismatches is not in fact the fault of education. She reiterates that skills mismatches are the result of the way in which the labour market uses people with qualifications, and the way employers select people with qualifications. As such, skills mismatches are driven to a greater extent by the labour market than by education. There could be a double concern that students are not being equipped with the relevant skills and that the economy is not expanding to absorb TVET graduates on the market.

The transformative role of education did not emerge strongly from the interviews. Regardless of how students valued the social aspirations that could be fulfilled through TVET education, they were constrained from practice by the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves. They had to focus on improving their lives first before taking initiatives to help their communities. Although there is no doubt that most students experienced personal growth and benefited through knowledge gained via TVET, the system did not do enough to build confidence among students, and hence they were unable to take initiatives to help themselves. This notwithstanding, confidence is central to securing employment, starting one's own business, and/or to pursue one's dreams within the community. Sen (1999) and Robeyns (2017) contend that having agency is central in order for people to change themselves, and to pursue that which they have a reason to value. Despite the students valuing taking care of others in their communities, some were not taking any action related to social responsibility. This seemed to suggest a weakness in the intention to produce responsible citizens through knowledge acquired through the curriculum. Nussbaum (2010) criticises a curricula that only aims to produce graduates for employment and advocates for

curricula that cultivate good citizenship values. The CA recognises that not all individuals will participate or benefit from education in the same way, nor be able to convert the resources afforded by education to generate the same or similar advantages in life (Sen, 2009). This means that students are different, and their learning or acquisition capabilities are also different. In terms of social justice, the CA views HE as an ethical intervention, concerned on the one hand with the instrumental, intrinsic, and social value of education. On the other hand, in terms of CA, HE is concerned with the transformative potential of equal opportunities through the design of curriculum and pedagogical arrangements for students to become and be what they value (Walker, 2006). While the scope of this study does not fully cover and allow for the development of an effective, transformative educational plan that could help TVET students to improve their capabilities, it provides a window into the results of education. In this case, both the intrinsic and instrumental value of education was weak.

Broadly, the South African TVET education system faced an array of challenges at the time of research. The College was experiencing a serious textbook shortage (Powell & Lolwana, 2012; Van Wyk, 2010), which had implications for students' ability to acquire knowledge that was relevant to fulfilling their course. The college seemed to be experiencing challenges with recruiting and attracting quality lecturers. In addition, there seemed to be a shortage of lecturers to teach the different courses to students. All of this meant that the College resources were a conversion factor, constraining students from accessing education resources.

Overall, students acknowledged that, to some extent, they had acquired knowledge about their fields in addition to receiving a range of skills from attending the College, such as entrepreneur skills, computer skills, communication skills, and teamwork. The acquisition of knowledge and skills was linked to the teaching and learning experienced by the students. The data seems to show that nothing much had changed from students' experiences in Phase 1 to them completing their studies at the College. The teaching methods included using PowerPoint presentations, reading from the textbook, and doing group work. Whilst some students enjoyed classes, some indicated that the learning environment was not conducive for effective learning to occur, due to the teaching methods employed by lecturers. Gamble (2013) however reminds us of the foundations of a successful TVET i.e., the opportunities for practical experience, pedagogy expertise, and having qualified teachers from the same field, all aspects which TEVT in South Africa struggle to both acquire and maintain.

## **Chapter 8: In pursuit of an expanded approach to rural TVET**

In this chapter, the researcher operationalises the CA with the objective of examining how the rural settings of colleges have affected college graduates. The aim of this chapter is to analyse, interpret, and discuss the findings in relation to the literature review and the CA.

The chapter addresses the study's research questions:

1. What knowledge and skills [functionings and hence capabilities] do students have reason to value through studying for a TVET qualification?
2. In what way can the CA lens contribute to the policy, theoretical, and practical development of the rural TVET system?

This chapter provides a summary of the empirical data with key findings, followed by a brief restatement of the theoretical framework. This chapter then lists and explains the capabilities that students valued and/or achieved through TVET. It draws the capabilities from the functionings that students reported to value and have achieved. Conversion factors are used to explain the reasons for the extent to which certain capabilities were realised or not attained. This is followed by a further discussion on the implication of these capabilities and how the CA could be helpful to understand the kind of skills the TVET system should equip rural students with for lifelong skills, sustainable livelihoods, and enhanced wellbeing.

### **A recap of the Capabilities Approach to Rural TVET**

The argument advanced in this thesis is to rethink the purpose of TVET and in particular, rural TVETCs, by considering other human-centred and holistic development approaches, specifically the CA. The HCT emphasises the economic dimension of the skills attained from the TVETCs, which is limited and outdated within the context of rapidly changing industrial needs. The HCT only focuses on one of the three aims of higher education, namely economic

development, the other two of which are personal and social development. The HCT does not place the wellbeing of individuals in TVET institutions in the foreground and also fails to equip rural students with lifelong skills, such as being creative and creating self-employment. Moreover, the HCT undervalues the need to train individuals in rural TVETCs about quality of life and their wellbeing. Rural students ought to gain skills beyond those linked to employment, namely skills related to personal development and being socially responsible citizens. This is where CA provides a more expansive view of the role of rural TVET in contributing to rural students' wellbeing, their societies, and the economy in general, through focusing on the central aims of HE.

The above values of the role of higher education are underpinned by the White Paper of 1997, where, among other things, the policy seeks to produce graduates with skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and communication for economic growth, so as to be socially responsible graduates (empathetic individuals who have good citizenship values). These individuals also care for others, which is important in a country such as South Africa, where there is a significant need for social integration and cohesion given the deleterious legacy of apartheid. This is to say that the CA enables us to understand the role of TVET as that of developing "fully human" graduates (Nussbaum, 2000) in a sustained recuperative project that recognises all that has been done to permanently and transgenerationally undermine the ability to thrive of the majority of the country's citizens, affecting particularly those in the most rural and impoverished circumstances.

### **Capability list for rural TVET graduates in South Africa**

The researcher developed a capability list based on the interviews conducted with students and lecturers. This list presents what graduates deemed to be valuable during their first year at college, as well as after completing their studies (see Table 17). The list shows what emerged as being valuable and important for rural graduates from a TVETC. Some of the capabilities that were deemed to be valuable were achieved, while others were not. It is important to note that what rural students achieved or did not achieve was also determined by other factors, such as agency, academic talent, and so on. According to Sen (1992), agency allows an individual to make informed choices and act on them, thereby being proactive. He termed this 'agency achievement', referring to the realisation of goals and values a person chooses, and has reason to pursue. However, he also highlights that individuals will need

freedom to achieve this, and terms this 'agency freedom'. Agency freedom refers to the freedom to choose and bring about those achievements one has reason to value. Individual agency lies at the centre of what a person does, and what they can achieve in all spheres of their life (Sen, 1992). This implies that the resources for an individual to achieve capabilities where functionings are achieved will depend on their agency. The list in Table 17 is non-exhaustive and does not necessarily apply to all rural student colleges or other contexts.

**Table 17: Capabilities of rural TVET graduates**

Emerging capabilities	Valued functionings emerging from the students' data	Valued by students	Achieved by students	Valued by lecturers
Employment opportunity	Having the qualifications needed for entry into the labour market	✓	✓	✓
	Having the skills to perform and learn from a job	✓	+/- <sup>20</sup>	✓
	Having security at work after graduation	✓	✗	✓
	Being able to make a valuable contribution in the workplace / Self-satisfaction with one's work	+/-	✗	✗
Entrepreneurship skills	Having skills to establish a business	✓	+/-	✓
	Being able to grow, maintain and employ others	✓	✗	✓
	Being able to influence others in family and communities to become entrepreneurs	✓	+/-	✓
Self-esteem and confidence	Believing in oneself in everyday life such as in learning, family and in the community	+/-	+/-	+/-
	Having confidence to secure internships, employment and establish a business	✓	✗	✓
	Having a voice at the campus, work and community	+/-	✗	✓
Respect and recognition	Being respected by peers, lecturers, and others in the community	+/-	+/-	✗
	Being treated with dignity	✓	+/-	✗
	Being recognised by family and community after making a difference	+/-	✗	✗
Affiliation	Being able to establish learning groups on campus	✓	+/-	+/-
	Being able to receive information from lecturers/students/family members about TVET, internships and work placement opportunities	✓	✗	+/-
	Recognising and respecting different groups and associations; for example, religious, political, and cultural groups, etc	✓	✗	+/-
Social responsibility	Being able to actively assist and give guidance to the youth	+/-	✗	✓
	Willingness to improve the lives of others from their communities	+/-	+/-	+/-
Resilience	Being able to complete tasks under hardships	✓	✓	✓

<sup>20</sup> +/- The researcher could not make a determination.

	Having confidence after circumventing hardships	✓	+/-	+/-
	Having determination to work towards one's aspirations	✓	+/-	✓

### ***Employment opportunity***

The capability of “*Employment opportunity*” is focused on whether rural graduates from the Esayidi College were able to find meaningful economic opportunities that would grant them stability and security. This capability also refers to having the occupational skills required by employers to help one secure a job. Being able to become gainfully employed, having the ability to contribute to work, and getting satisfaction from such work are additional aspects of the capability. Powell (2014, p. 202) views this capability as incorporating aspects such as having access to fair and equal opportunities to career progression.

As previously mentioned, one of the instrumental roles of higher education institutions is to equip students with employability skills. It was therefore not surprising that many students in the current study chose to study at Esayidi College to acquire employability skills (as discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). For example, many students, including JB, Busie, Royalty, Lolly, Zakes, Kate, and Jack wanted to secure employment opportunities immediately upon completing their respective qualifications. These findings correspond with studies conducted by Powell (2014) and Matenda (2018), which found economic opportunities/capabilities for work to be an important capability that was valued by students.

Despite students valuing this employment capability, the results show that most students did not achieve the functioning of employment after graduation. Hence, the capabilities are contracted among students, due to conversion factors such as the absence of in-service training, lack of practical skills offered by the College, rural location of the College and employers’ perception of low-quality education offered by TVETCs. The findings in chapters 5 to 7 reveal that the lack of practical skills was a common criticism expressed by both students and lecturers and was attributed to the geographic location of the College. Students expressed their dissatisfaction at mainly acquiring theoretical knowledge as opposed to practical skills, which they believed has limited their ability to secure internships

and thus employment. This too was attributed to the geographic location of the College. The results from lecturers also reveal that the TVETCs are not adequately imparting employment skills to students who lacked practical experience of the knowledge they were acquiring in order for them to compete in the world of work in general.

Conversion factors, such as the curriculum, emerged as constraining students' realisation of the capabilities. Furthermore, both students and lecturers cited the rural location of Esayidi College as a huge challenge, in the sense that students struggled to find meaningful internships and employment opportunities. The limited number of companies in rural areas and a lack of a dedicated careers officer at the College designated to assist students with this task made it difficult for graduates to find internships and employment opportunities, where those that were not successful in their own search simply became unemployed, while those who found employment due to their own initiative faced having to conduct an internship in a field that was not relevant to them. Babalo, who was an Electrical Engineering lecturer at the time of the study, articulated that his students could not become technicians in the mining industry, as there were no manufacturing companies or mines in the near vicinity of the College, and consequently students who had the ability and resources would choose to migrate to urban areas or convert to other fields. Phase 3 interviews revealed that most rural graduates were still unemployed, whilst others chose a different path from that which they had studied at the college. Lucky, who was an Electrical Engineering student, was engaged in community work. Moreover, the College's failure to establish linkages between the students and industry (which did not exist in rural areas) exacerbated students' unemployment situations, as they struggled to access internships. What these findings show is that rural graduates failed to achieve one of the key goals of TVET, which is to prepare students with relevant skills to participate in the economy.

It is also important to note that the issue of training and placement is complex in rural areas. Most of these students were black, where there were unsubstantiated claims that white students did not experience the same degree of struggle to find placement as did their black counterparts. The South Africa labour market is also still struggling to address the highly unequal labour market, which rewards degreed graduates better than it does technical and vocational certificates and diploma graduates. The issue of why rural students were failing to gain placements could be due to the fact that jobs were just not available, or due to a



mismatch between skills that the graduates possessed and those which their chosen industry demanded (Allais, 2019). There is also the debate as to whether the quality of TVET was up to standard, or whether employers regard it to be of any value whatsoever. There were claims that some employers were concerned about the quality of TVET graduates. All these are concerns that raise the complexities of the South African circumstance and which require thorough and detailed recommendations in order for TVETCs to become positioned in such a way that they provide relevant skilled labour that results in individual, communal and societal wellbeing. Wheelehan (2019) argues that the whole problem of skills mismatches cannot be blamed on education, particularly vocational education that is criticised for not producing the right kind of skills, or people with the right kind of skills. She reiterates that skills mismatches are the result of the way in which the labour market uses people with qualifications, and the way in which employers select people with qualifications. Consequently, the problem of skills mismatches may be reasonably understood to be driven more by the labour market and less by the education sector.

### ***Entrepreneurship skills***

This involves students having the lifelong knowledge and skills to venture into their own businesses, having the ability to maintain these businesses, and employ others, and being able to derive an adequate income from these businesses. DeJaeghere (2018) observes that the capabilities involve the ability to formally establish a business and promote gains that extend beyond mere household income.

Students valued these capabilities during the initial phase of the interviews, as they expressed their intention to establish their own businesses. However, as outlined in Chapter 7, only Zozo and JB expressed confidence in becoming entrepreneurs. Zozo always wanted to become an entrepreneur, and had even gained experience from starting to sell sweets and popcorn at school. He mentioned that the benefit of becoming an entrepreneur would be to create employment for others, showing that he understood the unemployment challenges faced by rural TVET graduates and people in his community.

Despite valuing the capabilities, the data from the second phase of the interviews demonstrates the contraction of their capabilities due to the majority of students not having

achieve functioning. Instead, most students had lost confidence in their ability to establish their own businesses. Only one student, Zozo, attained the capabilities as he was able to establish a business at the campus both during and after his studies. The student attributed these capabilities to the Business Management course at the College that provided him with the knowledge and skills to establish an entrepreneurial endeavour. The majority of Esayidi students reported not having the confidence to start any business. For example, Megan spoke about having acquired knowledge, but did not mention plans to establish her own business. Others such as Jack had insufficient entrepreneurial information and knowledge by means of which to establish their business, despite being encouraged by their lecturers to do so. The absence of these capabilities among most of the Esayidi students demonstrated that the TVETC was inadequately equipping students for self-employment, and consequently was playing a minimal role in the economy.

The lack of capabilities could be explained by the weaknesses of the curriculum that equips students with some knowledge on markets, identifying value chains and how to run a business, with the understanding that students would convert that knowledge into businesses. The data from lecturers indicates that the curriculum did not sufficiently address issues of preparing students to become entrepreneurs and, hence, it needed to be changed. DeJaeghere (2018) explains that this approach to TVET is limited, assuming that incorporating a few aspects of entrepreneurship in the curriculum would automatically cultivate graduates who are able to establish their own independent businesses. More importantly, although Zozo demonstrated having achieved the functioning of establishing a business, DeJaeghere (2018) explains that such a business has a minimal chance of growing beyond household income to become a formal organisation that can employ other people. This highlights the weaknesses of the curriculum, which ought to have granted students practical exposure regarding how to establish a business; provided information on where to get support within the context of their communities; and helped to develop linkages with government institutions and people who were already involved in business.

## ***Self-esteem and confidence***

The capability of 'self-esteem and confidence' include the following valued functionings: believing in oneself in every aspect of life; having confidence to start one's own business; and being confident enough to enter into gainful employment.

The capability of 'self-esteem and confidence' plays an enabling or disabling role for the youth to take action as a way of becoming or 'being' what they want to be (Powell, 2014). The findings from this study illustrate that the capability did not develop much among most of the students at the College from their first year until graduation. For example, Grace did not feel confident enough to ask her lecturers questions and consequently preferred group work where she felt free to engage and ask questions. Likewise, Kate lacked confidence to participate in class due to her introverted personality and fear of her lecturers. Conversion factors that prohibited students from developing their capabilities include poor schooling in which they felt uncomfortable to participate in their learning, and the consequent lack of confidence to approach employers for in-service training. Moreover, the teaching arrangements did little to nurture confidence among disadvantaged students who went through poor-quality schooling in the rural communities. Instead, the College ought to be building confidence among students so that they are able to have a voice, make independent decisions, and take actions to achieve their goals. These findings were corroborated by the data from lecturers that the curriculum was designed in such a manner that did little to build confidence, autonomy, and agency for students to look for employment and establish their businesses.

The 'self-esteem and confidence' capability is particularly important for entrepreneurial skills, and thus for one to establish businesses and influence one's community. It allows one to believe in oneself and take risks to venture into income-generating projects, maintain them, and successfully navigate through the day-to-day challenges that they may encounter in the business. While Zozo appeared to have developed these capabilities, most students did not show the confidence to take action despite the knowledge on entrepreneurship they had acquired in class. Besides that, confidence capability is helpful for students in securing internships and employment. The findings in this study also show that although some students valued getting internships, along with in-service training and employment

opportunities, not having enough confidence prevented them from achieving functioning. Not having the confidence to approach businesses for an internship, Susan could not secure employment and was still unemployed and, in her words, which evidence the kind of demoralisation that in the long term undermines a sense of agency, “sitting home doing nothing”.

These capabilities are strongly related to agency, which explains whether and to what extent TVET students took initiative to find internships or waited for the College to find positions for them. There is little evidence that lecturers paid much attention to agency development, which ought to be at the centre of achieving capabilities. Agency is intrinsically important for individual freedom and instrumental for collective action and democratic participation (Sen, 1999). Student agency is also ‘a key dimension of human wellbeing’ (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 6). It has been argued that for students to exercise agency and to live the lives that they value, they ought to have access to conversion factors, for example, a critical, respectful, and inquiring classroom context for the agency to develop (Wood & Deprez, 2012). These conversion factors are absent or weak where there is an attempt to develop them. However, one must be cautious not to blame students for lacking agency, as there could be underlying structural factors that prevent them from accessing internships and jobs and establishing their own businesses, as much as these same structural factors are likely to affect their lecturer’s abilities to teach.

### ***Recognition and respect***

The capability of recognition and respect refers to students being able to respect themselves, having a feeling of recognition by their family members, friends, and communities, including their lecturers. This includes students beginning to value others and diversity at the campus. Being able to contribute significantly through knowledge or actions and receiving credit or acknowledgement from peers, family members and communities underpins this capability. Treating others with dignity and not discriminating against others based on race, gender, and religion etc. constitutes the capability of respect and recognition (Walker, 2008).

The capability of respect appeared to be valued and achieved by some students. Many students hoped to gain respect from their respective families and communities upon

completing their course at the College. During the Phase 1 interviews, students including Harry, Royalty and Jabu all mentioned that they had learned to respect and socialise with students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Welcome and Royalty felt that they would be respected by both their families and communities upon completing their studies. Enrolling at a TVETC provides an opportunity for students to be respected and recognised during their studies, as well as when they are in the workplace thereafter (Powell, 2012). Matenda (2018) also reported in her study that women students felt respected and recognised when they helped other students in their communities with their homework.

Related to the above some students felt recognised and respected after making a contribution to knowledge and to establishing and operating a small family business. This is after the knowledge they brought home from the College had made an impact on their family, which further attracted the attention of the community in which they lived. John communicated with his family member the idea that they should start a trading business which his grandmother accepted, an idea that he thought of after learning about business at the College. Until then, the business had diversified to include other food products. Because the idea had been embraced by his family and the business was giving them a significant income, the neighbours and community began to respect him for transforming his family. In her study, DeJaeghere (2018) asserts that successful youth who engage in entrepreneurship can have an impact in their communities beyond attracting respect and recognition, to raising entrepreneurial aspirations within the whole community.

The capability of respect and recognition was diminished among other students. Zingisa, who was a rural Travel and Tourism graduate, mentioned that she was not respected by her family, as she was still unemployed. In addition, some students felt recognised when they taught and/or tutored their peers on some of the lecture content. As previously discussed in Chapter 7, students seemed to have mixed feelings about their lecturers and their teaching styles. The findings indicate poor teaching in the rural TVETCs, where rural students felt that their lecturers tried to create a free learning environment by encouraging them to participate in class. However, Jack further commented that younger lecturers were not respected by students, as they questioned the respective lecturer's qualification and ability to teach. At the same time, lecturers seemed not to be inculcating values of respect to others

in their teaching, as they perceived this to be not part of the curriculum. This finding relates to that of Powell (2014), who reported that the difference in age in a diverse student cohort resulted in different cultures, which led to students behaving disrespectfully towards lecturers.

### ***Affiliation***

Central to the affiliation capability was the ability of students to establish social networks and groups on campus as well as within their communities. It also referred to students' having a sense of belonging to social institutions where they received information and support. According to Nussbaum (2000), affiliation involve social relations, respect, recognition, and equal valuing of differences. Affiliation also involves protection against discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, and origin. Affiliation in HE has been associated with social relations, equal recognition and valuing (Walker, 2006).

The capability of affiliation was valued by some students and was considered to be important by a few lecturers. The findings reveal that working in groups was somewhat common, and was mainly based on the respective lecturer and assignment. The formation of study groups seemed to have been triggered by lecturers not showing up for classes. Students mainly perceived this to be an advantage as they were able to share resources and knowledge on the modules they were studying towards at the College. For example, Lucky, Royalty and Zakes all explained that working in groups not only gave them an opportunity to learn independently but also to learn from one another. As previously discussed in Chapter 7, students benefitted from studying in groups as they became independent agents in their learning. The data also reveals friendships between students of different ethnicities. For example, Grace, who is Zulu, reported having Xhosa friends. According to Grace, the Zulu and Xhosa people do not usually get along, and by having Xhosa friends, she was able to appreciate the differences between the two ethnic groups and expand her horizons. The capability of affiliation was also expressed when students showed concern for other human beings by wanting to create employment opportunities for future graduates within their communities. Underpinning this capability is concern over others, as students felt the need

to help others. JB recalled his early days in college when another student helped him arrange his accommodation, which taught him to always help others and to also gain their respect.

Consequently, the capability for affiliation seemed to be valued and achieved by most students. The capability of affiliation was enabled by a combination of factors including lecturers' teaching styles, type of assignment, lecturing format, and students themselves. This capability not only contributed to students finishing their studies, but it gave them a lifelong skill that they could use at work as well as in their communities. The capability is also necessary for maintaining small businesses, as explained by De Weerd (2010), in the sense that those entrepreneurs who establish social relations and links tend to be more successful than their counterparts who fail to do so. This happens through the information, support, and trust that the youth build together within their groups.

### ***Social responsibility***

Social responsibility and active citizenship capability include aspects such as the willingness of individuals to contribute to improving the lives of others from their communities. Being able to make well-reasoned, informed, independent and socially responsible choices are other aspects of the capability.

The capability of "social responsibility and active citizenship" was somewhat valued by students, while only one lecturer understood this capability to be of value to students. The lecturers' data points out that most students graduated without being aware of the need to participate in social responsibility activity in their communities, and in society at large. With regard to students, during the Phase 1 interviews, Lolly, who was a female Electrical Engineering student, shared her desire to help her community gain access to electricity. Zakes, who was a male Electrical Engineering student, also expressed his wish to help with the electrical installations in his community, in order to prevent accidents resulting from improper electrical wiring. Notably, both were Electrical Engineering students who seemed to have understood the challenges experienced in their communities, and who wanted to improve the lives of community members. Some of the students were assertive enough to engage in other responsibilities that had nothing to do with their studies, but had everything to do with their wellbeing and contributing to their communities as well as to society at large. When students were asked about any social responsibilities or community service

engagements in Phase 3, only Zozo mentioned his engagement in charity work, such as donating clothes to poor people in his community. In addition, he also assisted his community by teaching mathematics to high school students. Students such as Zakes and Royalty wished to contribute to their community and expressed their willingness to advise and/or to motivate younger people to pursue their education by sharing their own experiences. However, many students were unable to engage in social responsibility and community service activities for a number of reasons, such as being away from home; trying to find their career path; and struggling financially; this despite Sen (2004) highlighting the need to help others as a form of achieving wellbeing. More so, helping others is another way of one exercising agency through showing commitment to other people's lives.

Nonetheless, the findings indicate that capabilities did not emerge for some students, especially those who were constrained by financial resources. These students' failure to help others, despite them valuing the capabilities, can be explained by Ballet, Dubois and Mahieu (2007), who note that it is necessary to garner certain freedoms and become what one aspires to be before extending one's agency to help others. Another reason for students failing to realise the functionings related to helping others was that the curriculum did not adequately enhance those values among students. One of the lecturers squarely blamed the curriculum for failing to inculcate citizenship values in the students, as some students graduated without having developed these capabilities. Nussbaum (2010) however advocates that higher education ought to incorporate aspects of the liberal arts as a way of instilling social values of caring for others and developing one's community through participating in democratic processes. In this regard, rural TVETCs ought to help instil similar values so as to cultivate well-rounded graduates, which the colleges are not adequately doing.



## Revisiting the research questions

Four research questions were developed, and these were carefully addressed using empirical data from 21 students in Phase 1, 6 lecturers in Phase 2 and 13 students in Phase 3. Each research question was addressed as follows:

### How do students understand the aims of the education, knowledge and skills they acquire?

This question sought to understand the students' views on the aims of the education, knowledge and skills that they acquired. This research question was, addressed in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 revealed that TVETCs globally have been driven by the HCT approach, which places greater emphasis on employability, as opposed to lifelong skills. The chapter highlights the criticism of this approach and the need for an alternative, human-centred one. Empirical data from students, presented in Chapters 5 and 7 also indicated that students valued experiential learning through practical sessions. They also valued having internships, which could help to develop the skills they learned in class. Undergoing an internship was believed to not only expose the students to the working world, but to improve their chances of employment after graduating. Nevertheless, very few students had the opportunity for practical learning and internships until their graduation. Equally significantly, the chapters revealed that, although students valued gaining skills in other spheres of their lives, such as personal development, good citizenship, and participating in a democratic process, TVET was doing little to provide these skills.

The findings in Chapter 7 revealed that students clearly valued what they had learnt and the knowledge they had acquired. Students reported that the knowledge they had acquired, enabled them to improve their communication skills and their ability to respect themselves and others. They also reported hoping that their qualifications would help them move up the social ladder. None of the graduates reported having been formally employed, which questioned the quality and relevance of the skills that they had acquired. Unemployment of rural graduates could nevertheless be the result of the economic environment, which might not be offering opportunities for graduates to secure employment. If graduates were unable to get jobs, it is argued that they ought to create their own employment through starting small businesses. Although valued by most students, the capability of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills was seen as inadequate. Only two graduates were actively involved in

running small businesses, while most of the graduates indicated that they lacked the skills and confidence to do so.

What knowledge and skills (functionings and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value when studying for a TVET qualification? In what ways do knowledge and skills acquired by TVET students contribute to enhancing or constraining their capabilities to live meaningful and fulfilling lives?

This research question focused on the capabilities that students valued and/or achieved through TVET. The capabilities were extrapolated from the functionings reported by students in Chapters 5 and 7. These capabilities were outlined in Chapter 8 and include: employment opportunities, entrepreneurship skills, self-esteem and confidence, recognition and respect, affiliation, social responsibility, and resilience (see pages 206-214). The more prominent capabilities are discussed below:

The employment capabilities were valued by the student participants, although none of them reported having achieved these capabilities after graduation. This was the same with the entrepreneurship capability, which only two students achieved during their studies and after graduating, despite it being valued by the majority of the students and lecturers. The student data also uncovered the recognition and respect capabilities which, again, the majority of the students did not achieve, although these capabilities were much valued within the student spheres.

The affiliation capability emerged through reports of students forming study groups to provide each other with academic and social support on campus. However, this capability was not achieved beyond the College, as none of the students established networks to help them secure employment and establish their own businesses. This, despite the significance of this capability in developing and sustaining entrepreneurship.

Self-esteem and confidence capabilities were valued, but only a few reported achieving these. While poor schooling can be blamed for not nurturing the capabilities among the students, college teaching methods are also to blame for failing to develop it. The findings uncovered that the lack of self-esteem and confidence capabilities were associated with low

agency, as some of the students indicated that they had given up on securing employment and started their own establishments.

The capability of social responsibility was brought forward by some students, who indicated that they would want to improve their communities. Subsequently, only a few students showed achievement in those capabilities or were working towards meeting the capabilities. The conversion factor constraining students from achieving the social responsibility was lack of resources, as they indicated that they were struggling to take care of themselves. The graduates felt that they needed to improve their wellbeing first, so that they would be able to take care of others.

What did not emerge, however, was the social responsibility capability that would help students to engage, participate, and influence the decisions made on campus, in their communities and in the country. The student data indicated that the political participation capability was also diminished among the students on campus, as they did little to protest against the challenges they were facing on campus. This was also associated with students' low agency and the curriculum's failure to incorporate active citizenship values, which could be partly blamed on poor schooling, and the poor quality of education students had received, as mentioned in the preceding section (page 235).

Some of the conversion factors that were disabling for students to achieve the above capabilities include: TVET funding, college teaching, poor quality of college infrastructure, the curriculum, absence of practical sessions during learning, failure by students to access internships, and poor-quality schooling. Low employment opportunities in industry and unfavourable conditions for entrepreneurship development also diminished the students' opportunities to become what they aspired to be. The skills that students gained from the TVETCs were diminished by these conversion factors, although a few fared well in pursuit of their aspirational goals and at achieving the capabilities.

#### What do lecturers aim to achieve with the curriculum that they implement?

This research question concentrated on determining what lecturers aimed to achieve from the curriculum that they implemented. Most of the findings from lecturers in Chapter 6 concurred with the students' views that lack of practical sessions and internships for

students and the gaps in the curriculum compromised students from acquiring skills and knowledge relevant to the world of employment in South Africa.

Lecturers believed that students were not adequately equipped with IT skills, social skills and a sense of entrepreneurship. Lecturers indicated their will to develop employability (education for instrumental value) and entrepreneurial skills (education for entrepreneurship), but there was little evidence to show their intention or plans to develop these skills, despite these being highly valued by students. While this was true, the need to equip students with social skills and political participation were not emphasised from the lecturers' view of what the curriculum aimed to achieve. Blame was placed on the curriculum that failed to develop students' social skills.

Lastly, the lack of internship exposure, practical experience, and poor quality of infrastructure were viewed as worsening the unemployment challenge among the rural graduates. Lecturers also cited administrative challenges linked with the centralisation of the VET network in the country. The main challenge reported was that centralisation was not sensitive to the remoteness and rural context of the college, resulting in the college failing to attract qualified lecturers. Low staff morale prevented students from receiving the skills with which they ought to have been equipped.

#### In which way can the CA contribute to the policy, theoretical, and practical development of rural TVETCs?

This research question sought to address how CA could contribute to the policy, theoretical and practical development of TVET in a rural setting. A discussion was presented in Chapter 8 regarding how an expansive TVET approach could further enhance an understanding of the kind of skills rural TVET should be equipping students with, including exploring RIVETA, and how students could move towards sustainable livelihoods and enhanced wellbeing.

While the capabilities valued and achieved by the students were outlined and discussed, the chapter went further to explore the conditions that are necessary for the development of these capabilities. The chapter also attempted to identify the most important capabilities for rural TVET, while exploring the environment that is conducive for the attainment of these capabilities.

The need to implement policies to create employment opportunities and dismantle inequality in accessing employment was identified as important for creating a fertile environment for the achievement of the employment and entrepreneurship capabilities. Effective policies were identified as essential for the growth of entrepreneurs to become formal businesses.

Chapter 8 also made clear that TVETCs ought to offer lifelong knowledge together with employment and entrepreneurship skills for the creation of sustainable livelihoods and for the wellbeing of graduates. Students from this study aspired to secure well-paying jobs through formal employment in order for them to have decent lives. Realising the limited opportunities for them to find formal jobs, most students however valued becoming entrepreneurs through establishing informal businesses. Although TVET graduates in Powell and McGrath's (2019) study did not regard being involved in informal businesses as employment, this study reveals that students valued becoming entrepreneurs as well. Earning an adequate income, whether from formal jobs or from being involved in informal businesses, was valued by the students in this study as it would allow them to invest for further personal development as well as to perform their family and community responsibilities (Powell & McGrath, 2019).

Part of this research question is addressed later in chapter 9, under policy implications, and recommendations are made on how the TVET system could be improved in rural South Africa.

### **The implication of these findings for Rural TVETCs**

The findings from this study reflect that rural student did not only value being employed in order for them to be productive. Students also valued being recognised and respected through TVET and becoming active members in their communities who care about others. Studies that employed the CA in South African TVETCs, such as Powell (2014), McGrath (2012) and Matenda (2019), also reveal similar findings, namely that students in South African TVETCs valued not only being employed or being entrepreneurs, but being active citizens, having self-imagination and practical reasoning capacities, and having bodily integrity. This implies that rural TVET students valued becoming full humans, as opposed to being trained for production (Nussbaum, 2002).

What we can learn from the above capabilities is that rural TVETCs ought to be able to provide rural students with lifelong skills, which can help them to achieve their aspirations and wellbeing. If the TVET system fails to meet the three dimensions of the capabilities, i.e., economic growth, personal growth, and social development, then it can be argued that it is not playing an effective role in equipping rural graduates who are able to think critically about the decisions they make in society, compete effectively in employment, and operate small businesses. In other words, the rural TVET system would have failed to develop the agency and capabilities required for students to lead flourishing lives (Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015).

Most of the capabilities that arose from the rural student findings are also on Powell's (2014) list. However, Powell's (2014) capabilities of bodily integrity and imagination did not emerge in the current study. Two other capabilities that were not on Powell's (2014) list, but which featured in the students' data in the current study are resilience, and affiliation. The difference could be that the graduates in this study were experiencing more difficult conditions at a rural college than those in Powell's (2014) study, who were urban-based despite them also being from low-income families. This suggests that the TVETCs conditions in a rural context could be more marginalised than those in urban contexts and implies the need to consider the rurality context, when rethinking the kind of TVET students and the support they ought to receive.

Concomitantly, the capabilities of social responsibility and affiliation that emerged in the current study did not appear on Matenda's (2019) list. Students in Matenda's (2019) study valued the capability for work, recognition, and respect; occupational knowledge and skills, bodily integrity, aspirations, educational resilience, having a voice, and practical reason. The social responsibility and affiliation capabilities that emerged in this study could be explained by *ubuntu* that describes the values of togetherness, sense of belonging and connectedness, and reciprocity with others (Shanyanana & Waghid, 2016, p. 107). Unlike in urban settings where Matenda's study was conducted, the value of *ubuntu* could still be entrenched within the traditional and rural communities, being less pronounced in urban areas where individualism has won over.

The capabilities that emerged from the students' data can be compared with DeJaeghere's (2018) list of capabilities of entrepreneurship, which includes, among others, affiliation, respect, and recognition, along with entrepreneurship skills. The students' data excludes the capability of community care, which was more pronounced on DeJaeghere's (2018) list. DeJaeghere's (2018) community care capabilities refer to the youth giving and receiving from the community in their entrepreneurship activities, unlike the social responsibility capability in this study that constitutes a one-way capability. The social responsibility capability concentrated on students/graduates helping the members in the communities to improve their wellbeing. The reason for this difference could be that DeJaeghere's (2018) study specifically evaluated an entrepreneurship project which saw youth already running their projects in their communities, unlike those graduates included in this study, who were still open to pursue different trajectories, including employment and further education.

What also emerged from the above findings was the presence of conversion factors that were respectively enabling and disabling for students to realise their capabilities. Among them was college teaching, the curriculum, college and student funding, the absence of practical sessions during learning, failure by rural students to access internships, and poor-quality schooling; all of which exacerbated the failure to develop confidence among the students. Despite these factors working in complicated ways to disable students in achieving functioning, funding appears to be the most significant factor in influencing the capacity of the college to offer quality and lifelong skills to the students. Inadequate student funding prevented students from realising their full potential during their studies, as some failed to access resources such as textbooks and the technological equipment they needed for their learning, could not afford accommodation, lacked transport money, skipped meals, and did not have decent clothing. These findings correspond with that of other researchers of the TVET system in South Africa, for example, Matenda (2019). Furthermore, findings from lecturers and students concur that rural TVETCs did not receive adequate funding from the DHET, resulting in poor infrastructure and failure to attract well-qualified and experienced lecturers. Poor working conditions demotivated the teaching staff from providing academic support to students and this compromised the quality of skills the students gained. Poor quality teaching worsened the lives of the already financially struggling students. Gamble (2013) underscored the role of quality of teaching for a successful TVET in South Africa to produce graduates who can

compete in the industry and communities. All these conversion factors contribute to contracting the capabilities that the rural TVETCs ought to provide to students. Needham (2018) explains that poor funding compromises the capacity of TVET to produce well-equipped graduates. As such, governments together with private partners, should adequately fund the rural TVET system if they expect the system to continue producing well-equipped graduates.

Besides funding, the absence of an arrangement between the public sector colleges and the private business sector is a conversion factor that constrained the students from accessing internships that would in turn open up the capabilities of employment and that of entrepreneurship among the rural students. This is another significant conversion factor affecting the kind of skills students received. This alongside inadequate curricula compromised the skills that students gained. The curricula over-emphasise theory and there is little in the way of practical experience, yet one of the purposes of the rural TVET system is precisely to cultivate skills among students through hands-on experience. The findings from lecturers show that the rural TVETCs were still using outdated curricula, without much input from the teaching staff. This is concerning given the rapidly changing trends in skills required in industry. This means that TVETCs could be not responding adequately to the skills needed in industry, limiting the rural graduates' opportunities for employment (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). Alternatively, there may be a need for TVETCs to collaborate with industry to align what is being taught with the skills needed in specific industries (Allais & Fleisch, 2019). Nevertheless, this is not to dismiss the assertion that there could be very few jobs industries to accommodate all TVETC graduates, where the blame could be placed on the job creation strategies in the economy as a whole, and not only on VET (Allais, 2019). Considering VETCs, when thinking of expanding the capabilities among students, there is a need to focus on these conversion factors to create a conducive environment for the students to realise capabilities relevant to both the industry and the needs of communities (Robeyns, 2017).

Besides the conversion factors discussed in this chapter, the results from interviews with lecturers and students point to ICT as a conversion factor disabling students to access funding, find employment, and achieve other functionings related to learning. Lecturers highlighted that most students did not have the computer skills essential for their learning



and for preparing them for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This despite ICT playing a critical role in enabling students to reach achievements, while enhancing their agency to achieve educational functions (Zheng & Stahl, 2012). The Covid-19 pandemic has also affected educational institutions such as TVETCs, through the adoption of on-line learning. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the South African government implemented several multi-media student support initiatives after TVETCs and other educational institutions were closed to control the spread of the virus. The impact of Covid-19 has exacerbated the already existing inequalities in the South African education system. In particular, rural students have been severely affected as most of them come from poor rural families and communities. In addition, many students in rural areas do not have access to smartphones and other electronic devices such as laptops and iPads. Furthermore, students in rural areas also do not have sufficient access to data and electricity.

Rural students could still be constrained by ICT even if the ICT resources were available, as most of them were unfamiliar with using it (Zheng & Stahl, 2012). Subsequently, this can also diminish their confidence and agency pointing to further marginalisation. Although ICT is such an important conversion factor considering the adoption of ICT by TVETCs in South Africa during the pandemic, its impact on rural TVETC students is unknown as this study was conducted before the pandemic. It is thus difficult for students in rural areas to study online and/or to self-study compared to students in urban areas, who have access to most of these resources and who are able to take advantage of online learning materials. This further compromises the quality of skills that the rural TVET graduates are equipped with, highlighting the need to improve the rural colleges' infrastructure so that they are fully equipped in the event of national and international disasters.

In Chapter 3, collective capabilities are described as one way that marginalised people join forces to fight for a good cause. The students could not be regarded as a group, but when they embark on internship they are separated. Although the students seem to face the same challenges of lack of internship opportunities, there is less evidence to suggest that they coordinated to engage in collective action to enhance their capabilities in various ways. The marginalisation is subtle, and the students seem to face challenges in silos. Firstly, the capabilities approach suggests that the students could conceptualise collective action that is instrumentally valuable for promoting income generation, resource sharing and creating

a sense of self-esteem among themselves (Stewart, 2005, p. 190; Thorp et al., 2005, pp. 907–913). The second point is that collective action is also intrinsically important for affecting the formulation of values and beliefs. Thirdly, individual freedoms and collective action are mutually reinforcing. Freedoms widen the possibilities for collective action, while collective action allows individuals to exercise their freedoms (Evans, 2002, pp. 56–57). Finally, the ability to engage in a collective action or form a group is itself a capability (Stewart, 2005, p. 199). However, in conceptualizing the relationship between capabilities and collective action, one needs to be aware of three main limitations. First, “group affiliation is not always beneficial”. Sen (2004, p. 41) expresses his skepticism of group affiliation, as it “can have a cementing role within that group while encouraging rather severe treatment of non-members”. Empirical data shows less evidence for collective action.

This section demonstrates that CA is helpful in identifying some of the contextual factors that may enable or constrain students from acquiring the life-long knowledge and skills in line with their aspirations. However, the approach is criticised for not adequately addressing power (see Page 90) and the structural inequalities that may contribute to the lack of sustainability of these capabilities, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa.

### **Capabilities most important for sustainable rural TVET and wellbeing of rural graduates**

The capabilities and the wellbeing of TVET graduates ought to extend to cover the economic growth, personal development, social development, and political dimensions of graduates in order for them to flourish. Nussbaum (2011) refers to these as combined capabilities as they address all aspects of the individual. The capabilities listed in the preceding section, namely employment opportunity, entrepreneurship skills, self-esteem and confidence, recognition and respect, affiliation and social responsibility are linked to the economic, personal development and social spheres of the graduates’ lives. However, the political dimension did not emerge strongly from the list of capabilities above, suggesting a gap. The active citizenship capability appeared on Powell’s (2014) list and emphasise students’ abilities to actively participate in the political processes on campus and in communities. Nevertheless, little was mentioned by the rural students in this study about having acquired knowledge to participate in political processes and transform the challenges the society is facing, such as unemployment, unfair business practices, and inequality. Findings in this study also indicate

that students did not actively challenge the TVETCs administration and policies that contributed to their marginalisation, despite being aware of these injustices. This likely implies that the political capability did not develop much among the graduates. The absence of the political participation capability could be partly explained by the low-level sense of urgency the students had associated with poor schooling and teaching at the College. Besides that, the TVET curriculum could also be held responsible. Rural TVET curricula ought to be able to cultivate the political participation capability so that they are able to bring about change in the economic and social spheres, including challenging the historical inequalities existing in the country (Nussbaum, 2010). Cultivating the political participation capability among the students in addition to the economic, social, and personal empowerment spheres, means that VET is able to effectively equip graduates with lifelong knowledge and skills necessary for survival in the economy and in their communities.

Although the findings in this study point to the rural TVET system being partly to blame for not adequately equipping students with relevant and quality knowledge and skills, the economic environment played a role in the joblessness of these graduates. This could be attributed to dominance of the global markets that forced especially rural communities out to the periphery of economic participation. Gibson-Graham (2006) maintains that the TVET system in developing countries is designed to fulfil the global economy, and the fact that it ignores the specific conditions in these countries means that it is less effective in providing employment and business opportunities for rural graduates. South Africa had high levels of unemployment at around 29.1%, and in the 2021 second quarter, 34.4% (Stats SA, 2019a). The expanded definition of unemployment, including people who have stopped looking for work, stood at 44.4% in the second quarter of 2021, and job seekers between 15 and 24 years old hit a new record high of 64.4% (Stats SA, 2019a). This meant that the chances of rural graduates being absorbed into employment were shrinking and this minimised rural graduates' chances of realising the employment capability. Additionally, the rural TVET graduates in this study were further marginalised by residing in rural areas where their chances of accessing jobs were limited due to the absence of companies, knowledge, and means of applying their limited social capital. The rising unemployment and marginalisation of the communities from which these students came, suggested the importance of equipping its graduates with skills for them to venture into their own businesses. Although entrepreneurship capability was valued, it had

not been adequately developed, as evidenced in the fact that so few graduates had the skills and confidence to become entrepreneurs. Equipping students with strong entrepreneurship skills coupled with other capabilities such as resilience, sense of affiliation, and confidence, would enable students to contribute to addressing the unemployment challenge in the country.

However, equipping graduates with entrepreneurship skills was not sufficient, as there was a need to create a conducive environment for students to realise the capabilities and practically venture into businesses. The absence of and/or failure to implement supportive policies in the country for entrepreneurship among the rural youth reduced the ability of rural graduates to establish businesses. The post-apartheid South African government instituted policies such as the Black Economic Empowerment<sup>21</sup> and youth policies<sup>22</sup> to address racial inequalities that have existed in South Africa for a very long time. Despite these policies, a majority of the youth in rural areas were still unable to access the benefits at the time of data collection for this study. Those few businesses run by the youth were established by middle-class young people who had affiliations with politicians in the African National Congress (Southall, 2016). Southall (2016) explains that most of these establishments survived on corruption, especially on receiving tenders from the government with the help of family members in government or in the African National Congress. All this pointed to inequality and political power that placed rural TVET graduates at the periphery when accessing business opportunities. It is important to note that the presence of affirmative action policies was not enough to incorporate rural youth in employment and entrepreneurship in the absence of good governance and ethical conduct. This concurs with Johnson and Robison (2001) who explain that most developing countries have not done enough in establishing policies to support emerging businesses given the structural inequalities embedded in the history of colonialism and global economic arrangements.

While entrepreneurship capability was important, fostering affiliation capability was also a priority. Although students valued the capability through recognising diversity and the different ethnic groups at the campus, these capabilities were not fully realised. Findings in

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<sup>21</sup> This is an affirmative action policy for supporting black people who have been marginalised by the previous apartheid policies and prevented from participating in the economy.

<sup>22</sup> The National Youth Policy 2015-2020 recognises youth entrepreneurship as a priority due to the joblessness in the country. The policy aims to train and support youth to venture into business (RSA, 2015).

this study show that the graduates had fewer social networks to help them to secure employment and establish businesses. Bathmaker (2015) explains that the working class, who constitute the majority of TVET students, have limited social capital, i.e., the social networks to provide information and links to employment, unlike the middle class. This highlighted another layer of marginalisation in addition to the general unemployment in the country. Nussbaum recognises affiliation capability as architectonic in education due to it enabling students to form social networks and groups for their support. This was also a relevant skill needed by graduates to survive at workplaces and in their businesses, suggesting that TVET affiliation is a core capability that TVETCs ought to place at the centre for sustainable economic opportunities and the wellbeing of its graduates (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Another structural factor that contributes to female graduates not finding employment is gender inequality. Although female graduates in this study did not explicitly mention gender discrimination in accessing jobs, this does not imply they were not being discriminated against, as female students tend to report their experiences in a gender-neutral way even when they are being directly disadvantaged (Chisholm et al., 2007). Despite gender inequality not being mentioned by the students in this study, female students continue to be marginalised through discrimination and sexual harassment on campuses, and in accessing internships. For example, in her study, Matenda (2018) found that in the engineering field, employers favoured male students for internships compared to women, which subsequently disadvantaged them when job seeking. This constrained their capability of access to employment. Creating an environment where the society respects and treats all people with dignity despite their gender will facilitate rural female graduates having the same opportunities as men in accessing employment. Failure to reveal the gender inequality among the rural students in this study could be associated with the weakness of the CA in it not being a full-fledged theory requiring a complimentary theory to fully understand gender inequality in particular (Robeyns, 2017).

## **Towards Rural Integrated Vocational Education and Training Approach**

This study focused on the exploration of rural TVET in South Africa using a human development approach. This is specifically through the use of the CA (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000, 2003; Robeyns, 2017), which has allowed the researcher to identify the capabilities and the functionings valued by students attending a rural TVET college, and consequently the conversion factors affecting students' ability to have flourishing lives. This thesis offers an alternative to the neoliberal approaches, such as the HCT, that bring to the fore the training of graduates for economic growth. The HCT has demonstrated certain limitations due to its failure to account for the increasing unemployment, poverty, and inequality in the country (Akoojee, 2005; Wheelehan, 2019). Social problems continue to bedevil the country as illustrated by the recent protests and looting in 2021 in the KZN,<sup>23</sup> where the present study was conducted. As an alternative, the CA has provided us with a more expansive view of what TVET ought to provide to students (Walker & Fongwa, 2016).

Considering the above discussion about a capabilities list for rural TVET graduates and the dynamic work that the twenty-first century is pointing towards, the researcher proposes a Rural Integrated Vocational Education Training Approach (RIVETA).<sup>24</sup> This study not only considered employment skills or human development skills or access to an abundance of resources that will solve the problems that rural TVETCs are facing but reconceptualises rural TVET from an expansive perspective. This study argues for the need to "rethink" the purpose of TVETCs in South Africa, particularly rural colleges that are struggling to facilitate successful TVET in which a significant share of a typical youth cohort enrolls and undergoes meaningful training. The research examines what TVET education is doing, and proposes what could be done to produce graduates with skills for work, life, and society. This study advances the notion that TVET education is important, but notes that the education system needs to move beyond preparing students for employability only, when it is known that the jobs might not be readily available and that the economy is not expanding, particularly in rural areas. This study argues that what students value or have reason to value, the skills valued by the

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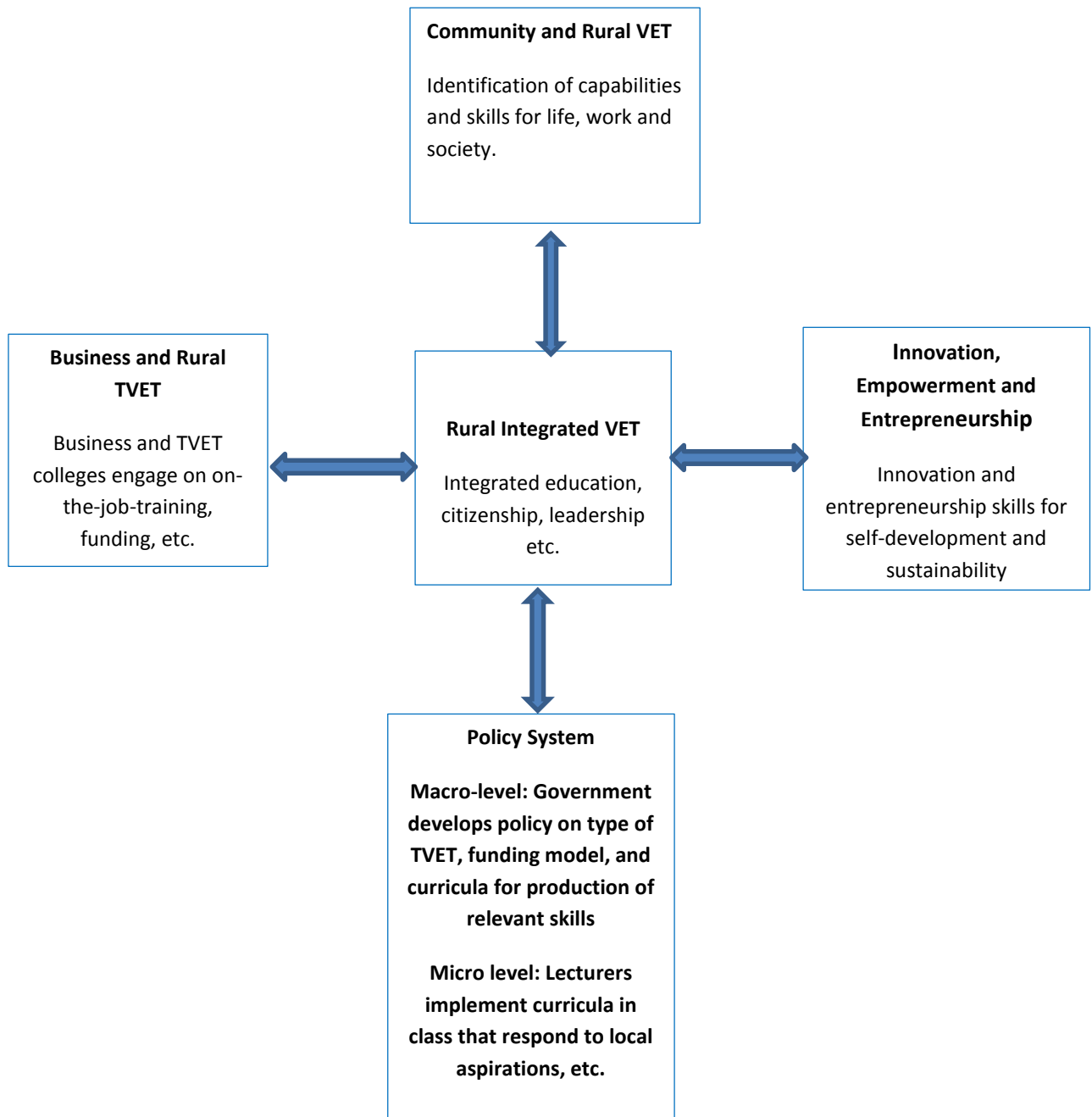
<sup>23</sup> The 2021 South African unrest involved a wave of civil unrest occurred in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

<sup>24</sup>The Rural Integrated Vocational Education and Training Approach (RIVETA) is an expansive approach informed by the Human Development Approach. Central to the RIVETA is for VETCs to produce graduates with employment and entrepreneurship skills as well as social and active citizenship values.

industry and the local context, should to a larger extent influence the education and training in rural colleges. Ultimately, TVET education ought to produce graduates with capabilities for work, (students with employability skills to influence rural economy and skills), life (human development skills), and society (self-employment skills above the subsistence level). This implies that TVET education ought to be intentional, better focused, and thus that colleges establish strong institutional linkages with (rural) industry.

The proposed RIVETA implies that rural TVET graduates ought to be equipped with entrepreneurship, innovation, and leadership skills, and the kind of knowledge that crosses boundaries.

Figure 6 shows the RIVETA.



**Figure 6: Rural Integrated Vocational Education and Training Approach (RIVETA)**

The framework puts Rural Integrated Vocational Education and Training Approach (RIVETA) at the centre, and it is anchored by four arms with inward and outward movement of ideas. The two-way system arrows means that information flows in either direction. For example, the Innovation, Empowerment and Entrepreneurship feeds into the centre (RIVETA) and it is expected that the centre (RIVETA) influences all the four arms in terms of informing them with the trends in new technology and training, policy implications (Macro and Micro), and



producing graduates with critical and problem-solving skills. It borrows from the earlier work of Allais (2019), McGrath et. al (2020), McGrath and Powell (2014), Powell and McGrath (2019), Walker and Fongwa (2017) and many others who have written about TVET as indicated in chapter 2. The framework has four arms: i) Community and rural TVET, ii) Innovation, empowerment, and entrepreneurship, iii) Business and rural VET and iv) policy system. All four arms contribute to RIVETA (see Figure 6).

The community and rural TVET arm is largely influenced by what McGrath et. al (2020) term the CCA-VET (see Page 78). At the centre of the CCA-VET are eight key elements that they consider particularly important for richer theorisation of TVET: TVET students' experiences of multidimensional poverty, a gendered perspective, interaction with the political economy of skills account, a broad conceptualisation of work, a focus on flourishing, the centrality of aspirations, a multiplicity of decision points in vocational learning pathways and an evaluative dimension. What is novel about their approach is that it places young people's voices at its centre and their backgrounds and future aspirations, particularly work (McGrath et al. 2020). The student voices on capabilities that matter in terms of life, work and society ought to be captured. The community and rural arm ought to articulate these capabilities.

As previously stated, the CCA-VET approach places young people's voices at its centre and seeks to listen carefully to their stories of where they have come from before TVET, often including accounts of marginalisation and disempowerment; their hopes for and experiences of TVET; and their aspirations for their future lives (McGrath et. al, 2020). Literature shows that curriculum knowledge is not the starting point for curriculum planning and construction but the vehicle through which capabilities can be developed (Manyonga and Ngubane, 2019). From this perspective, the first stage for rural integrated TVET education system is identifying the capabilities needed for work, life and society and from there the knowledge (form various programmes/courses) that would foster capabilities. The capabilities can be obtained from the students. Selecting capabilities in education means looking at what beings and doings are crucial to individual students, collectively and at societal level, thus providing a foundation to enhance other beings and doings that can contribute to a more just society. Sen (2009) suggests that people could hold democratic deliberation in meetings where information, knowledge and diverse perspectives could be debated. The process could involve students, lecturers (for professional input) and all other relevant stakeholders to

capture important capabilities that can be included in the curriculum and thus the rural vocational education system.

In this context, the assumption is that lecturers or the college ought to educate and train students to be able to pursue work. The students must have the skills, access to employment which has to be meaningful in order to be conducive for human development. The capabilities approach also highlights that work opportunities should be sensitive to people's individual circumstances. Capabilities pay attention to what people are able to do and to be. For rural students we can imagine that the opportunity for work must be sensitive to accommodating needs of rural students. Above all, the students ought to have the capability to look for work. According to Nussbaum, in work, a person has to be 'able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers. The capabilities of practical reason and affiliation come into play here. The capability of practical reason, namely 'being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life', and the capability of affiliation, namely being able 'to engage in various forms of social interaction', and 'having the social bases for self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. If we think about capabilities for life, students ought to engage with in debates about the political economy. That requires for example the capability to critically think and reflect on issues that can affect wellbeing. In terms of capabilities for society, we can think of the empathy capability. The question is, do the students have the capability to understand others?

Given the above, the lecturers ought to engage meaningfully with stakeholders such as students (who can identify their aspirations), captains of industry, curriculum experts, community leaders and other relevant stakeholders as they design the curriculum. Once the valued capabilities are captured as a working guide, the second step will focus on knowledge organisation to achieve capabilities. Whilst lecturers bring in the technical expertise, the knowledge selection must be aligned with the (indicative) capabilities that the students have reason to value in order to achieve valued functionings. This makes the organisation of curriculum knowledge a pedagogical challenge, where the curriculum developers select knowledge with reference to its role in developing capabilities (Manyonga and Ngubane, 2019). In the end, rural TVETCs must produce graduates who can compete on job markets

and become entrepreneurs and citizens who can be positive agents of society. The core of the notion of capability is that individuals can identify their “valued beings and doings” through reasoning, which in turn is facilitated by education. Education, thus, primarily is about human flourishing, not human capital development only.

The innovation, empowerment and entrepreneurship arm focus on empowering students to build skills and opportunities through innovation and empowerment drills such as innovation workshops, mentorship, incubation, etc. Practicality, and a progressive mindset are at the core of innovative learning. This requires students to attend workshops that focus on guiding them toward a higher level of thinking and innovation that is needed to accelerate change. The incubation hub could help students to start business ventures. Rural TVETCs should empower rural graduates with the skills and resources they need to become twenty-first century employees, entrepreneurs (employers) and to be able to identify challenges in their own communities and design solutions for them.

The third arm entails building bridges between rural TVETCs and the business or the private sector ecosystem. The big question is what the relevant rural skills would be, for rural people to service a rural economy. This is a broad question which deals with policies for rural development or rural economy as conceptualised by the central government. Rural development is inherently linked to the national economy and how its growth path is shaped. Creating jobs in a rural economy has been slow. The people living in rural areas have limited access to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. For a shift to take place and a better future to be built for the many people living in these communities, rural development has to take centre stage. Infrastructure in housing, education, health and other related industries which can play a role in boosting productivity in these communities. What is needed is feasible and sustainable infrastructure development, that will allow people in rural areas to stand a chance at accessing quality basic services such as nutrition, healthcare, education, employment and entrepreneurial support.

Agriculture is the primary economic activity in rural areas. As such, agriculture has the potential to create jobs, but it is the intentionality of the government to introduce interventions that support commercial agriculture sectors and regions that have the highest potential for growth and employment. If agriculture becomes the main economic activity for

a rural economy, the next activity is to develop the relevant skills to service that sector. For example, government could start by improving and extending skills development in the agricultural sector including entrepreneurship training. The main focus will be to identify areas with greater economic potential, industries such as agro-processing, tourism, fisheries (in coastal areas) and small enterprise development and develop the market support.

In view of the above, TVET colleges or for example Agriculture colleges should then focus on empowering students with relevant skills for the rural economy. This may require reforming the TVET sector in relation to the main economic activity, for example, the rural and agricultural development and non-agricultural sectors. The skills could include life skills, business and entrepreneurial skills. TVET education institutions are important for such systems, both as developers of high-level skills but also as information hubs. We could also think of SETA and other relevant councils should elicit and coordinate information, research labour market needs, and assist in establishing partnerships among educational institutions and social partners. These partnerships are essential to providing relevant, high-quality training through any TVET system. Business can be incentivised by government to work closely with rural TVETCs, particularly on on-the-job training programmes and mentoring. The internship could be linked to a course of academic study as a formal part of the curriculum. Most job adverts require prospective candidates with experience and study-related work experience, this could give the students a competitive edge on the market. Considering that the students come from poor backgrounds, paid internships would seem more ideal.

As the diagram above shows, the fourth arm is about the policy framework that can guide the TVET system to an extent on how the demand and supply forces could be moderated for the rural graduates. It is in promoting and supporting this TVET component. It is equally important to train on how to implement apprenticeships (for students, teachers, and administrators of both TVET institutions and hosting business enterprises) as an important component in this process. All these suggestions have implications on the funding model of the TVET system and is worth it to re-examine the current funding model where government provides full subsidy of TVET within the national education system.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the TVET education system faces several challenges. Issues of funding, infrastructure, competent lecturers are some of the challenges that are being faced in TVETCs in South Africa. With regard to the RIVETA, government ought to develop and implement a robust policy and legal framework to foster the TVET system at macro<sup>25</sup> and micro level<sup>26</sup>, the business sector and innovation hubs ought to take responsibility for skills development to build leadership and innovation, for the community at large and the education sector ought to nurture global citizens. The researcher submits that the South African environment needs more entrepreneurs and leaders whose imaginations look beyond employability and human development skills.

## **Conclusion**

As previously discussed, the South African TET policy (HCT) is based on neoliberal assumptions, and while employability skills are important for economic development, human development skills are equally essential as they produce responsible and politically active citizens.

The capabilities that emerged from the student and lecturer findings are employment opportunities, entrepreneurship skills, self-esteem and confidence, recognition and respect, affiliation, social responsibility, and resilience. Political participation capability is essential, contributing to students' equality, and creating enabling conditions under which students can participate fairly in the economy. Promoting political participation and social capabilities through the TVET system will help in designing rural TVETCs that can produce well-rounded graduates.

The above theorisation has identified the capabilities significant for TVET in a rural context in South Africa. Although all capabilities valued by students are important, being able to establish and maintain businesses, having access to employment, and affiliation, were seen as the most significant for lifelong knowledge and skill, sustainable livelihoods, and the wellbeing of graduates from rural TVET in South Africa.

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<sup>25</sup> Government develops and implement policy that fosters integrated education.

<sup>26</sup> At classroom level, lecturers (subject/discipline experts) ought to develop curricula that meet the aspirations of students.

The expansive rural TVET approach also brings the fore recognition and respect capability, and political participation, both of which are not well-pronounced in the South African literature on rural TVET. The political participation capability, however, is essential for the disruption of inequality in society, considering the inequalities in the country, and the marginalisation of rural TVET graduates. Furthermore, the expansive rural TVET approach has helped the researcher to assess the conditions conducive for the realisation of the capabilities valued by rural TVET graduates. It has been argued that, through promoting the combined capabilities of rural TVET, rural graduates can have lifelong skills, realise their aspirational goals, and have their wellbeing enhanced through living sustainable lives.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by rural TVET students contribute to economic development, and to a broader human development agenda. The TVET system in South Africa ought to contribute to the attainment of the National Sustainable Development Goals of providing skills to the country's industries, for both economic and personal growth. It is the researcher's belief that the TVET system ought to serve to reduce unemployment, especially that of the youth, who are marginalised in the economy. In particular, the TVET system ought to contribute to the reduction of inequality through promoting the participation of the rural youth, who are further marginalised partly by their geographical location and the political economy that places them at the periphery in development. While this points to a neoliberal assumption through foregrounding the HCT, this approach is based on a flawed understanding of the purpose of TVET in assuming that developing human capital will translate into economic development, reduction of unemployment, and hence redress inequality (McGrath, 2012). This study, therefore, sought to broaden the understanding of TVET beyond instrumental gains by focusing on human development, through recognising the wellbeing of TVET graduates, and the need for social development and political participation. Recognising the problem of increasing unemployment and the shrinking economy, the study views human development and having innovative entrepreneurship ideas as core to addressing joblessness among the rural youth, suggesting that TVETCs ought to equip its graduates with innovative skills to start their own businesses.

In examining the kind of skills that TVETCs ought to equip rural students with, the study began by evaluating the relevant literature in Chapter 2. Specifically, the researcher discussed the purpose of TVETCs and reviewed debates about the strengths and weaknesses of rural TVETCs, debates on skills supply and demand in South Africa, the dominant approach to TVET, and the current level of rural TVET research, both globally and in South Africa.

Chapter 3 presented the CA, explained the reasons for its adoption and how it could be helpful in informing TVET in rural South Africa. South Africa's persistent youth unemployment, inequality and poverty crises, especially in rural areas, call for the need to rethink the purposes and policies of TVET in South Africa. Accordingly, in this thesis, the

researcher argues for the need to rethink the purpose of rural TVETCs, by considering an alternative, human-centred, and holistic development approach, namely CA.

The CA provides a more expansive view of the role that rural TVETCs ought to play in contributing to students' wellbeing, their societies, and the economy. The expansive conceptual framework brings the core concerns of economic growth as well as human development into perspective, with the understanding of the kind of knowledge and skills that rural TVETCs ought to equip students within South Africa. The need to focus beyond skills for employment has become even more relevant in the context of higher education expansion.

Chapter 3 suggested CA as a framework upon which this research is based. While it broadens the focus to what kind of skills TVETCs ought to equip rural students with, the CA is deemed appropriate for the opportunities individual students in a rural context ought to have and the subsequent conversion factors that affect the attainment of these opportunities. Through a focus on conversion factors, the CA enables the researcher to explore in-depth historical and structural arrangements in the country. Thus, what strengthens the CA lens to rural TVET education is its sensitivity to the country's history of apartheid, the political and economic arrangements, and the need to develop conducive environments for entrepreneurship (DeJaeghere, 2018).

Chapter 4 described the qualitative research methodology that was adopted in this study. In addition, the chapter described the context in which the TVETCs are located, and justified the choice of Esayidi College as a case study. Further, the researcher outlined and justified the qualitative research methodology, the use of semi-structured interviews and the sampling procedures adopted in this study. The epistemological relationship between the CA and the qualitative methodology employed in this study received elaboration.

Chapter 5 presented the Phase 1 student findings obtained in 2017. The purpose of Phase 1 was to set the scene for the study, including a description of students' dreams and aspirations upon completing their studies at the College.



Chapter 6 presented the lecturers findings that were (Phase 2) obtained during 2018. The aim of interviewing lecturers was to understand their perspectives of rural TVET as well as their perspectives on Esayidi College.

Chapter 7 presented Phase 3 student findings that were collected during 2018 and 2019. The purpose of the Phase 3 interviews was to determine whether students had acquired knowledge and skills from the College and to assess how far students had come in acquiring their dreams and fulfilling their aspirations they had articulated in Phase 1.

In Chapter 8, the key research findings were discussed in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework on which the research was based. Chapter 8 proceeds by revisiting the research questions and explaining how each was addressed. This chapter aimed to theorise empirical findings using the CA, and to develop a possible framework for approaching TVET in a rural context, i.e. RIVETA. The RIVETA model was discussed in the chapter and the researcher emphasised that it could improve understanding of the kind of skills rural TVET graduates ought to possess.

Having provided a summary of this study, this is followed by a presentation of the contribution and limitations of the study before a discussion on the implications that the findings have for policy. The final section shares the researchers' final word on the research.

### **Contribution of the study**

As stated on Page 233 (under the heading Towards Rural Integrated Vocational Education and Training Approach), a major contribution of this study is the exploration of the rural TVET in South Africa using the Human Development Approach. This is specifically through the use of CA (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017), which has allowed the researcher to identify the capabilities and the functionings valued by students and consequently the conversion factors affecting rural students' ability to have flourishing lives.

The thesis offers an alternative to the neoliberal approaches, such as the HCT, that brings to the fore the training of graduates for economic growth. The HCT fails to account for the increasing unemployment, poverty, and inequality in the country (Akoojee, 2005). Social challenges continue to bedevil the country, as illustrated by the recent protests and looting in 2021 in KZN, where the present study was conducted. As an alternative, the CA has

provided a more expansive view of what the TVETCs ought to provide to students (Walker & Fongwa, 2017).

Another contribution of this thesis is its focus on rural TVET. Previous studies such as Powell (2014), and Matenda (2018) have investigated experiences of students in TVET, mostly in urban and peri-urban areas. However, this study introduces student voices from a rural VETC. These students are marginalised through geographical location, lack of employment opportunity, poor infrastructure, and are deprived in their schooling. The findings from this study have illustrated that most students from a rural TVETC perceived themselves as worse-off than those from urban and peri-urban areas. This suggests that they might not necessarily value the same capabilities and functionings as those from VETCs located in urban and peri-urban areas. For example, this thesis has revealed the resilience and affiliation capabilities that TVETCs may be able to foster, specifically for rural students. It could also be argued that the students have learnt not to value that which they know they cannot have. Findings from this study therefore have implications for specific policies that need to be developed in order to improve rural TVETCs so as to contribute to the development of KZN and other rural areas in the country. The strategies employed to stimulate rural development have been largely unsuccessful in improving the quality of lives of the people in rural South Africa (Neves, 2017), hence the adoption of the Human Development approach and the CA.

The most important contribution and what is novel about this thesis is the notion of conceptualising rural TVET from an expanded perspective, using the CA. RIVETA implies that rural TVET graduates ought to be equipped with entrepreneurship, and leadership skills and knowledge that crosses boundaries to good citizenship, as described earlier in Chapter 8. In that regard, Government ought to develop and implement a robust policy and legal framework to foster RIVETA at macro- and micro-levels, the business sector, and innovation hubs ought to take responsibility for skills development to build resilience and innovation, and the education sector ought to nurture global citizens. The researcher submits that the South African environment, particularly its rural TVET colleges, need to produce more entrepreneurs and leaders whose imaginations look beyond employability skills to having human development an entrepreneurship skills.

This thesis also makes some contributions in relation to theory, policy, and practicality. As discussed, TVETCs play a critical role in the development of South Africa. TVETCs are important in addressing challenges pertaining to skills shortages, unemployment, and poverty. However, as McGrath et al. (2019) argue, the South African TVET policy is flawed and is based on an outdated version of development, which places emphasis on neoliberal assumptions, rather than on human development. This research explores the TVET system in a rural setting beyond productivity and considers the CA. Accordingly, the inclusion of the CA further contributes to the existing body of literature relating to TVETCs and especially to rural TVETCs. This study provides a broader view on the role rural TVETCs could play in contributing to student wellbeing, their society, and the economy within rural settings.

This research is the product of one of the few studies that have explored what students and lecturers from rural TVETCs value. In addition, Chapter 8 identifies a list of capabilities, or skills, that are significant for a rural South African TVET context. The analysis reveals that students not only valued employability skills, but also human development skills including entrepreneurship skills, self-esteem and confidence, recognition and respect, affiliation, and social responsibility. There is, therefore, a need for rural TVETCs to look beyond employability and economic growth, and instead look to a system that integrates the CA.

What emerged as novel is the need for TVETCs to promote students' resilience capability. This considering that these capabilities are helpful to students not only in dealing with the challenges they face on campus, but in pursuing their aspirational goals. Resilience emerged as a central quality for students to secure internships, find jobs in a highly competitive environment, and to start their own businesses. Due to the instability in the economic environment in the country, it is essential for rural graduates to become resilient so as to maintain and grow their entrepreneurship skills. Furthermore, social responsibility capability emerged as one of the significant capabilities, associated with Powell's (2014) active citizenship, and is instrumental in creating conditions that will contribute to a conducive environment for the other capabilities to be achieved. Promoting this capability helps rural TVET students and graduates to influence policy and participate in decisions on matters that affect their wellbeing.

## **Policy implications and recommendations**

In this study, the researcher has shown the need for a more expansive approach to understanding rural TVET in South Africa. Hence, the notion of conceptualising rural TVET from a perspective that brings together aspects concerning employment, entrepreneurship, social development, business, and political participation was adopted. Consequently, recommendations for policymakers and practitioners in rural TVETCs are listed below:

- Incorporating social skills into the curriculum. Superimposing the development of social skills on the various programmes could assist in producing well-rounded graduates who are socially responsible and can contribute effectively to the development of their communities.
- Encouraging rural graduates to participate in community development programmes.
- Fostering participation skills into the curriculum. Besides teaching the importance of social responsibility, students can be encouraged to engage in public debates on campuses and in their communities. For instance, student activism could help foster the capability of social responsibility to challenge institutions and improve their lives, as well as that of others.
- Promoting students to establish relationships and connections with peers and people from industries, employers, and communities. This could be coupled with establishing a formal link between various industries and colleges in order to help students access internships, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Enhancing entrepreneurship skills. The curriculum can be strengthened by giving students not only knowledge about markets and finances, but the practical experience of entrepreneurship. Partnering students with established entrepreneurs could give students first-hand experience on how to start and grow a business.
- Building self-esteem and confidence among students. This can assist students to believe in themselves during their studies, find jobs, start their own businesses, help others in communities, and influence decisions on things that matter to them. This can be accomplished through using more interactive teaching methods, such as presentations and group work.
- Equipping students with resilience skills throughout their studies in preparation for the world of work. TVETCs can learn from the experiences of former graduates who

have been successful within a rural context in navigating their studies, securing employment and building businesses. This information can be shared with students while they are at the college.

- Improving funding for TVETCs. This includes allocating adequate financial resources to the rural colleges to improve their infrastructure, attracting more qualified teachers, and reducing staff attrition. Despite the adoption of the Free Higher Education policy, students still face financial challenges, as demonstrated by protests at almost all higher education institutions throughout 2015 and 2016, and intermittently since. Improving student funding prevents students from losing focus on their studies and dropping out.
- Improving college teaching practices. This is particularly important for the quality of graduates that the TVETCs produce. Colleges could employ more practical sessions and experiential learning, and facilitate internships. This can assist in addressing the negative perception of the quality of graduates produced by rural TVETCs and improve their chances of getting employed.
- Lobbying for macro- and micro-policy to give preference to rural graduates in entrepreneurship programmes, i.e., funding, training, and links to the job market. This can help to reduce their marginalisation based on their rural location.
- Raising entrepreneurship aspiration in communities, where rural students come from. This can be done through the rural college engaging with community leaders as a way of promoting entrepreneurship. This can help to build a rural community of small businesses, where entrepreneurs can learn from and support one another.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study has a few limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the qualitative nature of this study means that the findings from the case study cannot be generalised to other TVETCs in South Africa or elsewhere. In addition, students and lecturers' views cannot be generalised to represent the voices of all students and lecturers from all TVETCs in all rural areas. Thus, different findings may emerge from future studies that consider other rural TVET institutions, programmes, and a sample mix. However, it should be noted that the aim of this research was not to provide generalisation, but rather, to gain an in-depth understanding of student experiences in a rural TVETC, which in turn enabled the evaluation

of the role of TVETCs in facilitating both economic and social development. The findings provide useful information to policymakers and practitioners when thinking about the repurposing of the rural TVET system in other contexts.

Secondly, although an equal gender sample emerged, gender inequality in terms of accessing jobs was not explicitly stated by female students. As discussed in Chapter 8, gender inequality did not emerge from the current study and this could be related to the weakness of CA as a research instrument, potentially requiring a complimentary theory in order to fully understand gender inequality. Further research is required to explore the aspect of gender inequality and to understand the extent to which this constrains students' capabilities to access employment and in explaining other capabilities.

The third limitation was that the sample size of 21 students in Phase 1 was reduced to 13 in Phase 2. As discussed, although generalisation was not the aim of this study, it would have been beneficial to explore the journey of all 21 students so as to further enhance the findings. Nevertheless, the small sample size in Phase 2 offered helpful information to track the evolution of students' perceptions of what they respectively valued, and achieved.

### **Areas for further study**

This research did not explore the views of employers within the area around the college and what they thought about the skills acquired by rural TVET graduates in terms of the three capabilities dimensions, namely the economic perspective, personal growth, and social development. This is a potentially interesting area from which to understand how employers view rural TVET graduates, and which skills they expect from them.

Another area for further study is the conditions necessary for entrepreneurship to develop in rural settings. Being in a rural context, it could be interesting to understand the specific conditions in the community around a college that can enable the growth and sustainability of the area's existing businesses and community members.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to understand community perceptions of a rural TVETC. This could be undertaken specifically through investigating the views of community members regarding the role of rural TVET graduates in promoting social development in the

community. This is an important area of focus, considering the life-long social and political skills that TVETCs ought to aspire to inculcate in their students.

### **Researchers` final Word**

The researcher argued for RIVETA in the repurposing of TVETCs in South Africa. Clearly, the findings show that the current HCT approach adopted by the rural TVET system in South Africa is ineffective in addressing the employment and social needs of rural graduates and the inequality and high levels of poverty.

The data obtained from the rural students show that students valued other aspects besides employment, including skills that can be categorised as personal growth, entrepreneurship, as well as social skills. Although CA is helpful in exploring the human development of graduates, data from students and lecturers reveal that CA on its own does not adequately address the power, historical, and structural inequalities that are embedded in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, findings in this study illuminate that the RIVETA could assist in identifying the kind of skills required for an effective rural TVET system, which students ought to be equipped with in order to facilitate and expand their livelihoods and wellbeing in line with their aspirational goals.

The RIVETA goes further to identify the most important capabilities and the conditions necessary to meet these capabilities in order to ensure sustainable lives of rural TVET graduates. The study has highlighted how the capabilities can be expanded for rural and marginalised students in order for them to acquire skills that last a lifetime.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A:

### Permission to do research from The University of Nottingham



**School Of Education**  
The Dearing Building  
Jubilee Campus  
Wollaton Road  
Nottingham  
NG8 1BB  
Tel: +44 (0)115 951 4543  
Fax: +44 (0)115 846 6600  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/education](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education)

Our Ref: 2016/44/BDL

Dear Yoliswa Mancotywa

Thank you for your research ethics application for your project:

#### **Rethinking the Role of TVETs in South Africa**

Our Ethics Committee has looked at your submission and has the following comments.

- We wish you well with your research.

However, before your research can be fully approved, the Committee requests the following amendments are made:

- Questions 2a and 2b cannot both have a 'No' answer. One must have either a 'Yes' or 'N/A' answer. Which one is it?
- Questions 3a and 3b cannot both have a 'No' answer'. One must have a 'Yes' or 'N/A' answer. Which one is it?
- The contact details of the researcher and the supervisor should be added to the information sheet (Focus Groups).

**Confirmation that these minor changes were made and received by Ethics Administrator  
19/01/2017**

Based on the above, your research is now:

- **Approved**

Good luck with your research.



Dr Kay Fuller  
Chair of School of Education Ethics Committee

## Appendix B:

### Permission to do research from Esayidi TVET College.



Ms. Yoliswa Mancotywa  
PhD Student  
School of Education  
University of Nottingham

Central Office  
P.O. Box 2364  
Port Shepstone  
4240  
Tel: (0339) 684 0110  
Fax: (0339) 684 0280  
Email: [rector@esayidifet.co.za](mailto:rector@esayidifet.co.za)



25 March 2017

Dear Mrs. Mancotywa,

**LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ESAYIDI COLLEGE  
UMZUMKULU CAMPUS**

This letter serves as authorization for Mrs. Yoliswa Mancotywa to conduct her research project entitled "REPURPOSING RURAL TVETS IN SOUTH AFRICA" at our Umzimkulu Campus.

Upon a comprehensive review of her proposal and other ethics documents, we are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct the same study in our college. All interviews, observations around the site and the distribution of questionnaires have been approved and will be duly supervised by the College.

If there are any concerns or additional information required, please do hesitate to contact me or the College administrator. We look forward to having her on our campus and wish you the best of luck with her ongoing studies.

Yours faithfully,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sipho J. Nzimande'.

Sipho J. Nzimande (Ph.D)  
Esayidi College Principal



## Appendix C:

### Student Information Sheet

#### Postgraduate Research Study: Repurposing Rural VET In South Africa

**Researcher: Yoliswa Mancotywa**

You are invited to participate in this research as a student of this College. It is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. Please communicate with the researcher if you have any clarity-seeking questions.

Kindly take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with members of staff from your college if you so wish. You can contact the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**Aim:** This study focuses on repurposing rural VET in South Africa. According to the National Development Agenda, VET colleges are supposed to address SA's skill shortage situation, which should, in turn, increase access to jobs and subsequently reduce poverty. Given the above background, the primary research question of this study is to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by rural VET graduates contribute to their wellbeing, their societies, and the broader economy of South Africa. This study specifically focuses on a rural VET colleges based in KZN.

**Requirements:** Face-to-face interviews with students will be carried out in April 2018. Semi-structured interview questions will be used and the interview will take approximately 60 minutes. This is an opportunity for you to express your views on the role rural VET colleges play in addressing South Africa's skills shortage, unemployment crisis and poverty.

The interview will be conducted in English and later transcribed into a text form.

**Anonymity/Participation:** As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified from what you said. All of the research data will be stored in a secure place in a password-protected file, separate from any personal data supplied.

Kindly note that:

- You can decide to leave the interview at any point
- You need not answer questions that you do not wish to
- Your name will be removed from the information and anonymised.

It should not be possible to identify anyone from my reports on this study.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw during the interview or any time and without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study, all data related to you will be withdrawn and destroyed.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by the researcher upon application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and journals. The data will be kept securely for ten years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact the University of Nottingham using the details below for further advice and information:

Student's Name: Yoliswa Mancotywa

Supervisor's Name: Professor Simon McGrath

**Contact for further information**

University of Nottingham

Email: [educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

Phone: +44(0)1159515761

- The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator, should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds, are:

[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix D:

### Lecturer Information Sheet

**Postgraduate Research Study: Repurposing Rural VET In South Africa**

**Researcher: Yoliswa Mancotywa**

### Information Sheet for Lecturers

You are invited to participate in this research as a lecturer of this College. It is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully before you participate. Please communicate with the researcher if you have clarity-seeking questions.

Kindly take time to read the following information carefully. You can contact the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**Aim:** This study focuses on repurposing rural VET in South Africa. According to the National Development Agenda, VET colleges are supposed to address SA's skill shortage situation, which in turn should increase access to jobs and subsequently reduce poverty. Given the above background, the primary research question of this study is to examine how knowledge and skills acquired by rural VET graduates contribute to their wellbeing, their societies, and the broader economy of South Africa. This study specifically focuses on a rural VET based in KZN.

**Requirements:** Face to face interview with lecturers will be carried out in April 2018. Semi-structured interview questions will be used and the interview will take approximately 60 minutes. This is an opportunity for you to express your views on the role VET colleges play in addressing South Africa's skills shortage, unemployment crisis and poverty.

The interview will be conducted in English and later transcribed into a text form.

**Anonymity/Participation:** As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised, so that you cannot be identified from what

you contribute. All of the research data will be stored in a secure place in a separate, password-protected file.

Please note that:

- You can decide to leave the interview at any point
- You need not answer questions that you do not wish to

## Appendix E:

### Student Consent Form

**Project Title - Repurposing Rural VET in South Africa**

**Researcher - Yoliswa Mancotywa**

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet. The nature and purpose of the research project have been explained to me and I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I also understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I also understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I also understand that electronic data only will be stored in a password-protected computer that only the researcher has access to.
- Lastly, I also understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to lodge a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

**Signed** ..... (research participant)

**Print name** ..... **Date** .....

### Contact details

Researcher: Yoliswa Mancotywa

University of Nottingham

Email: [yoliswamancotywa@gmail.com](mailto:yoliswamancotywa@gmail.com)

Supervisors' Name: Professor Simon McGrath

Email: [Simon.McGrath@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Simon.McGrath@nottingham.ac.uk)

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator, should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds, are: [educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix F:

### Lecturer Consent Form

**Project Title - Repurposing Rural VET in South Africa**

**Researcher - Yoliswa Mancotywa**

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project have been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I also understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I also understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I also understand that electronic data only will be stored in a password-protected computer that only the researcher has access to.
- Lastly, I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to lodge a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

**Signed** ..... (research participant)

**Print name** ..... **Date** .....

### Contact details

Researcher: Yoliswa Mancotywa

University of Nottingham

Email: [yoliswamancotywa@gmail.com](mailto:yoliswamancotywa@gmail.com)

Supervisors' Name: Professor Simon McGrath

Email: [Simon.McGrath@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Simon.McGrath@nottingham.ac.uk)

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator, should participants wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds, are: [educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix G:

### Phase 1 Student Questionnaire

Theme	Guiding Questions
<b>Demographic Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pseudonym:</li> <li>• Gender:</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• What is your age?</li> <li>• What is your first language? English Afrikaans Zulu Xhosa Sotho Other - Please specify:</li> <li>• What is your race?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black</li> <li>• White</li> <li>• Indian</li> <li>• Coloured</li> <li>• Other - Please Specify</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Background/Family Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many siblings do you have? And, what are their ages? Brother(s): Sister(s):</li> <li>• How many of your siblings are at or have been to a 1) VET 2) university? 1. <input type="checkbox"/>  2. <input type="checkbox"/>  Other. <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• How many of your siblings are planning to go to a 1) VET 2) University? 1. <input type="checkbox"/>  2. <input type="checkbox"/>  Other. <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• What are your parents' highest educational qualifications? Father: Mother: Guardian:</li> </ul>



<p><b>Learner Programme/ Study Choices/ Information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you get any career guidance from high school?     Yes:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <span style="margin-left: 200px;">No:</span></li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you did, who conducted it?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which grade did you pass to gain entry into College?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>Grade 8</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>Grade 12</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>Other</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Can you tell me more about how and why you chose to enrol at VET instead of university?</li> <li>• What programme are you enrolled for and why did you choose this programme?</li> <li>• Was this programme your first choice? If not, why are you enrolled for this programme?</li> <li>• What would you like to get from this programme?</li> <li>• What was your dream job growing up? If you are not studying towards that qualification, why did you change your dream?</li> <li>• Are you happy with your choice of pursuing this of programme, now that you are in your final year?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learner Aspirations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you hope to gain from this College for yourself, your family and your community (i.e. what do you hope to “get out of”/achieve from your qualification)?</li> <li>• What have you learnt socially from the College? Do you still perceive life the same way you did when you first started college?</li> <li>• Have you identified a company or workplace where you can use your skills in your area?</li> <li>• Have you identified a company or workplace where you can use your skills in your area?</li> <li>• Please describe your life outside the College (e.g. do you work part-time; pursue any hobby; etc.)?</li> <li>• Do you have any future plans or aspirations based on your programme?</li> <li>• What do you think rural VET colleges must offer and why?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learner Funding/Sponsorship</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is sponsoring your education?           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>Mother</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>Father</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>NSFAS</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li style="text-align: right;"><b>Other</b>       <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who is the breadwinner at home?</li> </ul>

## Appendix H:

### Phase 2 Lecturer Questionnaire

Theme	Guiding Questions
<b>Biographical information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me more about yourself.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Age</li> <li>-Schooling</li> <li>-Highest qualification, from where obtained?</li> <li>-Number of years teaching in that department/ course.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How did you choose to study this course? Why did you choose to teach this course?</li> <li>• Do you think VET is valuable? Why?</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment of students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you please describe the typical student that you recruit in this department?</li> <li>• What are the minimum entry grades?</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the funding mechanism of your students look like and work?</li> <li>• What funding suggestions would you like the College to consider and implement, and why?</li> </ul>
<b>Aims of education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have been the influences on the design of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The education?</li> <li>○ Curriculum in your department?</li> <li>○ The subject that you teach?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Does this course contribute to the betterment of the society this college is supposed to serve?</li> </ul>
<b>What valued skills/capabilities are being developed through VET education?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In line with your education/curriculum conceptualisation, what type of graduate do you aim to produce?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are you producing them? How do you know?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What skills do they acquire as a result of studying this course? List them.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Human development skills/Intrinsic</li> <li>○ HCT-Employability skills/Instrumental</li> <li>○ Entrepreneurial skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How have these skills been developed? (Probe each of the above-mentioned skills)?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do students do practical sessions?                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Probe internship process-where, how long, what do they learn, get practical examples.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ What is the college's and hence the department's relationship with industry/parastatals and government departments?</li> <li>○ How satisfied are you with the skills of your students/ graduates?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In your opinion, do you think students have equal opportunities to succeed in the job market? Rural versus urban and VET graduates. If not, why?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from the technical and academic benefits, what other opportunities do learners acquire about life issues and dealing with social challenges?</li> <li>• How has VET education enhanced their role as citizens in society?</li> </ul>

<p><b>The transformative role of VET education.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the things that students acquire from studying this course are the notions of acting independently and being able to make their own free choices. In your own opinion, do you think studying for this course cultivated this in your students? How was this developed? Can you give an example when your students acted independently and were able to make their own free choices?</li> </ul>
<p><b>What needs to change in VET education?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think rural VET colleges must offer and why?</li> <li>• What general changes would you want at this college to make learning experiences better? / What can lecturers do to make a difference to the education/curriculum in your department?</li> <li>• Can you describe your role model (lecturer) in the college and why?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What advice would you offer to students who are planning to enrol for the course that you teach in future?</li> <li>• Is there anything about this course that we have not covered that you would like to discuss?</li> </ul>

## Appendix I:

### Phase 3 Students Questionnaire

Theme	
<b>Biographical information</b>	Tell me more about yourself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Age</li> <li>-Schooling</li> <li>-Grades attained (Matric points)</li> <li>-Family structure, marital status</li> <li>-Children/siblings</li> <li>-Highest education for parents</li> <li>-Siblings information; Anyone done post-schooling?</li> <li>-Home language</li> <li>-Ethnic background</li> </ul>
<b>Choice of VET and course</b>	Why did you enrol at this VET? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the decision influenced by parents/guardian, access, proximity, excellence in teaching, curriculum, graduate outcomes? And, what does this entail?</li> <li>• What programme are you enrolled for and why did you choose this programme?</li> <li>• What value do you place on education?</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you fund your studies and cater for your living expenses?</li> <li>• What challenges do you face in this regard?</li> </ul>
<b>Learner aspiration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you receive career guidance before enrolling for this course?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What did it entail and how was it done? By who?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What was your dream job growing up? If you are not studying towards that qualification, why did you change your dream?</li> <li>• What has VET education enabled you to achieve or made you hope to achieve?</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences in the VET education</b>	Learning experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me more about your learning experiences studying this course.</li> <li>• What is it that you like about the curriculum of the course?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Theory</li> <li>○ Practical</li> <li>○ Teaching methods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What is it that you dislike about the curriculum? Why?</li> <li>• Did the course meet your expectations and the important things that you value?</li> <li>• What did you become as a result of studying this course?</li> </ul>

<p><b>What valued skills/capabilities are being developed through VET education?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What skills have you acquired as a result of studying this course? List them.</li> <li>• What are the benefits of the course/skills that you chose? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Human development skills/Intrinsic</li> <li>○ HCT-Employability/Instrumental skills</li> <li>○ Entrepreneurial skills</li> <li>○ <i>Probe perceived and actual</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• How have the skills been developed (<i>Probe each skill</i>)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do you do practical sessions?</li> <li>○ Probe internship process-where, how long, what did you learn, get practical examples.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What are the skills you wish you had learned and why?</li> <li>• Have you identified a company or workplace where you can use your skills in your area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you intend to do after completing your course? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you foresee any challenges? What are the perceived challenges?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>The transformative role of VET education.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from the technical and academic benefits, what other opportunities to learn about life issues and dealing with social challenges have you gained? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explain to me the opportunities for social improvement that you have gained through VET education.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How has VET education enhanced your role as a citizen in society?</li> <li>• Did studying Electrical Engineering make you see society differently/critical of society/ critical of knowledge? How have you experienced this?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the things that students acquire from studying Electrical Engineering are the notions of acting independently and being able to make their own free choices. In your own opinion, do you think studying Electrical Engineering cultivated this in you? How was this developed? Can you give an example when you acted independently, and you were able to make your own free choices?</li> <li>• Do you still perceive life the same way you did when you first started college?</li> </ul>
<p><b>What needs to change in VET education?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What general changes would you want to make at this college for learning experiences to be better?</li> <li>• What do you think rural VET colleges must offer and why?</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What advice would you offer to students who are planning to enrol for this course in future?</li> <li>• Is there anything about this course that we have not covered that you would like to discuss?</li> </ul>

## Appendix J:

### Students Code Book

Accommodation	Transport and accommodation issues. Challenges.
College resources	Textbooks, computers, college infrastructure
Future plans	What students intended to do in future
Great quotes	Anything intriguing
Hard work	References to how hard people work at college.
Information	Access to information about subject choices at post-school level, course, source of information.
Social changes	Expressions of personal change or not. This is as a result of attending college
Schooling	Location, type of school, orientation to HE, attitude of teachers.
Self determination	Expressions of how one takes control of his/her life.
Social responsibility	Caring for others. Helping people in the community including family members
Suggestions	These are suggestions made by students to improve the college, learning, funding, etc
Skills and knowledge	The changes students experience as a result is attending college
Entrepreneurship skills	Skills related to being innovative, starting own businesses or products.
Family background	Students' family background
Training quality	The perceived value of the VET qualification
Resource issues	Infrastructure, staff size, facilities at the college books, etc.
Technology	Use of technology, computers, etc.

## Appendix K:

### Lecturers Code Book

CODE	DESCRIPTION
Personal information	Academic qualifications, working experience, subject of speciality.
Decision making	Any decision, whoever makes it, about pursuing post-school education about the course, about career, about working hard, about school subjects
Benefits from VET	Any references to positive outcomes from VET.
Student profile	Student background, qualifications, income, etc
Student funding	Source of funding, NSAFS, family, challenges
Information technology	Ability to use computers
College Teaching (Teaching, studying, academic progress, facilities and resources)	Curriculum issues Teaching methods  T: quality of teaching, methods, contact hours and assessment. S: time spent, where, when, relationships with lecturers and students. AP: grades, distinctions, relationship to knowledge being studied. Workshops, labs, computers, buildings.
Education for employment	Purpose of the curriculum
Skills	Skills that students receive
Entrepreneurship skills	Students receiving skills related to innovation and starting their businesses
Social skills	Student skills related to personal development and social responsibility
Practical experience	Practical sessions at the college. In service learning
Suggestions for college	Suggestion on curriculum, teaching methods
Good lecturing practices	Role model, what the lecturer is expected to do
College administrative issues	Centralisation, need for decentralisation
Information	Work related information
Language	Difficulties associated with English speaking and understanding

Employability	Expressions of employment chances in future.
Family	This includes all the information about participants' parents, siblings, levels of education, employment status, and domestic responsibilities.
Future Plans	Any goals, plans for the future, career - To be what? Better future. Personal - Material goods, transformation of self, family, helping others.
Confidence and participation	Having confidence, participating in group work and class
College funding	Any information to do with finances, fees, educational expenses.
College extra curriculum activities	
Gender	Anything about relationships, experiences, and achievements of boys and girls, men and women.
College Teaching (Teaching, studying, academic progress, facilities and resources)	T: quality of teaching, methods, contact hours and assessment. S: time spent, where, when, relationships with lecturers and students. AP: grades, distinctions, relationship to knowledge being studied. Workshops, labs, computers, buildings.
Voice	Occasions where one speaks out, become active, challenge and confront.



