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The Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training

The Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training (JOVACET) recognises the need for critical engagement through studies in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and adult and continuing education and training, and for encouraging critical scrutiny of this expansive knowledge area on the African continent.

The voices and experiences of practitioners, reflecting on all aspects of teaching and learning within vocational education and adult education settings, should be heard through the publication of empirical and robust research. While the journal wishes to take forward academic scholarship, it also seeks to strengthen opportunities for reflective practice that makes a scholarly contribution to the field. New knowledge emerging out of complex developmental contexts has significant value and needs to be showcased beyond existing geographical and political boundaries. The journal is therefore committed to also supporting the development of emerging researchers by providing them with a space to present and defend their research amongst a network of global scholars. Within the field of vocational and continuing education there is substantive 'grey literature' that remains in project report form. The journal is potentially a vehicle for the translation of this important work into an academic contribution to a wider community of practice, thereby enhancing its value.

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EDITORIAL TEAM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We once again acknowledge our reviewers for the insight and developmental critique which they so unstintingly offered. Each journal article is anonymised and subjected to 'blind' peer review by two reviewers and, in this process, it is inevitable that variations of interpretation and evaluation occurred, at times resulting in a third reviewer being consulted. We are grateful for the grace with which reviewers engaged and attempted to resolve any sticking points on such occasions. This has served to enhance the quality of our articles and strengthen our authors going forward.

Thanks to all the authors who made submissions to JOVACET and subjected their work to scrutiny. We trust that you will continue to contribute to this important vehicle for research in vocational, adult and continuing education and training.

Finally, the publication of this third issue of JOVACET was made possible by the Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme (TLDCIP) which is being implemented through a partnership between the Department of Higher Education and Training and the European Union. We are grateful for this support to the third issue of the journal, Volume 2, Issue 2.

We look forward to the ongoing support of our Editorial Committee and Advisory Board members who are advocates for JOVACET in the various spheres of their lives, and thank you all most sincerely.

EDITORIAL

Research in vocational education and workplace training – policy and practice

Prof. Joy Papier
Editor-in-Chief

This third publication of JOVACET follows the Special Issue which emanated from our 2018 conference on adult learning and education. While the Special Issue was focused on papers presented on the theme of the conference, the conference call for papers also yielded additional submissions outside the scope of the Special Issue, which contributed to this subsequent volume. Articles in this issue are situated in the vocational education and workplace training domains and constitute research at the level of practice as well as at the macro-policy level.

Our first article herein, authored by Barabasch, Caldart and Keller, concerns competence development in apprenticeship training, and how innovation in the labour market in Switzerland is impacting on VET (vocational education and training) learning cultures as well as on approaches to learning at, and through, work. The Swiss dual-learning model, in which the major part of apprentice learning takes place in the workplace, is widely admired, and Switzerland is seen as an innovation leader among its peers in Europe. Even so, the constant drive for innovation, new technologies and work processes can be seen to be impacting on workforce development. Vocational learners are requiring new skill sets, for instance less product-specific knowledge and more 'agile' approaches such as 'creativity', 'reflectivity', and 'taking the initiative'. Through a case study of the Swiss telecommunication industry, the authors examine how a new, innovative learning culture is being shaped in order to adapt to new work demands.

Next, Gaffoor and Van der Bijl report on an investigation into factors that influence retention and attrition at a sample technical and vocational education and training (TVET) college in South Africa. The reasons for student dropout at public colleges have not been well documented and only a handful of studies have been conducted to date. The social and

economic cost of young people leaving schools and colleges with incomplete qualifications is potentially crippling, and it is imperative that institutions understand the 'push' or 'pull' factors that are at play. Using the early constructs of Tinto, and later Bean, the authors attempt to provide a more holistic explanation of why students fail to complete their college programmes.

From explanations of early college exit, Groener and Andrews examine the access pathways into higher education offered by TVET colleges through their vocational qualifications in early childhood educator training. Public colleges have for many years offered early childhood development (ECD) programmes for aspirant teachers, and a persistent source of frustration has been the lack of articulation in this field between TVET college and university qualifications. Universities offer initial teacher education in ECD but only very recently has there been an attempt to build pathways into these university qualifications by perusing the nature and content of the programmes offered at colleges. Nonetheless, it is not the lack of articulation which is the main focus of this article, but rather the aspirations of students who enter TVET colleges in order to create a basis for recognition of prior learning (RPL) for access into university by an alternative route. Evidence from Groener and Andrews' case study shows that students in the sample who had the goal of access to university after completing their vocational college programme, demonstrated considerable agency and determination in overcoming structural and institutional barriers in pursuit of their goals.

Moving from learner-centred studies to broader social and policy constructs in TVET, Kraak's article considers the concept of 'intermediation' in the brokering of training compacts, especially in the light of the role that sector education and training authorities (SETAs) are required to play in South Africa. SETAs have a range of mandated functions with regard to employers in their scope of authority, but, with regard to training and development, they have an essential role in, inter alia, fostering links among employers, unions, and training providers. South Africa still has some way to go in developing the kind of relationships between employers and training providers that have seen established vocational systems become successful, and in enabling young graduates in these systems to become sought-after, highly skilled employees. Notwithstanding the slow progress towards the goal of a coherent system in which supply and demand can coexist, the author points to at least two successful examples of intermediation which could serve as a basis for future initiatives. An interesting dimension of the article is the inclusion of key stakeholder perspectives of four senior officials in the skills system, perspectives which suggest that, in the current dispensation, the expectation of intermediation may be a step too far for most SETAs. In this regard, Kraak acknowledges the input he received from the late Adrienne Bird, Director of the Special Projects Unit in the Department of Higher Education and Training, where she was leading the Centres of Specialisation initiative to revitalise the apprenticeship model. Adrienne Bird was a passionate advocate of vocational education and training and had a distinguished career in the South African post-apartheid skills development system. Her untimely passing in 2019, after a long battle with ill health, leaves a void in our still fragile and emergent national training architecture, where her dedication, experience and keen insight will no doubt be

missed.

Needham continues on the policy theme in his article as he interrogates the inability of the public TVET sector to meet human-capital development goals of reduced unemployment and improved economic returns on education investment. He argues that, while privatisation of education is a global phenomenon, in South Africa it is the result of the state's adoption of neo-liberal reforms and a shift in emphasis on education as a public good in favour of narrower interests. The dominant discourses of performance management, efficiency, accountability, and the like have come to characterise education, to the detriment of developmental goals. He critiques privatisation policy approaches, for instance the 'outsourcing' of public education to private providers and the disincentivisation of public colleges to offer occupational programmes which, he argues, led to the creation of multiple private providers to offer this training. When colleges were subsequently encouraged to offer SETA-led occupational programmes, many colleges found themselves ill-equipped to take on this task, he contends. In essence, the article concludes that neither public nor private providers have been well served by the confusing privatisation policy messages, and the two systems of provision have as a result been pitted against each other rather than working collaboratively for more effective skills development delivery.

Finally, in this issue of JOVACET, there is a book review by Martin Mulcahy, a former educator, policy analyst, and education adviser with vast experience of post-school education and training. He reviews the latest Springer handbook edited by McGrath, Mulder, Papier and Suart (2019), which is a mammoth two-volume edition covering nine broad themes and containing a host of scholarly articles within each theme. Mulcahy provides an informative overview of the handbook and its various sections, which will no doubt be a welcome and essential introduction to both volumes for vocational researchers, policymakers, teachers and students. We are indeed pleased that this timeous review could be included in this edition of JOVACET.

The authors of papers in this issue of JOVACET demonstrated patience and diligence throughout the rigorous peer-review process, and undertook with good grace the amendments that needed to be made to their articles. We trust that readers will appreciate their effort.

‘What can I already do well today?’ Competence development in innovative learning cultures

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ABSTRACT

Digitalisation and a rapidly changing labour market introduce new demands on competence and these demands reinforce the renewal of Swiss apprenticeship training in businesses. The telecommunication industry is a representative example of the new challenges that vocational education and training faces. This article highlights some new approaches and pathways to apprenticeships. It shows that not only structural conditions need to be adjusted, but also the learning culture of the community of practice, which includes the shared attitudes, values and beliefs of all the actors involved in vocational education and training. As this article indicates, comprehensive changes in the apprenticeships at the enterprise studied have had a substantial impact on the development of competences such as creativity, reflection, autonomous action and initiative-taking.

KEYWORD

Vocational education and training (VET); career and technical education; workplace learning; apprenticeships; learning culture; innovation; creativity; flexibility; individualisation; lifelong learning; case study; telecommunication industry

Innovative apprenticeships are shaped by innovative learning cultures

Switzerland is often seen as an innovation leader in the world (SWIR, 2015; European Commission, 2017). A strength of its innovation system lies in its apprenticeships and its dual approach to vocational education and training (VET): while some learning is based in vocational schools and training centres, the larger part of the three- to four-year apprenticeship takes place in enterprises. How the young adults, who are called 'learners', are trained and in what kind of learning culture they are enabled to acquire the competences needed in a modern economy, is largely unknown. Socialisation in a learning culture means to learn in an environment shaped by particular attitudes, values and beliefs regarding the education of the next generation of workers. Being innovative means that attitudes, beliefs and values are constantly adjusted to change (Wieland, 2004). In this sense, an innovation culture is an integral part of a learning culture in an enterprise or it can emerge as a result of a particular learning culture.

The drive for innovation has various effects on workforce development. For the workforce in dynamic industries, routine skills become less important, whereas observation skills, process-management skills, and transfer and problem-solving competencies are becoming more important (Pitton, 2004; Dreher, Jenewein, Neustock & Schwenger, 2015; Hackel, Blötz & Reymers, 2015). The rapid diffusion of new technologies and new production processes changes both the daily work and current challenges in these occupations and the corresponding VET and continuing-education programmes (Dreher et al., 2015).

With new markets opening up and digitalisation increasing, careers are no longer linear but have become increasingly marked by different stages and the acquisition of new competences (Heinz, 2009). Experiential knowledge and a focus on a specific vocation may be challenged, but they persist because the concept of professionalism is 'a stable phenomenon and by no means in contradiction to the dynamics of labour market trends' (Rauner & Smith, 2010:4). In most developed countries, it is intermediate-level skills that are mostly in demand, whereas 'the proportion of jobs requiring a university degree and of jobs requiring low kills are, in many cases, static or declining' (Rauner & Smith, 2010:3). There is a concomitant trend towards implementing VET systems in different countries, but the quality of VET and of workplace learning is a concern; as a result, new structural components, such as working with coaches as advisors to apprentices, are being implemented (Onstenk, 2010).

Innovation dynamics, however, has implications for the ways in which workplace learning is organised to meet the needs of both employers and apprentices. Among the competences required are innovation management and creativity, since innovations and changes are often implemented within the duration of a VET programme (Ruiz Ben, 2005; Limacher, 2010; Barabasch, 2018). While product-specific knowledge can become less important and is often not transferable, high levels of perception skill, openness, and the ability to find and understand new information independently become more important. Learners have to take responsibility for their own learning, which requires a great deal of personal engagement and

discipline. Related to these demands on VET, teachers and trainers have to adapt their teaching: for one thing, their role is changing from that of instructor to that of coach; secondly, flexible structures and action-oriented methods are required. Moreover, teachers and trainers have to create room for learning, prepare and present subjects, give feedback, and promote reflexive learning in learners, a process that they moderate and accompany (Weicker, 2007; Modrow & Strecker, 2016).

For most apprentices in Switzerland, learning takes place in a dual arrangement of school-based and work-based learning. Both environments demand and develop different skills and competences but also need to connect in order to support learning that is relevant to practice (Rauner, 2017). Vocational learning in general aims at developing the vocational ability of apprentices or learners through continuing education, and, although the theoretical aspects contribute to vocational ability, practice is essential: vocational ability always has to be trained practically. Rauner (2017) has suggested a model that shows how vocational competences can be developed and measured. He assumes that practical work should be the point of reference to account for the validity of a diagnosis of competence in VET and he conceptualises vocational competences based on practical work. Accordingly, he assumes that all vocational learning should be based on relevant vocational tasks (Rauner, 2017). Vocational competence comprises job-related personal and social competences (Rauner, 2017:44). These competences should lead to the ability to complete vocational tasks in a holistic way. The (holistic) completion of a vocational task requires presentation/form/clarity, functionality, efficiency, sustainability, work and process knowledge, environmental compatibility, social acceptability and creativity. These requirements need to be trained in both VET and continuing education.

The learning of apprentices is always embedded in an enterprise's general learning culture. Therefore, a key issue is how learning processes can be managed. Vocational learning, especially in dual systems where workplace learning is included, can be seen as a modern form of learning or as a model for learning in a constructivist perspective, since it is (or can be) situated in a particular context.

The theory of communities of practice (CoP) can be considered as a lens through which to look at workplace training and current developments. The central elements of CoPs are 'a shared domain of interest, a community of people, and a shared practice' (Lippert, 2013:40). According to Wenger (2001), 'members of a community of practice are practitioners' who 'develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, and ways of addressing recurring problems' (Wenger 2001:2–3). Newcomers in a community of practice – such as apprentices in the workplace – are able to avail themselves of 'legitimate peripheral participation' in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). 'Legitimate' means that they can actually participate in the practice; 'peripheral' signifies that they do not immediately participate fully – that they are not initially 'complete workers' – but that they are gradually proceeding towards full participation. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), it is essential that newcomers are allowed to participate in the 'real' practice of the community, just as apprentices are in the Swiss apprenticeship system.

Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that learning builds identity in a specific community of practice. Instead of the didactical setting that is typical of schools, workplace learners learn through exchanges with their peers and other employees, gradually inheriting ways of talking about the communities of practice. It is critical to appreciate that what is learnt in school is not actually part of real practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991:99); for this reason, these authors strongly advocate that workplace learning take place in real settings, because it enhances motivation:

> In summary, rather than learning by replicating the performances of others or by acquiring knowledge transmitted in instruction, we suggest that learning occurs through centripetal participation in the learning curriculum of the ambient community (Lave & Wenger, 1991:100).

Workplace learning in this sense is an ideal form of learning. Here, apprentices obtain legitimate peripheral access to a community of practice (the workplace) and they gradually become members of that community as they get to know the relevant objects, tools and ways of comportment of the members. In this light, this article on the learning culture in VET focuses on the components of a modern working and learning environment, relevant practices at the workplace, and how competences are developed in a community of practice.

Apprenticeships in the Swiss telecommunication industry

The information and communications technology (ICT) sector in Switzerland has seen a steep increase in the number of employees. Since 1991, it has grown four times faster than other sectors and has become one of the biggest sectors in Switzerland.[1] Parallel to the growth of the ICT sector, task complexity has increased. Overall, the competence requirements for employees are higher than previously and this has made it necessary to develop new job profiles (Aepli et al., 2017). This has been particularly challenging for the telecommunication industry (Ruiz Ben, 2005; Limacher, 2010). VET programmes in this sector, which are complex and intellectually demanding, comprise those in informatics and mediamatics (Stalder, 2011). Apart from a secondary-school graduation, the preconditions for starting an apprenticeship in this field are strong performance in mathematics and languages. The new competence requests also challenge conventional qualifications and learning pathways that have formerly been common practice. Not only the structural conditions of vocational learning need to change, but also attitudes, beliefs and values regarding the ways in which apprentices are treated, communication takes place, tasks are distributed, or expectations are expressed. How to shape such a new learning culture and such new practices through VET at an enterprise or in an organisation in the context of workplace learning, and which competences are particularly relevant to future jobs, will be shown via a case study that has been conducted at Swisscom, a major player in the Swiss telecommunication industry.

1 https://digital.swiss/de/publikationen/die-wirtschaftliche-bedeutung-der-ict-1

In 2018, Swisscom had about 910 apprentices, who are called 'learners', of whom 483 (or 53.1%) worked in ICT occupations. In the apprenticeship programmes, human resources works with coaches, who advise the learners throughout their three- to four-year apprenticeship. Each coach looks after about 40 learners.

At Swisscom, VET was restructured in 2003. Ghisla and Zgraggen (2004) reported that this was the consequence of both societal and economic changes and new expectations of VET. Increasing national and international competition led to frequent reorganisation and rationalisation in the enterprise, which also affected the VET department. Demands included more cost transparency and a better use of synergies between VET and the required workforce. VET was no longer required to follow the rather rigid structure it had done in the past. The previous programme included one year of 'pre-training' at an isolated training centre followed by practical work at one location for the whole duration of the apprenticeship (technical occupations). Instead, the apprentices were now required to be flexibly employed on real projects, and, in support of this, a learning organisation has been installed (Ghisla & Zgraggen, 2004).

The Swiss case study – research questions and goals

This case study was conducted in order to characterise learning in a specific environment. Case studies allow for adopting a holistic perspective on an object and are particularly suitable if the connection between a phenomenon and a context is not evident (Yin, 2014) or if particular contextual conditions are relevant to understanding a case (Yin & Davis, 2007). Organisational cultures or power structures and hierarchies within an enterprise are shaped by the historical, economic and social contexts (see Matthäi, 2007). An organisational culture cannot be examined without considering the context at a given time. Themes – such as the pressure to innovate, international markets, diversity, and equality of the sexes – have an impact on enterprises and are reflected in the behaviour of individuals. The methodological approach of a case study is suitable for a 'realistic' and 'relative' research orientation (Yin, 2014:17). Research with a realistic perspective starts from the perspective that objects exist in reality, independently of the viewpoint of the observer. In applying qualitative methods, the conviction exists that individuals themselves construct knowledge and that the object of research does not exist independently of the research perspective. The research perspective is made explicit in qualitative research. According to qualitative research logic, reality is also constructed in the subject area (see Mabry, 2008). Jointly constructed knowledge informs the practice of action on the part of the actors in groups. When individuals speak about such practice of action, their implicitly shared knowledge, which governs their action, becomes accessible (see Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2014).

Integrated in this case study are, on the one hand, quantitative data – such as the number of apprentices, in which occupations they are trained, key data about the apprenticeships, and official information about the organisational culture and the apprenticeship concept. These data are relevant to the holistic description of the case and they are also referred to by the

interviewees. They form the entirety of the explicit and common knowledge, which serves as an orientation to the employees in an organisation but also influences the public image of the enterprise. Especially when aspects of an effectively lived culture are of interest, it seems meaningful to research it in order to capture the implicit knowledge of the employees. It is this knowledge which serves as a point of reference for their action in the community of practice in the enterprise. Through the analysis of interviews and focus-group discussions, it becomes obvious how the employees orientate themselves in their daily work.

By conducting an in-depth case study at a large Swiss enterprise in the telecommunication industry, the authors have been able to collect a wealth of insights into the ways in which apprenticeships are conducted, shaped and pursued. The main goal of the enquiry was to gather information about the values, attitudes and beliefs of everyone involved in pursuing an apprenticeship in order to understand the parameters and constituencies of the current learning culture. Another goal was to find explanations for how and why the established culture is innovative, supports the development of innovative products, and identifies development perspectives for shaping apprenticeships more generally. Of central interest were, among other issues, the different types of appropriation exercised by the learners.

This article responds to the following research questions:

- Which factors contribute to shaping a new, innovative learning culture in apprenticeships?
- How are competences such as creativity, reflexivity, and the ability to act autonomously and take the initiative, developed?
- How do the learners experience this learning culture? How do they benefit from it?

Data collection and data analysis

The three researchers conducted semi-structured interviews among 17 learners, five coaches and three employees who work with learners. In addition, four members of management responsible for VET were interviewed. The participants were primarily selected after being recommended by gatekeepers such as managers or coaches. Additional interviewees were identified based on the snowball technique. The managers selected five coaches, each of whom selected three to four of their apprentices and also one or two employees who work with apprentices. At least one coach was drawn from each language region of Switzerland (to gather findings on the culture of the enterprise at a national level).

In order to acquire a more representative overview of the spectrum of learners, their challenges and their ways of overcoming them, additional participants who had struggled with their apprenticeship were selected.

The interviews lasted mostly between 30 and 45 minutes (in the case of the learners) or between 45 and 60 minutes (in the case of the coaches, colleagues working with learners, and

managers). The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed after the goals of the study were communicated to the interviewees and written consent was given. In addition, the researchers visited innovative projects across Switzerland that had been identified by the interviewees and their observations protocolled.

The data analysis based on the transcripts and notes was guided by a content analysis (see Kuckartz, 2016). The material was structured according to individual cases and categories representing different research topics (Kuckartz, 2016:49). In an iterative process, the narratives were coded according to emerging themes and regularly discussed by the research team to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. In this way, a comprehensive and detailed system of categories was derived. Table 1 represents the central codes of the data analysis. The coding of the material rendered visual major aspects of the learning culture from the participants' perspective. The complete set of coded data provides an orientation for the analysis of the practices, beliefs and values that were revealed.

Table 1: Central codes of the data analysis

Themes		**Discursive elements**
Challenges	Conception of human beings	Direct speech
Acting autonomously and taking the initiative	Conditions for learning process	Otherness
	Learning by doing	Me and others
Flexibility/agility	Conditions for creativity	Irritations
Problem-solving competence	Conditions for performance	Imagery
Competition	Feedback	Cursing
Past and present	Win-win situations	Image of the maker
Transformation	Motivation	
Digitalisation	Passion	
The future	Reflection	
Relationships	Work–life balance	
Trust	Recognition	
Conveyance	Coping with mistakes	
Role models		

Source: The authors

Research results

Innovative learning culture and agility

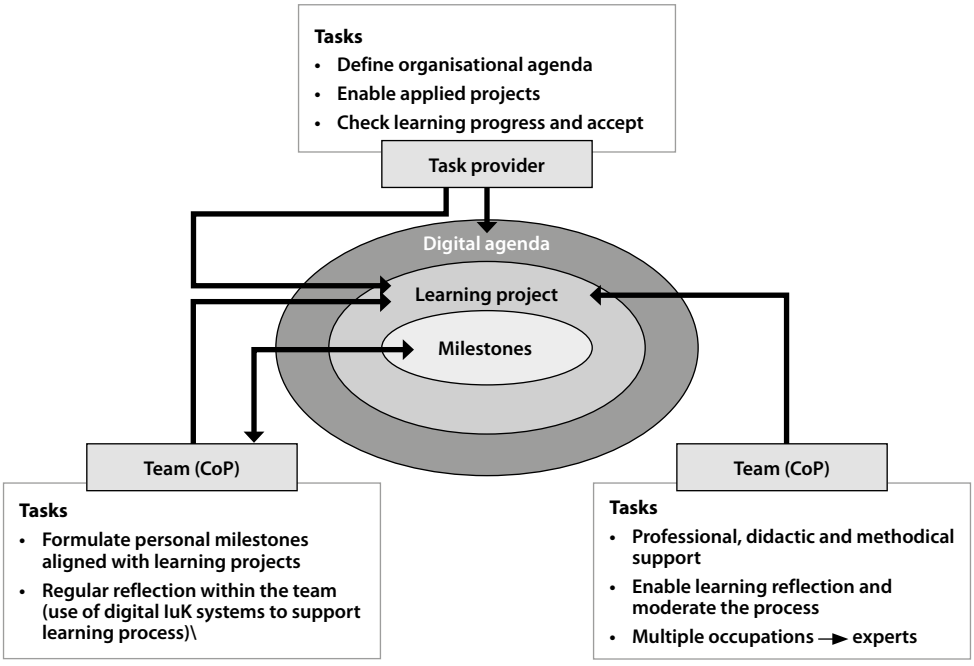
It is known that actors' attitudes, values and beliefs regarding the framework conditions for learning in enterprises characterise the existing learning culture. Largely unknown, however, is how existing practices and structures influence learners' development of competence (Sonntag, 1996). Friebe (2005) is one of the few authors who has shown that the learning culture influences the development of employees' competence. He researched the connection

between different signifying components of a learning culture and occupational competence, which – with one exception – were significant (mostly in the lower and middle sectors). In this article, the further effects of the learning culture on the development of competence in learners are described. These effects offer additional suggestions of a positive correlation. Based on a case study in VET at Swisscom (Barabasch & Keller, 2018), we introduce several aspects of the learning culture and show how they support the development of various competences.

One of the main reasons for investing in employees' further education and training is to secure and substantiate the innovative and competitive capacity of an enterprise. The challenge for VET is to meet the expectation that what is trained there is relevant at future workplaces (developed skills that match labour market demands). Employees need to be ready to acknowledge and cope successfully with the increasing complexity of their work environment (Sonntag, 2002). New conditions in the workplace can, for example, comprise working in different teams, taking over new and unknown tasks, interacting with people of different cultures and qualifications, having the ability and willingness to take on greater responsibilities, and being stress-resistant. A rapidly changing labour market characterised by new skill demands and high expectations of workers' readiness to cope competently with new challenges therefore leads to an increasing need for further education and training or learning in different settings or configurations. The enterprise in the telecommunication industry we researched has responded to the changing labour market with different organisational measures. For example, all learners are required to apply at least every half-year for a new project over the course of their three- to four-year apprenticeship, which they are able to find at an internal online portal (the 'marketplace'). In this way, instead of following a standardised pathway, the apprenticeship becomes highly individualised. However, over the course of the apprenticeship, coaches make sure that all the competences defined in the framework curricula are acquired over the duration of the apprenticeship.

An innovative learning culture in the enterprise is the foundation for the framework conditions that are conducive to competence development. A key feature of this particular enterprise is its culture of agility in which the younger generation is socialised. The term 'agility' was originally conceptualised for the business of programming software, but it was soon adopted in other sectors and functional areas (Graf, Gramß & Edelkraut, 2017). It became known through the concept of 'agile manifest' introduced by Beck et al. (2001). Agility is central to the new learning culture in apprenticeships at the enterprise (Höhne et al, 2017). It consists of multiple organisational concepts, which are continuously extended and modified (Hooper et al, 2001). The agile learning model developed by Höhne, Bräutigam, Longmuß and Schindler (2017) is based on their experiences in agile project management. The enterprise has consequently implemented agile learning and working in its apprenticeship training and this form of learning has increasingly become part of the new learning culture, as described in the model above. In Figure 1, the role of the different actors in this agile learning culture is represented.

Figure 1: The role of actors in the model of agile learning in the context of competence development (Höhne et al., 2017)



The role of distribution in an apprenticeship programme is oriented towards the so-called scrumming method, according to Dräther, Koschek and Sahling (2013). The authors define three actors who collaborate: the task provider is the enterprise itself, with its expectations of staff performance, but also those who announce projects on the online marketplace platform. Here the duration of the projects and the relevant fields of competence development are defined. The human resource department manages the system centrally.

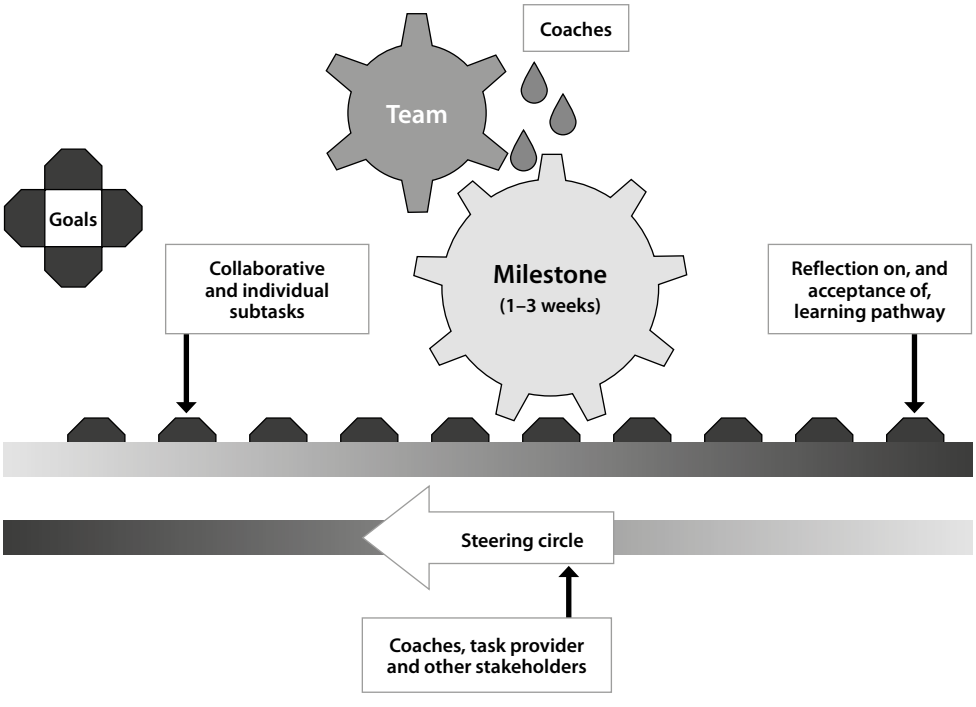
Another structural feature is the shift from workplace trainer to learning facilitator or coach. The learning facilitator or coach advises the apprentices throughout their entire apprenticeship. It is the responsibility of learning facilitators or coaches to guide both the choice of projects and all other questions regarding the training (and often above and beyond that). Although the coaches have their personal coaching styles, they are all predisposed to a 'coaching attitude' in the sense that they do not prescribe what learners have to learn and do not teach learners. Instead, the support they offer is to help learners to find their own solutions to problems, to develop initiative, to strive for achievements beyond expectations, and to find the strength to be persistent in their chosen pathways and finish their project work. At a more formal level, the coaches are responsible for the documentation of the learning processes. They gather feedback from the learners' quality point average (QPA) scores, which indicate a learner's level of achievement., make sure that, in total, the learners acquire the skills needed for the final examination, and coordinate with the vocational schools. Often, the coaches are

recruited from among regular workers in different occupations, some of whom have completed further training in coaching, and others of whom may have a background in psychology or pedagogy.

Quali-project providers (QPPs) announce projects in the online marketplace, conduct interviews with applicants, and provide professional support to those selected for the project. They are responsible for ensuring that the learners reach their competence development goals and they take care of the learners' skills development. About every three to six months, the learners change projects, which entails a new application process. In this way, they also acquire the skills to write applications and conduct interviews. In each project, they work with new teams and have a new person providing professional guidance.

While the agile method is largely applied in project work and the team takes over the steering process, for the learners the QPP is the key person to report to. Together with the coaches and the QPP, the learner sets personal milestones for their apprenticeship training, their single projects and their career progress (skills development pathway) in their apprenticeship. In this way, not only does the learner develop skills that are highly relevant in the enterprise, but they also develop the skills that are set or prescribed by the curricular framework plan for federally recognised occupational degrees. In Figure 2, the process of cooperation in an agile learning and development project is illustrated.

Figure 2: Process of cooperation in an agile learning and development project (Höhne et al., 2017)



The central task of the coaches is to continuously advise and, to some extent, counsel learners in order to ensure sustainable success in their learning (Höhne et al., 2017). Coaches also take on the role of process coordinator. It is their responsibility to ensure that the ways in which teaching and learning take place in the workplace lead to the intended skills development. They are also responsible for the flow of information between all the stakeholders. At the enterprise, for instance, they coordinate the information flow between QPPs, vocational schools and learners.

For agile learning projects to be implemented successfully, it is essential to involve the organisational level. A reflective process involving all the stakeholders ensures that the development of this approach to work and learning is sustainable (Zink et al., 2015). Therefore, coaches, QPPs and learners have regular meetings in which they talk about the learning progress and intentions. Overall, the systemic approaches to the organisation of learning in the enterprise indicate that, to a large extent, the principles of agile learning are guaranteed. The question, however, is this: Which implications flow from these new structural framework conditions as they influence the development of learners' competence?

Competence development in an agile VET culture

Competences are personal resources or traits, such as knowledge, skills and behaviour, which allow a person to manage their daily work effectively. They can be acquired by learning and working in a real work context in an organisation (Matthäi, 2007). The learning culture has a major impact on an individual's competence development (Friebe, 2005). The next few sections focus on three competences which are particularly important for many apprentices working within a highly dynamic, competitive and agile environment such as the telecommunication industry: creativity, reflexivity, and the ability to act autonomously.

Creativity is an important precondition for the ability to actively shape and create – in sum, it can be called 'innovation competence' (Anderson, Potočnik & Zhou, 2014). Self-reflection plays a major role in agile learning processes and is an immanent component of the structural conditions relevant to the learning culture in Swisscom. Acting autonomously is one of the major goals of VET and a central component in agile organisations.

Creativity

To think and act creatively is often viewed as a first step towards innovation (West, 2002) and it plays a major role in innovative enterprises and their learning culture. Generally, creativity is understood as a mental and social process of generating ideas, concepts and associations (Serrat, 2017). Research considers a transparent information flow as elementary to supporting creativity (Amabile, 1988). A learning culture, which supports risk-taking behaviour as necessary for the development of new products and processes, also supports working creatively (Sternberg, O'Hara & Lubart, 1997).

In the Swisscom telecommunication enterprise, there is a high level of consciousness of the need to communicate transparently and constructively in order to sustain trust and secure the preconditions for creative work. In regular meetings with their coaches, the learners receive feedback about their behaviour and performance. They are given the opportunity to talk about everything of concern to them and their training. Their exchanges with coaches have been described by many learners as trustful and constructive, especially also with respect to their having made mistakes. In the following example (Barabasch, 2018), a coach reports about an IT (information technology) learner who had been dissatisfied with a tool for events and who expressed his discontent quite strongly. In the conversation with his coach, he was asked what he would improve:

> [F]or about two weeks there was radio silence and then he brought two or three proposals as to how to improve the tool. Then we talked about it and we made such good progress that the learner said: 'OK, then. I can build this new tool'. (Coach)The example shows how learners are supported early on in developing critical thinking skills, in acting autonomously, and in shaping products and processes creatively.

In the following areas, the learning culture has an impact on creativity (inspired by Serrat, 2017). It supports the generation of ideas and a positive culture of coping with mistakes. In addition, the coaches have pointed to communication at eye level, the establishment of a trustful relationship, and the absence of fear in communicating about mistakes as determining factors for a positive learning culture (see, also, Schneider & Breßler, 2016). According to the testimonies of coaches, this culture of constructively communicating about mistakes contributed to the learner's idea of developing a new tool and feeling confident about his skill to do so. He has first created an ambiguous image of himself by being hypocritical, but with the support of the coach redirected his attention to the problem and its solution. Instead of condemning his behaviour, the coach helped to turn strong concerns into a drive for creative action and supported the development of action competence that led to the development of a new tool. The example indicates how the tolerant and constructive handling of mistakes can contribute to the development of different competences as much as to a positive stimulation of inventiveness and creativity among learners (Hansen, Trantow, Richert & Jeschke, 2013).

That the telecommunication enterprise actively supports a positive culture of coping with mistakes is underscored in the following quotation:

> A mistake is ... . So, we have hung up a poster in the front of the room: 'Making mistakes is better than doing nothing.' Because, for example, instead of only learning something, if I can really do something, test something out. When I make a mistake, then it is about 90 per cent likely that I will never make it again. And with this ... you can argue, well, Swisscom says: 'You should rather make a mistake instead of not even trying to make something'. (Learner)

In the school context, these effects on students' creativity have already been proven. Research has found that students whose teachers support autonomy act more creatively than students

who learn in a highly controlled environment (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri & Holt, 1984; Frey, 2017). In our case study, throughout their apprenticeship, the learners developed a strong action competence in their project work and also in terms of planning and shaping their pathway through their apprenticeship:

> Exactly; so promoting creativity should actually work. And it should work even in the context where you do not have a specific job to do, but are more open. (Learner)The learners can, depending on the project, chose their workplace and sometimes even their tasks within a project (for example, developing a new IT tool). The opportunity to work in hubs or co-working spaces also supports creative work by providing the environmental conditions for it. At these places, representatives of different departments and disciplines meet each other and can exchange knowledge and ideas, which supports the development of creative ideas and networking.

Self-reflection (reflectivity)

Self-reflection characterises 'the ability of persons to think about their own situation'.[2] The sequence of objective-stage reflection and its continuation is an important component of agile learning and of the training programme at Swisscom. For a learning project to be implemented successfully, the reflexive process, with the active participation of the actors, is indispensable (Zink et al., 2015). This competence is therefore an important component of agile project management and is communicated to the learners during discussions at regular intervals – in the case of Swisscom, at least every three to six months. A learning culture in which self-reflection is an important design feature of the agile learning process should, according to Friebe (2005), have an influence on the vocational skills of learners. The following statement shows that a learner has recognised the benefits of obtaining regular feedback:

> Not necessarily at the end. Instead, it really is about me going to ask the stakeholder myself for their feedback as part of the process. And, of course, afterwards, in the end, I reflect upon everything myself. But I do not necessarily just go through the whole thing again and the whole crap that you have finally built in the end. But, really, in the whole process, you should collect feedback throughout, so that afterwards you can then choose other directions in which to go. (Learner)

The repeated changing between projects promotes reflectivity in the learners, as they have to expand or adapt their acquired knowledge in new situations. At Swisscom, before each project change, a feedback discussion is held together with the QPA and the responsible coach; there, the learners' development and learning objectives are discussed. As Gebhardt and Jenert (2011) show in their study, constructive feedback is an important design feature that enables deep reflection. At Swisscom, this is a constitutive feature of the learning culture:

2 http://lexikon.stangl.eu/7084/selbstreflexion.

learners receive timely, direct and constructive feedback in order to foster a factual examination of their own strengths and weaknesses.

A symbolic quotation by one learner shows how asking oneself a number of questions supports the development of reflective skills, being self-critical in the interests of self-improvement, and openness to change:

> And also, well, to understand 'Who am I? Where do I want to go? What is important to me? What can I do well already today? Where am I not so good today' and then, well, the question could be 'Can I really improve all of that which I cannot do so well today?' Or could I possibly also say: 'I know that this is my weakness and I will try to get this reasonably under control, but am I aware of it …?' Also, just this self-reflectivity, I believe this is extremely helpful for getting ahead. (Learner)

Learning to think and act reflectively is of great importance at the workplace. It helps employees to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity, which increasingly characterise workplace situations. Learning to be reflective is also an incremental part of maturing in one's personal development and employment career. Coaches play a key role in the development of these skills. The ways in which they communicate with the learners and establish a culture of trust that encourages open reflection, stimulates learning.

Acting autonomously and taking the initiative

Reflection on work experience is an important building block in education for self-employment and self-initiative (De Bruijn & Leeman, 2011). This independence is characterised by three aspects:

1. It is self-starting, which means that you do something without being asked by someone else;

2. It is proactive, which means that you plan your work ahead of time and foresee future action; it also means that you anticipate the problems or opportunities that may arise and act accordingly, and

3. It requires initiative and perseverance, especially in the face of setbacks (Frese, Tornau & Fay, 2008).

The following statement by a coach describes the effects that the learning culture has on independent action (Barabasch, 2018):

> And at the beginning, of course, there is … much closer support, including [for] learners who are in their first year of the apprenticeship. In the first and in the

> second semester, they need a lot of support and later it becomes less. This is also very individual of course. There are fourth-year students [whom] you still have to advise intensively and who can't manage themselves well enough, but the large majority are learning fast to be independent and so they can do the … recurring tasks independently. I check that. (Coach)

The company expects that the level of working autonomously will increase over the course of an apprenticeship and that the need to support or intervene will decrease accordingly. Throughout the first year of their apprenticeship, the learners are already encouraged to search for their projects on their own and can, within certain framework constraints, design their own projects and take ownership of their individual learning pathway. The extent to which working autonomously is possible can be determined by each individual so that particularly talented learners can be involved in challenging projects or independently develop projects early on and then work on them. Here a learner reflects on his training success:

> Well, of course, I have become much more independent … . I have become more open. I'd better just go spontaneously and talk to new people, do something and work a bit more than I could before. And, that just … comes with time here at Swisscom, because that's what you have to do. (Learner)

The quotation indicates how important education for autonomy in one's activities in the workplace is to the development of various behaviours such as taking the initiative, planning and organising one's work and learning pathway, and also communicating about one's needs in this respect. It also shows how social skills, such as being open to talking to new people, taking in their ideas, and learning to understand their needs and comments, are further supported. Such support helps to develop self-confidence and, more generally, one's communication skills. The approach also signals that it is not necessary to guide all learners strictly at the beginning of their apprenticeship, but, instead, that guidance should be adjusted to individual needs and that those learners who are capable of organising the work themselves be allowed to be as autonomous as possible. One coach describes the opportunities to work independently at the enterprise:

> There are leaners who are very proactive and who actually write their own projects. They just have this idea somehow of what they want to do and they just search for some godfather who will take them on as a QPA so that they can follow their plan. This was the case last year, for example, with an IT learner, who got hell-of excited about how complicated the management of absences was, and how awkwardly they were handled, at VET school. And he thought about a solution, [about] how to make this process easier electronically. He knew right from the beginning what this tool should look like. Then he just asked me: 'Would you sign for responsibility for this project formally and accompany me?' (Coach)

The learner below describes how he was soon able to take over a responsible position. He was in charge of developing a web application and points out how little guidance was given and how much it depended on him to decide which steps to take and how to manage the project:

> I am someone who designs things and I have also taken on a design function in a team. But nobody tells you 'it has to look exactly like that' in the application. There are some rules and norms when you program an application that Swisscom is using. But how we manage the whole thing is totally up to us. (Learner)

The possibility of flexibly shaping one's pathway throughout the apprenticeship helps ambitious learners to follow their learning and development interests. In enabling this flexibility, the enterprise also profits from innovations initiated and often developed by the learners. The opportunity to individualise one's learning sparks motivation and ambition. It may support students who are particularly talented and those who may be bored if their work and learning pathways are largely prescribed for them.

Reflections on competence development in an innovative learning culture

Competence development is understood as being a process in which the action competence as much as the ability to organise oneself is extended, restructured and updated (Erpenbeck & Sauer, 2001). The fact that social competencies play an essential role in addition to specialist and methodical competence and, in general, the competence to act, is shown by the statement of a member of management at Swisscom (Barabasch, 2018):

> What does VET have to achieve today? If I can sum it up like this, I really think it's about the learners … giving them a good base for the future, no matter in which direction. But, really, it is about them … and not necessarily just at the level of professional competence, but also really to convey these methods and social skills. (Manager)

The sometimes very independent coordination of one's own competence development and the possible decision for a project, which enables learners to build up a specific competence profile, is a collective learning experience for the learners at Swisscom:

> And I actually try to take as much as possible from this apprenticeship … So, now, for my next project, it's rather a film crew, which is quite a lot out of and away from my field. So, I actually ask: 'What skills do I need that I do not already have?' (Learner)

The learners also become aware, not least because of the internal competition for attractive projects, that they have to prove certain competencies in order to be sufficiently prepared for new projects:

> We have such an internal system which relates to the quali-project market and the projects are named quali-projects. And there you can chose a project and apply for it. You have to apply for it, because there can be many learners who are looking for a position. And afterwards, after an interview, you could be chosen. But this is really difficult. You have to have competences in order to be lucky to get the place you want. (Learner)

Steering one's learning, which involves navigating through the marketplace to find suitable projects, is also a highly competitive process. Not every learner might find a placement in a project they are interested in. Finishing these unwanted projects is also an important part of the learning process and it develops competences such as stamina for completing projects or encountering and discovering information about one's interests and motivations. Highly relevant are application and presentation skills, which are as important as career orientation and navigating one's own skills development, which is learnt by applying for projects several times throughout an apprenticeship.

Discussion and research perspectives

An innovative learning culture has many components with which it can support the development of highly relevant competences. In this article, we present an example from the Swiss telecommunication industry in order to showcase how the development or unleashing of creativity can be supported as much as autonomous work and the development of initiative-taking behaviour and self-reflection. Apart from these, we indicate how the topic of developing these competences has entered the minds of all stakeholders and is consciously shaped. In principle, the results of the Swisscom study show that a lived innovative learning culture supports the development of 21st-century skills and competences in a way in which employers require them. It is important to acknowledge relevant framework constraints on and practices for shaping competence-based workplace learning. These include supporting agility, instilling trustful communication at eye level, and offering guidance and, if necessary, counselling. In addition, rendering competence development throughout an apprenticeship as flexible as possible, as implemented within the marketplace, and instilling an openness for newly initiated projects by the learners, support the development of creativity.

For these reasons, the enterprise started to implement new approaches to work and learning about ten years ago and is constantly experimenting with them and striving for improvement. Learners are often involved in testing new approaches and are asked for their opinions regarding recruitment, career guidance throughout the apprenticeship, or different learning activities.

We can assume that, as the work in this enterprise increases in complexity, social competences, agility and flexibility will gain in importance. This calls for the development of an innovative learning culture, which is key to the success of VET if it is to ensure that the next generation

of employees is sustainably prepared for their work challenges and for lifelong learning[3] (see, also, Hämäläinen, De Wever, Nissinen & Cincinnato, 2017; Woesmann, 2017). Transfer competences and skills are gaining in importance (Moraal, Lorig, Schreiber & Azeez, 2009) and the relevance of personal competences, such as creativity, initiative-taking and working autonomously, is increasing. Particularly in the telecommunication industry, where rapid technological change is taking place, this is essential. The enterprise supported the development of these competences by adopting measures such as allowing apprentices to suggest and work on their own initiated projects, collecting proposals for innovation from them, and providing opportunities to work in different locations and with changing teams and individuals or engage in various online debates across the enterprise to share ideas and knowledge. In order to ensure that the competences defined in the framework curricula are acquired, coaches provide advice during individual sessions (being quite flexibly available in person or via various communication platforms). Overall, apprentices are gradually given autonomy in working on projects, to the extent of possibly working outside the enterprise or even outside the country. It is expected of them to use public transportation across the country for work (for which they are provided with an annual pass).

The statements of apprentices in this article indicate their satisfaction with their competence development and sometimes even offer a surprising remark about their learning progress. There is a lot of pride in working in this community of practice and in contributing to real work projects. The motivation is high among many learners because they feel trusted, are taken seriously by co-workers and coaches, can ask for advice when it is needed, and are able to steer their own learning process.

Considering that all of this is enabled by VET among apprentices between the ages of 15 and 19 years shows how much more can be achieved and supported at this stage in life in terms of learning and personal growth than is often the case in more conventional apprenticeships or other forms of competence acquisition in high schools and colleges. Among the countries in which VET is a major pathway into employment Switzerland takes the lead, because a large majority of each cohort starts off with this pathway after compulsory secondary schooling. Based on the findings of this study, we can advocate a number of innovations, as listed above, in order to innovate apprenticeships to the extent that they increase motivation, enable learners to acquire the requested competences in the workplace, and promote personal growth.

However, we are aware that this example, coming as it does from a highly dynamic sector and one of the biggest apprenticeship providers in the country, cannot easily be transferred into other sectors or into small and medium enterprises. Since every sector is marked by different practices, characteristics and requirements, a generalisation of our results is therefore not possible and more research is therefore necessary in other sectors to understand their special circumstances, affordances, developmental needs, and potential to shape their apprenticeships.

3 https://bildungsklick.de/internationales/meldung/zukunft-des-arbeitsmarkts-deutsche-stellen-sich-auf-lebenslanges-lernen-ein/.

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Factors influencing the intention of students at a selected TVET college in the Western Cape to complete their National Certificate (Vocational) Business Studies programme

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ABSTRACT

Student dropout, also called 'early departure', is a significant problem in South Africa's post-school education and training (PSET) landscape, specifically in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector. The challenge of student retention and programme completion (the antithesis of dropping out) is equally significant and important to TVET institutions, the state department responsible (Department of Higher Education and Training) and the South African economy. Early departure negatively influences the success rates of educational institutions. It also influences the chances of personal employment and financial well-being of individual students, causing financial ripple effects on society and government. Students' decisions to remain or leave college or a programme are influenced by a variety of individual and social factors, both internal and external, including people close to the students and the policies, systems and structures within which students interact. These factors also encompass the quality and friendliness of teachers, social interaction with teachers and peers, and the role played by friends in academic achievement. This article reports on a study of student perspectives on the internal and external factors that influence their retention in, and completion of, a TVET college Business Studies National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) programme in the Western Cape, South Africa. An improved understanding of student experiences, intentions, and decision-making processes leading to persistence provides a foundation for improving student retention and programme completion in a TVET environment.

KEYWORDS

NC(V); retention; persistence; South Africa; TVET; business studies; early departure; attrition

Introduction

TVET colleges aim to promote increased opportunities for, and access to, post-school education and training for students, and to develop in graduates the required labour market knowledge and skills (South Africa, 2013:13). In 2006, the NC(V) curriculum was introduced by the then Minister of Education (South Africa, 2006:4). The three-year, full-time NC(V) programme is aligned to Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)[1]. The implementation of NC(V) programmes was intended to be a major contribution to transforming South African education and training (South Africa, 2006; 2007). However, the NC(V) was initially characterised by low levels of programme completion as well as high failure and dropout rates (Papier, 2009:39).

Programme retention and completion are not insignificant challenges, for they potentially affect a country's financial stability, including both the employability and financial well-being of individual students (Adamson & McAleavy, 2000:535; Allen, 2012:8; Thomas, 2011:43). Up to 55% of young people actively searching for employment have education levels below NQF Level 4 (Grade 12), and this presents a challenge to actually finding employment (Statistics South Africa, 2015:1). Despite the intention of the TVET college sector as a whole and the NC(V) programme system in particular to overcome national skills shortages, such efforts have been described as 'inefficient' (Sheppard & Sheppard, 2012:63).

Social engagement and support are significant factors in retaining college students during their first year of study (Hodgson, May & Marks-Maran, 2008, in Allen, 2012:13). Both student retention and students' intention to complete their study programmes have been researched (Tinto, 2006:1). Existing studies of student-related issues – such as performance, attrition, integration and retention – in South African TVET colleges have mainly applied Tinto's theory of successfully integrating students into institutional environments. Such studies include those by Maharaj (2008), Papier (2009), Ngcobo (2009), Pather (2015), Moodley and Singh (2015), and Lawrence (2016).

Thomas (2014:225) argues that such studies tend to focus primarily on factors that influence dropout, poor performance or attrition, but that not much attention is given to the factors that influence students' intention to complete their studies.

The study that this article describes differs from existing South African studies because it:

- Investigated, as an alternative approach, the internal and external factors that influence NC(V) programme completion;
- Combined two student-retention constructs, namely those of Tinto (1975) and Bean (1981), in order to help understand student decision-making holistically; and
- Used both quantitative and qualitative data-collection instruments in order to provide a broader view and understanding of students' perspectives.

1 The NQF is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications (South Africa, 2008b:6).

Research findings can be fruitful in helping TVET college policymakers to devise or amend policies and plan and implement programmes aimed at improving retention and programme completion – in this case, in the Business Studies NC(V) programme. The findings could also encourage future research to further explore the factors we have identified and over which TVET colleges have control.

TVET in South Africa and the introduction of the NC(V)

The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 resulted in education reform – in the areas of legislation, policy, access, curriculum development, and modes of delivery (South Africa, 2008a:1) – being prioritised. Educational structures are continuously being made more accessible to previously disadvantaged groups who had limited access to education or were denied access in the past (South Africa, 2008a:38). The South African education and training system underwent a significant change in 2002 after 152 technical colleges were merged to form 50 multicampus institutions. These institutions, previously called further education and training (FET) colleges, were later renamed TVET colleges (South Africa, 2013:12). It was argued that both the integration and the renaming were aimed at aligning the South African vocational education system with international developments and standards (Odendaal, 2014).

The NC(V) Levels 2 to 4 programme was introduced at TVET colleges in 2006. Its purpose is to achieve the state's goal of making post-school education more accessible through vocational qualifications (South Africa, 2008a:243). According to Cloete (2009:11), the National Plan for TVET identified, as potential candidates, unemployed, out-of-school youths and individuals who had less than an NQF Level 4 qualification.

Since its inception in 2007, the NC(V) programme has experienced low levels of programme completion and high failure rates (Papier, 2009:39), as well as poor retention and throughput rates. Papier (2009:26) indicated that the following factors, among others, influenced the poor performance of students:

- A lack of social integration into, or adaptation to, the college environment;
- Failure to make new friends;
- Students' programme workload, based on the number of subjects and the duration of classes;
- The inability of lecturers to facilitate students' learning; and
- Lecturers who were unprepared.

Papier's 2009 report findings were intended to help prepare colleges for the new intake of Level 2 students in 2010 and to promote improved programme completion and student retention. However, performance, retention and completion continued to be low and, four years later, Fryer (2014:27) reported that the NC(V) throughput rate was still 39%.

Student perceptions of TVET

Many students who embark on a college qualification often do not complete their programmes when faced with the decision whether to remain in a college or a programme or to leave early. There are a variety of reasons for this (Roberts & Styron, 2010:2). Hillmert and Jacob (2003) and Billet (2014, cited in Harris 2014:50) indicate that individual decision-making, discretion and weighing up of options form part of every student's educational process. These influence their persistence in respect of completion and hastening entry into the labour market. The effect of individuals not completing their programme contributes to the lingering stigma attached to TVET and the perception that it is of a low quality when compared with mainstream education (Harris, 2014:37). Puckett, Davidson and Lee (2012:1) argue that TVET is perceived in many countries as being inferior when compared with a general academic education obtained through traditional universities or schools. This perception creates what Puckett et al. (2012:1) describe as a 'negative-feedback loop', despite TVETs having the potential to respond to both the skills shortage and unemployment. Lewis and Lewis (1985:167, cited in Harris, 2014:37) support this description, stating that the international perception of TVET is that it is a second-class option. A study by Needham and Papier (2011:36) in South Africa uncovered a difference in perception of vocational training between secondary-school learners and TVET college students: some learners were unaware of TVET, while others saw it as 'second-choice education … resulting in low-paying jobs with no career prospect' (Needham & Papier, 2011:36). TVET college students, however, had a positive attitude to TVET, to their actual exposure to the programme and to career-path progression (Needham & Papier, 2011). Such a positive attitude was attributed to the practical component of the NC(V) programmes, which helped students to understand the theoretical components.

Contrary to the view of secondary-school learners on TVET, as indicated above, South African TVET students seem to perceive their labour market entry and job prospects to be easier and of greater benefit as a result of the specific, practical workplace learning and experience they acquired (Needham & Papier, 2011:36). Jamaican participants in a study conducted by Aynsley and Crossouard (2010:138, cited in Harris, 2014:50) shared this positive view. They considered the benefit of gaining practical experience, as opposed to pursuing a purely academic education, to be a direct labour market advantage. The Jamaican participants also indicated that there was a greater economic gain to be had from practical training as opposed to that offered by a higher education qualification (Stockfelt, 2013, cited in Harris, 2014:45). Participants in Harris's (2014:45) study of TVET students in Barbados similarly understood that a university qualification does not guarantee employment or good employment.

Factors influencing student decision-making

Over the past two decades, studies conducted both internationally and in South Africa have found the factors that influence student decision-making to be similar. The findings set out

below emerged, more than two decades ago, from the largest sample-group study on persistence and dropping out undertaken in the United Kingdom. Such findings are comparable to those of Papier (2009). The '9 000 voices' study of Martinez and Munday (1998) indicated that the following factors had influenced students' decision-making processes with regard to early college departure:

- Not being placed in the most appropriate programme, and therefore being less satisfied;
- Applying too late;
- Not making friends easily;
- Being less satisfied with the teaching quality; and
- Being less satisfied with their programme timetable.

In a study relating to engineering programmes (mechanical, electrical and civil), respondents concluded that certain students had left their college and programme early because of personal factors, that is, as a consequence of either their own actions or those of their parents (Ngcobo, 2009:66). Some students had become parents themselves, while others had failed a level and were kept out of college by their parents. A recent study by Lawrence (2016:93) of NC(V) Civil Engineering students in South Africa established the following reasons for their early departure from their programme:

- Delayed external examination results;
- Theoretical overload in the programme structure;
- College and programme expectations not being met; and
- Socio-economic conditions and influences.

Accumulatively, the factors influencing student performance, their intention to complete a programme, and their retention or early departure represent external–internal and student–institutional factors which, according to Jensen (2011:2), can be grouped in three categories: individual, institutional and external.

Theories and models of student retention

The study of attrition and concern about student retention changed in the 1970s from a purely psychological stance to a broader understanding of, and relationship between, individuals and their environment, particularly the learning environment and students' intention to complete their programme (Tinto, 2006:3). Adopting a proposition by Durkheim (1961), Spady (1971) concluded that individuals lacking the values of a social system and who were not supported, committed suicide (Bean & Eaton, 2001:74). Spady argued that the absence of an appropriate social system could be related to a feeling of hopelessness and a student dropping out of formal education altogether.

Based on Spady's use of Durkheim's proposition, Tinto (1975) introduced the concept of student academic and social integration as being related to students' decisions about dropping

out of, or continuing with, their studies. Later, Tinto (1993, 1997) revised this concept, suggesting that the extent of the relationship between student and institutional commitment might influence dropout intention and is a predictor of student persistence (Schreiber, Luescher-Mamashela & Moja, 2014:6). Tinto's (1987) retention theory advises against solely identifying individual factors as a measure of success: institutions should take equal responsibility for this and have to refrain from putting the onus solely on students to succeed (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011:34).

However, Tinto's theory and Student Integration Model (SIM) were criticised, mainly owing to the model not accommodating non-traditional[2] and part-time students such as community college students, who do not have the time or the opportunity for social integration (Tierney, 2000:1). Similarly, Karp, Hughes and O'Gara (2008:1) have criticised Tinto's theory in relation to students attending community colleges – for example, in the United States – as they are perceived as not having sufficient time or opportunity to participate or integrate. A view held by Bean and Metzner (1985) advocating that non-traditional students have less social interaction and integration as opposed to traditional full-time students pointed to the later criticism by Tierney (2000) and Karp et al. (2008). However, Tinto's SIM remains primarily in use for analysing student success, despite its noted shortcomings. Tinto's SIM has predominantly been applied to retention studies in South Africa on the maximal environment at educational institution in order to help better understand student success.

Acknowledging the criticism of Tinto's SIM has led to the analysis and use of Bean's (1981) Student Attrition Model (SAM), which focuses more on external support and influence and gives less prominence to social integration influences. The model recognises the influence of social interactions and of factors beyond the educational institution that play a vital role in influencing students' decision-making processes. External support includes, but is not limited to, family, friends and even finance, which were also used in Bean and Metzner's model (1985) for non-traditional students (Adamson & McAleavy, 2000:537). Bean (1981) equates student departure to labour turnover and attributes behavioural intention as a forecaster of persistence and retention.

Combined, the models of Tinto and Bean provide a basis for analysing the interaction of personal and institutional factors, because these factors influence a student's intention to persist. These models point to the importance of a successful fit between student and institution, the student's integration experiences, and how the internal and external support the student receives influences his or her motivation (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora & Hengstler, 1992). Combining the Tinto and Bean models minimises the criticism levelled at singular-model relevance and increases understanding in respect of the internal and external factors that might influence student persistence and retention.

2 That is, part-time students not influenced by the college culture, environment or integration experienced by traditional full-time students (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Existing South African TVET studies (Papier, 2009; Maharaj, 2008; Pather, 2015; Lawrence, 2016) refer primarily to Tinto's model in order to assist in understanding student decision-making. However, by incorporating Tinto's SIM and Bean's SAM, the present study was able to analyse and present a broader array of factors that influence students' intention to complete a programme; this, in turn, led to greater understanding of, and insight into, the research problem.

Methodological considerations

Acknowledging the effect of combining the Tinto and Bean models, the study on which this article is based aimed to determine the internal and external factors that influenced programme completion among the 2017 NC(V) Business Studies Level 4 students at a particular college. The study subscribed to an explanatory approach, as classified by Welman and Kruger (1999:19), applying a cross-sectional, mixed-methods design. An explanatory sequential contribution of the findings was used, a process that initially entailed prioritising quantitative data and which was followed and understood by related qualitative data.

Our analysis of Business Studies at Level 4 focused on two programmes, namely: (1) NC(V) Office Administration (OA) and (2) NC(V) Finance, Economics and Accounting (FEA). The research population comprised 63 final-year Level 4 students registered in 2017 for both NC(V) programmes. Quantitative data were collected during May 2017 and collated and analysed during June 2017.

The student sample was obtained through random sampling (Welman & Kruger, 1999:52; Kumar, 2014:236). To improve random sample reliability, a 99% confidence level was applied in order to derive a sample size of 63 students, of whom 46 consented to complete the quantitative rating-scale instrument. A sample of $n = 6$ participants was identified from the quantitative sample through non-probability purposive sampling, of which three consented to participate in the qualitative self-completion, computer-based questionnaire. The qualitative component sought to add a student perspective and understanding to the quantitative data. An attitude or rating scale, encompassing institutional or internal factors advocated by Tinto and external factors advocated by Bean, was used as the quantitative instrument completed by the 46 participants. A rating scale can test a wide variety of variables, objectively using a standardised procedure for questions or statements and answers or responses. The results can generally be applied to a wide range of people and settings, which improves their validity (Morgan, 2014:51).

After analysing the quantitative data in June 2017, the questions for the qualitative instrument investigating the influences that are directly in the control of a TVET institution were refined in July 2017. As indicated above, from the quantitative sample, six students were identified through non-probability purposive sampling and three consented to complete the qualitative self-completion, computer-based questionnaire during August 2017. The three consenting students were registered for the NC(V): OA programme. Selecting a self-completion

questionnaire for the qualitative component yielded the following advantages, which are in accord with those of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:158):

- Greater reliability;
- Greater objectivity;
- Freedom of thought;
- Absence of pressure or haste;
- A focus on content analysis;
- Allowance for additional thoughts relating to previous questions;
- A great likelihood of participant response;
- Cost-effectiveness;
- Completion over time; and
- Reduced researcher influence or bias.

The quantitative attitude- or rating-scale instrument preceded the use of the qualitative self-completion questionnaire. The quantitative instrument was administered during the first quarter of 2017, namely in May, and the qualitative instrument was administered during the third quarter of 2017, namely in August. The rationale for collecting the data during May and August was to ensure that the quantitative analysis was thorough, thereby ensuring the sound and refined development of the qualitative instrument. It also allowed participants in the qualitative study to reach their final academic quarter in preparation for their final national examinations and programme completion. Such allowance yielded the students' responses based on their experience, perception and understanding of their programme during a two-and-a-half-year period and their decision to persist towards completion.

The quantitative instrument was divided into three categories, namely individual, institutional and external, under which the internal and external factors advocated by Tinto and Bean were positioned. The factors that the study investigated were further guided by the findings of earlier studies, including those of Papier (2009) and Martinez and Munday (1998). Prior to administering the data-collection instruments, a pre-test was performed on the respondents similar to the population samples. Data from the quantitative rating scale were analysed manually – as suggested by Kumar (2014:316) – using Microsoft Excel. The responses to the rating-scale surveys were entered according to the number of responses per statement, per rated scale (1–4), namely: 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree'.

The quantitative findings yielded numeric data gathered from the 46 participants. The collated responses were expressed as a percentage per statement, per rated scale. Kumar (2014:316) argues that data can be analysed manually (i.e. by way of paper-based or computer-aided analysis), based on a reasonably small number of respondents and on there being not many variables to analyse. Content analysis was used to analyse the responses emerging from the qualitative data collected. Qualitative data analysis essentially involves noting content patterns, consistencies and general themes by sifting participant data and

making sense of their understanding and expressions (Cohen et al., 2007:461). A common procedure used is content analysis, by which 'many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories' (Weber, 1990:15, cited in Cohen et al., 2007:475). According to Cohen et al. (2007:475), content analysis has the following advantages:

- It focuses on language and linguistics and therefore on the meaning of the data received;
- Data collection is systematic and the rules of analysis are 'explicit, transparent and public'; and
- Data are available in a 'permanent form' and, as a result, are verifiable and replicable.

The qualitative data-collection instrument was a computer-based, self-completion questionnaire. The computer-based mode of delivery avoided what Cohen et al. (2007) describe as a laborious and time-consuming task of transcribing or processing text. The participants' responses were entered under each question. After collation, this study used content analysis to note the content patterns, consistencies and general themes emerging from participant responses.

Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study used the strength of both quantitative and qualitative data. Presenting numeric data in percentage form objectively revealed the overarching experience of the 46 participants in the quantitative study. The descriptive data gleaned from the qualitative instrument helped the study gain a better picture of the students' experience, perspective and understanding of the factors identified in the quantitative data.[3]

The student-persistence models of Tinto and Bean

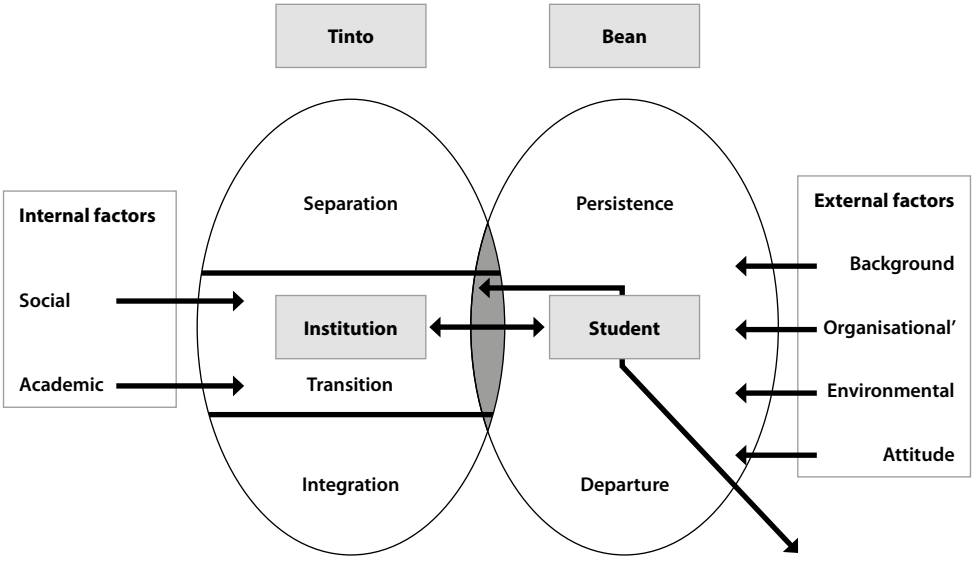
The combined theories of Tinto and Bean were adapted for the purpose of this study and are illustrated in Figure 1.

The internal (institutional) factors that influenced the student-persistence decisions broadly depicted in Figure 1 included:

- Friendships established at the educational institution;
- Student support services;
- Programme advice and orientation programmes;
- Academic staff, and teaching quality and style; and
- Financial and employment assistance.

3 Observing and complying with ethical standards and considerations, specifically in educational research, this study received research permission and ethical clearance from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Ethics Committee, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the selected TVET college and campus, and the participants in the study by way of informed consent. None of the participants' personal information was divulged and their anonymity was guaranteed.

Figure 1: Internal and external factors influencing student persistence and departure (Gaffoor, 2018:38)



Factors emanating from outside the educational institution which influenced students' decision-making about programme persistence, as broadly depicted in Figure 1, included:

- Intention – both initial-study and post-qualification intention;
- Employment prospects;
- Family influences, demands and facilitators;
- Community influences, demands and facilitators;
- Career guidance;
- Support structures; and
- The influences, demands and facilitators of friends outside the college.

Findings and results related to student retention and their intention to complete a programme

Business Studies is a broad, knowledge-based programme that provides general preparation for employment in a business environment. As a result, TVET college Business Studies attracts a broad array of students with a wide variety of backgrounds and reasons for study.

The factors of influence on and likelihood of NC(V) Business Studies programme completion are indicated in Table 1. The data gleaned from the self-administered questionnaire indicate all the investigated factors of influence. The factors are not listed in order of priority or importance; rather, they are expressed in the same manner as presented in the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 1: Internal and external factors of influence on and likelihood of Business Studies programme completion (Gaffoor, 2018:97)

Factors of influence on and likelihood of Business Studies programme completion as indicated by enrolled students	**Factors of influence on and likelihood of Business Studies programme non-completion as indicated by enrolled students**
1. Clear reason for enrolment	1. Unclear or no reason for enrolment/forced enrolment (parents)
2. TVET and NC(V) programme readiness	2. Unfriendly and unsupportive teachers
3. Friendly and supportive teachers	3. Poor teaching quality
4. High teaching quality	4. Absence of or underdeveloped soft skills, namely study technique
5. Developed soft skills, namely study technique	5. Absence of parent/guardian
6. Active parent/guardian engagement and involvement	6. Friends for social interaction only
7. Social interaction with friends with similar academic commitment and goals	7. Limited or no financial aid and transportation
8. Accountable financial aid and transportation or self-funded	8. Limited or no career guidance
9. Mature/older student	9. Younger and immature student
10. Female gender	10. Male gender
11. Student support service and teacher collaboration	11. Limited or no student support service
12. Programme- and career path-specific orientation	12. Limited or no TVET and NC(V) programme readiness
13. Clear intention after completion	13. Absence of or ineffective orientation
14. Assistance with labour market entry	14. Limited or no family and society support
15. Parent input on programme choice	15. Unclear or no intention after completion
	16. Limited or no labour market entry assistance

The computer-based, self-completion qualitative interview gleaned responses from seven open-ended questions and 11 detailed questions. A number of external factors contributing to programme completion, as indicated in Table 1, were identified from the quantitative data; these were explored further by using narrative interview data. The biographical data indicated a finding between age, gender and programme completion intention comparable to that in the literature, namely that there was a greater likelihood of programme completion by older students and females. The participants' responses regarding age showed that 65% fell into the age category 21 to 25 years, 29% fell into the age category 26 to 35 years, and only 6% fell into the age category 18 to 20 years. This indicated that older, more mature students were more likely to complete a programme than younger students. Across the two NC(V) programmes, 96% of participants were female. This showed that females were more likely to complete the NC(V) Business Studies programme than males: the enrolment and retention of females in the NC(V) Business Studies programme were more than double those of males. Historical secondary data from the TVET college investigated indicated that 56% of the students retained between 2015 and 2017 were female and 23% were male. This indicates a decrease in the progression of males since initial enrolment in 2015.

Internal factors influencing students' intention to complete a programme

Focusing on the literary factors both from a student-retention theorist, namely Tinto, and from existing student attrition and retention studies, this section discusses the internal and institutional factors that emerged from the study's quantitative and qualitative findings.

Of the participants in the quantitative study, 94% agreed that their intention to complete the programme was influenced by their teachers being supportive and assisting them in understanding the work. Of this group, 85% agreed that teachers had a good teaching style and 95% agreed that their lessons were enjoyable and understandable.

To arrive at students' perspective of, and experience related to, the matter of teachers being an influencing factor, participants in the qualitative study were first required to rank in order of importance eight factors that influenced their intention to complete their programme.

The eight factors were: available funding, teaching quality, friendly teachers, family support, friends, college support, job certainty and social interaction. This study expanded, in order of importance and participant experience, the two factors in support of the quantitative data regarding teachers, namely teaching quality and friendly teachers. Here, the quality of the teaching methods used and the personal characteristics and dispositions of teachers featured strongly. One interviewee noted:

Teaching-quality helps one understand the work better. The work is transferred in a way I can relate [to] and it's relevant to daily activities, as opposed to examples which are not relevant to us as youth.

Another noted:

> Teaching-quality, as each lesson comes with a positive message, making it memorable and easier to understand, and assist[s] you if you don't understand the first time.

The third interviewee noted:

> Friendly teachers, because[,] when someone is friendly[,] you feel accepted and welcomed, and you will return for that friendliness. Friendly people come across as knowing their job and [will] assist you at any time and not get frustrated, and that made me return and enjoy my programme completion.

Of the participants in the quantitative study, 94% agreed that they were satisfied with the NC(V) programme they had enrolled in. Practical work and the NC(V) programme structure featured as factors that contributed to their intention to complete the programme, as did constructive access to college resources (e.g. computers) and dedicated computer laboratory

space. However, these factors are not exclusively regarded as either positive or negative. One student experienced practical aspects of the programme, as well as access to computers and the library in order to complete the practical tasks, as both positive and negative:

> There are no dedicated computer labs[;] therefore[,] I needed to bunk (abscond from) certain classes to complete my assignments [at home] due to [the] lack of resources.

Another student noted enjoying the practical work related to workplace exposure, but least enjoyed lecturer mood swings and student protests that disrupted class time and examinations. One interviewee claimed:

> I enjoy the friendly and motherly[,] caring nature of teachers, but least enjoy certain teachers' unpredictable mood swings and emotions[,] which dampened my college experience.

Social interaction with friends had an interesting limitation. Fifty-nine per cent of the participants disagreed with the statement about having many friends in class as well as on campus in other programmes. Respectively, 67% and 77% agreed with the statement about receiving support and motivation from their friends. Despite receiving motivation and support from friends, 72% of the participants stated that they preferred to study alone in order to achieve their academic goals, which indicates a preference for limited and selective social interaction in the classroom and during study or assessment periods. Sixty-three per cent of the respondents disagreed about the efficiency of studying with friends and 91% agreed that studying alone was better.

This indicates that a varied type of, or need for, social interaction with friends exists and that the interaction is dynamic, prioritising as it does academic achievement over social needs. Social integration and interaction seem to be a dynamic factor at different stages of a student's studies.

Friendship was also a double-edged factor: while one student noted, 'I can always approach them (i.e. friends) to show me how to complete a task or explain it to me', another noted that peers 'are a huge distraction in my life. Most times they are negative and not motivational [regarding] my academic goals.' One student indicated:

> They create distractions and not all of them contribute academically (in respect of group work), so it is frustrating to explain everything. They are of no benefit [during] class time either.

Social interaction or the need for friends is not academically driven; it exists only outside of classroom settings and in non-academic activities. Social interaction is dynamic and moves from a social need or requirement (classroom interaction) to an academically driven or motivated interaction.

Teaching-quality and supportive interaction with lecturers were seen as important factors contributing to a student's intention to complete the programme. Students' lecturers had a primary, more immediate influence than that of the campus Student Support Services (SSS). Sixty-seven per cent of the participants were aware of additional TVET college activities such as sport and extra lessons, facilitated by the SSS. But, although they were aware of the SSS and its offerings, 62% of them indicated that they did not make use of any SSS services. The students noted their appreciation for those lecturers who supported and guided them beyond the requirements of the curriculum. One student noted:

> Teachers told us they were glad to teach us and went the extra mile outside of curriculum and classroom requirements.

In contrast to using support services, the same student noted:

> I only use academic support and extra classes [in respect of] the subjects that offer them. I … generally seek assistance from one specific subject teacher who has always played an encouraging and supportive role since 2015 in Level 2 [in relation to both] my friends [and me].

Another respondent agreed:

> College open days are a great reminder for existing students. Access to existing students helps remind us of what is expected out there specifically in our field of study, and [of the] job … requirements after graduation. For academic and personal support, I generally have specific teachers who have assisted me since enrolment in 2015 and continue to assist me. If they do not know, they will [make sure] to refer [me to someone] or assist me obtain an answer or get the needed support.

None of the respondents made use of the campus SSS to support their programme completion, but relied instead on the additional services offered by certain lecturers.

The predominant response in the quantitative findings (based on student experiences gleaned from the qualitative findings) was that lecturers were influential internal factors as regards their disposition and content delivery and in helping students to align programme expectations to labour market realities. Teachers, as a factor influencing the students' academic achievement and intention to complete their programme, featured more prominently than social interaction and a need for friends. This study concurs with Tinto that social integration and interaction form part of the student experience, a process influenced by a number of interdependent factors. What emerged from this study was the importance and primary influence of teachers in contrast to the contribution of friends and SSS. The study also found that interaction with friends varied in purpose from the purely social to that related to academic achievement. It therefore concludes that, internally, teachers and their teaching-

quality and personal character were perceived by the students as the primary factor influencing their intention to complete their programme.

External factors influencing students' intention to complete a programme

The following section presents the external factors that influence students' intention to complete their studies, as suggested by Bean (1981), another student-retention theorist. It also considers the external factors that emerged from the present study.

Of the participants in this study, 78% agreed that they needed to complete their programme in order to further their studies in higher education. Despite these participants intending to further their studies at other higher education institutions after programme completion, 91% of the entire group agreed with Statement 4: 'My intention after completing my programme has been motivated by the idea of prospective employment in my vocation.' A further 83% agreed that the assistance offered by TVET colleges in finding employment after graduation had influenced their decision to complete their programme.

In support of these views, the participants also indicated that the predominant reason for enrolment was to obtain an NQF Level 4 (school-leaving) qualification that provided practical, work-related exposure. While the intention to further their studies at higher education institutions featured, the prospect of labour market entry with vocational experience was a key motivator for enrolment. Job-placement assistance was a further attraction. One student noted:

> The practical experience I gain [gives me] a competitive edge over students attending [a] traditional public secondary school.

Another noted:

> I did not cope academically at [a] traditional public secondary school and gave up after failing two subjects in Grade 12 (Level 4, final year). Enrolling at [a] TVET [college has] provided me with an alternative route to progress to higher education without the judgement of age in relation to qualification.

All three interviewees indicated that their experience of initial failure at a public school had motivated their enrolment at a TVET college. Their motivation for completing their programme was a perceived higher prospect of employment and improved labour market entry with an alternative NQF Level 4 qualification that would afford them practical experience. This indicates that a clear, direct reason for enrolling and completing their programme existed prior to their enrolment.

Respectively, 94% and 85% of the participants agreed to being motivated and influenced by parents and family support structures; 59% disagreed that they received support from their

immediate community; and 85% agreed that their parents had influenced and supported their programme completion, despite 83% stating that their parents had not completed any post-school education themselves.

One interviewee noted:

> I do not make use of any support structures available on campus. My support comes from my parish priest (religious community leader), who gives me … encouragement and [sound] advice, reminding me to keep the faith through challenging times.

Another noted:

> I only use academic support and extra classes [in respect of] the subjects that offer them. My motivation off-campus comes from my parents and [through] healthy academic … competition with my sister studying a different course at a different TVET college.

When compared with the internal factors, the external factors, as advocated by Bean (1981), were largely aligned to the literature and the findings of existing studies. An analysis of the current interdependent external factors influencing students' intention to complete their TVET programme revealed that a clearly defined reason for enrolment at a TVET college was the greater prospect of employment; and family and community influences were also prevalent external factors of influence.

Conclusion

In a country reforming its education system in order to permit greater equality of opportunity, the South African PSET (TVET) structure is of great economic importance. The TVET sector is widely accepted and entered mostly by previously and currently disadvantaged groups, and, in this way, it promotes greater access to post-school education. Many students, both in South Africa and internationally, regard TVET colleges as unfavourable institutions for opening up career prospects. This has a negative influence on perceptions of the education and opportunities these colleges offer, and also tarnishes the TVET sector and its stated objectives.

Existing South African and international studies have investigated the factors that influence poor performance, attrition and early departure. However, this study approached the research problem by focusing on the factors that influenced students' intention to complete a programme in NC(V) Business Studies. Internal factors that influenced the intention of the participants in the study to complete their programme included primarily the quality of the teaching, but, more importantly, the disposition, personal character and caring attitude and behaviour of the teachers towards their students. Findings regarding their interaction with

friends indicated a progressive and selective interaction that varied between a social need and a need to achieve academically, the latter being preferred by the group. The internal factors indicated that the participants perceived and experienced their teachers, rather than their friends and the college SSS, as the primary factor influencing their programme completion. To gain a broader perspective of interdependent factors, the external factors of influence in this study were considered and these were seen to include the participants' initial reason for enrolment and the support they received from their community, family and friends outside of the college. These factors indicated that some participants enrolled at an alternative PSET institution to achieve their NQF4 and so further their studies at higher education institutions. More importantly, they were influenced by the perception of easier labour market entry thanks to the NC(V) practical component. Support from parents and friends outside of the college environment was perceived as being a vital influencing factor; however, this factor was not held in higher regard than the influence of their teachers.

Bean (1981) posits behavioural intention as a forecaster of persistence and retention. Although the study was conducted with participants who had not yet completed their NC(V) programme, the findings in respect of factors that influenced their intention to complete it provide a broader and more current behavioural forecast from which TVET college policymakers can address, redress or create policies which take account of such factors. The TVET colleges should build on the internal and external factors that are within their direct control.

The study recommends that future research be undertaken to explore the research topic; and the aim of this research should be to provide a more complete and accurate understanding of the reasons for student attrition, retention and completion of studies in a South African TVET NC(V) Business Studies context. The replication and expansion of the research findings is also to be encouraged at other TVET colleges.

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Agency, access and barriers to post-school education: The TVET college pathway to further and higher learning

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ABSTRACT

Student access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and pathways into higher education are critical issues in South Africa. Powell and McGrath (2014) draw on theories of agency to explain why students access TVET colleges. Using sociological and social–psychological theories of agency, our study explores a theoretical perspective on student access to TVET colleges, their barriers, success, and aspirations to study at university. We selected a TVET college in the Western Cape as our research site and interviewed 30 students who had completed the National Certificate in Educare. Our analysis of the data shows that the students had enrolled at the TVET college as an alternative pathway when barriers prevented their access to universities. Evidence shows that they also encountered barriers during the course of their studies but that, despite these barriers, their desire to study at university persisted. Theoretical insights derived from the empirical evidence suggest that student success at TVET colleges may provide them with prior learning and practical work experience in order to gain access to universities.

KEYWORDS

Post-school education; technical and vocational education and training (TVET); further education and training; non-traditional students; adult learners; agency and structure; barriers to participation; access and success

Introduction

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) acknowledges as critical issues the need to increase access to post-school education and reduce the barriers that affect access and success.

This article reports on a study conducted at a TVET college in the Western Cape. The study focused on full-time students who had registered in January 2017 and who, by June 2018, had completed each of the six-month N4, N5 and N6 certificate programmes in Educare. The completion of these certificate programmes is generally followed by an internship of 18 months, after which candidates are awarded the N6 Diploma in Educare.

The aim of the study was to explore a theoretical perspective on the ways in which TVET students exercise agency and overcome barriers to gaining access to post-school education institutions, complete their TVET programmes successfully, and sustain their dream of studying at a university. The purpose of the study was to influence thinking among TVET college lecturers, university academics and government officials about strategies that could facilitate the expansion of access to post-school education and reduce the barriers in ways that enable students to navigate their course of study through TVET colleges as an entry point to higher education.

There is no direct access route between the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) programmes that TVET colleges offer and higher education programmes. Notwithstanding that, the findings of this study suggest that the TVET college educare students in the study, as agents, became creative by taking a detour: they built their academic capacities in an alternative space that could make their access to university possible through recognition-of-prior-learning (RPL) policies and practices that recognise mature age, prior learning and work experience.

New theoretical insights reveal that students' agentic actions to overcome barriers in pursuit of post-school education opportunities confirm Archer's (2003:7) sociological supposition that 'humans have degrees of freedom in determining their own courses of action'. Insights also indicate that students' 'social–psychological capacities' (Hitlin & Elder, 2006), which evolved while studying at the TVET college, equipped them to overcome barriers and continue plotting their own course of action. Such complementarity between sociological and social–psychological theories creates an aperture for further exploration, a new theoretical perspective on access, barriers to participation and success in which sociological theories of agency and social–psychological theories of agency could feature as complementary building blocks. This could give further meaning to Hitlin and Elder's (2006:34) identification of 'sociological social psychology'.

Reviewing conceptions of agency

Sociological theories of agency are a central concern in social theory. Over the past 20 years, social–psychological theoretical perspectives on agency have emerged, including

Bandura's (2001) 'Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective' and Hitlin and Elder's (2006:33) 'empirical model of agency'. Hitlin and Elder's (2006:56) point of departure is that 'agency is a vaguely defined, yet frequently employed, term within sociology'. Taking Giddens as their starting point, Hitlin and Elder explain:

> We follow Giddens' (1984) conception of agency as a capability, though, unlike Giddens, we find analytic possibilities to disentangle individual agency from social structure (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:39).

Characterising TVET college students as agents necessitates an introduction of some conceptualisations of agent. Sewell (1992:20) portrays agents as having an innate capacity for agency, stating that 'humans are born with only a highly generalized capacity for agency'. Archer's (2003:2) description of agents as 'possessing properties … such as thinking, deliberating, believing, intending, loving and so forth', seems to converge with Sewell's (1992) portrayal, as these could be characterised as instinctive attributes. Giddens' (1984:3) definition conveys an element of existentialism: 'To be a human being is to be a purposive agent.' In his description of an agent, Bandura (2006:164) asserts:

> People are self-organizing, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are not simply onlookers of their behaviour. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them.

These attributes are instructive for understanding how TVET college students as agents project their life course at particular moments.

Attributes such as 'deliberating' (Archer, 2003:2), 'purposive' (Giddens, 1984:3) and 'self-organising' (Bandura, 2006:164) can shape the intentions and intentionality that are embedded in acts of agency which direct a human agent's life course. Sewell (1992:20) conveys agency as a primary 'capacity that is essential for … for forming intentions'. Giddens (1984:8), however, contends that 'it has frequently been supposed that human agency can be defined only in terms of intentions', arguing that 'agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing things in the first place' (Giddens, 1984:9). Implying a different perspective, Archer (2003:6) maintains that intentionality is a dimension of agency, asserting that 'people possess the intentionality to define and design courses of action in order to achieve their own ends'. These theorisations are pertinent to analysing the intentions and intentionality of TVET students as they mediate their way through post-school education.

Bandura's (2001:2) description of an agent draws attention to intentionality:

> To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence is exercised, rather than residing as a discrete entity in a particular place.

By framing it within social cognitive theory, Bandura (2006:164–165) conceptualises intentionality as a core feature of agency, along with forethought, self-regulation and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality in agency occurs when 'people form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them' and forethought in agency is evident when 'people set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts'. Such intentions could be evident when agents consider choices, hatch a plan and plot a course of action.

Giving expression to 'intentionality' is evident in acts that Giddens (1984:10) describes as follows: 'agency refers to doing'. 'Doing' can refer to various acts of intervention as described by Giddens (1979:54–55): 'The concept of agency as I advocate it here, involving intervention in a potentially malleable object-world, relates directly to the generalised notion of *Praxis*.' Giddens' description implies intervention as doing, acting upon, changing the direction of one's life course, and creating change. In the case of students at a TVET college who were denied access to a university, examples of such interventions – as purported by Giddens – are changing direction by seeking access to alternative institutions and taking concrete action to overcome barriers and achieve successful completion of their studies.

While human beings may have intentions to meet life-course expectations such as achieving a university education, they require particular kinds of capacity to take concrete action and to intervene. As discussed earlier, Giddens (1984), Sewell (1992) and Archer (2003) suggest that human beings are born with an inherent or even an instinctive capacity for agency. Hitlin and Elder (2006:39) acknowledge Giddens' conception of agency as a capability but conceptualise agency as a capacity through the lenses of social psychological theories. Social–psychological theories focus on 'individual agency' and the social–psychological development of capacities that constitutes such agency. Hitlin and Elder (2006) conceptualise agency in life-course theory, which is pertinent in understanding how agents steer the course of their lives. They view 'agency as an individual capacity for meaningful and sustained action, both within situations and across the life course' (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:38). They also describe agency as 'a human capacity to influence one's own life within socially structured opportunities' (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:57). Although they distinguish individual agency from social structure, their research is significant to understanding agency as an individual capacity that can have an impact on structural conditions through 'meaningful and sustained action' (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:38).

According to Hitlin and Elder (2006:37), 'studies that empirically attempt to assess agency most often refer to social psychological capacities for self-efficacy or planfulness'. Social psychology scholars identify constituents such as self-efficacy that comprise agency as a capacity for action which, Hitlin and Elder (2006:58) argue, could include steering one's life in a particular direction. For the exploration of an empirical model of agency, they adopt as their starting point previous empirical research on self-efficacy and planfulness. Gecas derives from Bandura (1997) his definition of self-efficacy as

> the perception of oneself as a causal agent in one's environment, as having control over one's circumstances, and being capable of carrying out actions to produce intended effects (Gecas, 2003:370).

Premised on the findings of their investigation into an empirical model of agency, Hitlin and Elder (2006:60) conclude that

> agency, in this model, represents an individual capacity, one that is both the result of individual differences (planfulness) as well as achieved successes (self-efficacy) and a sense of temporal, self-reflective understanding about one's life chances (optimism).

Hitlin and Elder (2006:42), assert that 'planful competence involves three dimensions: intellectual investment, dependability, and self-confidence'. However, their empirical research explains planfulness as a catalyst for agency.

Their empirical research validates 'self-efficacy as constitutive of agency' (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:57). This means that, in the context of our study, self-efficacy could be interpreted as a constituent of TVET college students' agency viewed as a capacity that enables them to navigate the course of their direction in post-school education. Instructive are also their conceptualisations of 'temporality – optimism' (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:43) as the capacity for agency that includes the element of optimism in projecting future courses of action. However, they acknowledge that this requires further research. Therefore, Hitlin and Johnson (2015:1453) conducted further investigations into optimism and 'optimistic life-course expectations' and found that their respondents' 'optimistic expectations function to improve life-course outcomes' (Hitlin & Johnson, 2015:1463–1464). Such planfulness, self-efficacy and optimism are instructive in understanding the kinds of capacity that TVET college students as agents may require to direct their life journeys across the post-school education landscape, and how they potentially transform conditions to make success possible.

Agents have intentionality to plot their course or direction and capacities to exercise agency in order to navigate their life's journeys. But they could encounter obstacles and, as is the case of TVET students who were confronted with barriers, could 'act strategically to try to discover ways around [them] or to define a second-best outcome where constraints are concerned' (Archer, 2003:6). Seeking an alternative course of action requires an element of projectivity which, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998:971),

> encompasses the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future.

Social–psychological capacities of agency are pertinent to understanding how students influence their life's journeys. However, these do not explain the kinds of capacity which are

required to change structural conditions that enable or constrain their agency. Although this article focuses on agency, conceptualisations of it in relation to transformation expose relationships between agency and structure. It is therefore important to consider this concept in relation to structure; this is because some theorists propose that reciprocal influences between these phenomena shape the capacities of agents and the nature of agency. Theorising transformation in relation to agency and structure opens up possibilities for exploring the ways in which agents can exercise agency to transform structural conditions that limit agency.

Illuminating the relationships between agents, agency and structure, Sewell (1992:20) advocates that 'agents are empowered to act with and against others by structure'. The role of agents in social change is conveyed in Sewell's (1992:20) statement that 'to be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed'.

Drawing attention to the capacities for agency relating to structural transformation, Sewell (1992:20) declares:

> As I see it, agents are empowered to act with and against others by structures: they have knowledge of the schemas that inform social life and have access to some measure of human and nonhuman resources. Agency arises from the actor's knowledge of schemas, which means the ability to apply them to new contexts.

Structural transformation, as implied by the interrelationships between agency and structure, is well illustrated by Emirbayer and Mische's (1998:970) comprehensive theorisation of the concept of agency, which they define

> as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal – relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations.

Although agents possess capacities to effect social and structural transformation, it is significant to acknowledge that they do not have limitless powers, because 'humans have degrees of freedom in determining their own courses of action' (Archer, 2003:6–7). Hitlin and Elder (2006:34, 39) assert that the marginal subfield of sociological–social psychology is 'the most amenable for offering an empirical basis for understanding agency' – they explored their analysis of agency within 'an empirical model of agency' framed within social psychology.

Methodology

The research was conducted at a TVET college in the Western Cape at which the respondents were registered as full-time students for the N6 in Educare. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select 30 respondents from the 129 students who completed the N6

Certificate in Educare and had passed their final external examinations in June 2018. As some of the selected respondents were reluctant to participate in the research, 'snowball sampling' was used to secure 30 respondents.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Age group	**Number of respondents**
19 years	2
20–29	25
30–39	1
40+	2
Total	30
Marital status and dependants	**Number of respondents**
Single with no dependants	23
Single with dependants	5
Married with dependants	2
Total	30
Gender	**Number of respondents**
Women	29
Men	1
Total	**30**

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews by using an interview guide. We were interested in exploring the respondents' experiences of exercising agency in order to gain access to post-school educational institutions, overcome barriers, achieve success, and sustain their dream of studying at a university. The flexibility of the semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth responses, as additional questions facilitated clarification. The interviews took place between June and July 2018 at locations convenient to the respondents.

Findings

Interviews with the respondents provided a glimpse into students' journeys as agents, that is, how they:

- Exercised agency in their attempts to access university after completing high school;
- Enrolled at a TVET college as an alternative; and
- Mobilised their agentic capacities to overcome adversity and succeeded, still holding on to the aspiration to attend university in the future.

As the study included only 30 respondents drawn from one programme offered by a single TVET college, the findings do not claim to be generalisable and are merely illustrative.

Agency, intentionality and the TVET college as an alternative

After receiving their matriculation results, the respondents, as agents, pursued access to university and experienced 'below minimum qualifications' as a structural barrier to access, attesting that:

> I couldn't get into university because I didn't have a bachelor's pass. (Respondent 4)

> I was not accepted at the university because of my results [in] Grade 12. (Respondent 9)

> I had too few credits to get into university. (Respondent 17)

> I wanted to be a teacher but, because my matric results didn't allow me to go to university, I decided to do Educare. (Respondent 2)

When they were denied access by universities, the respondents conceded that they did not meet the university entry requirements and, therefore, as they explain, decided to apply to a TVET college:

> I had another option – to get in at a TVET college. (Respondent 4)

> I didn't achieve what the university required of me to study education; therefore, I went to a TVET college. (Respondent 7)

> I chose this TVET college because UWC [the University of the Western Cape] was full and my parents said that I have to go study. (Respondent 13)

Their efforts displayed impressive agentic actions to steer their lives in a different direction by exploring access to the TVET college as an alternative. Being excluded from the university and seeking an alternative resonate with Archer's (2003:6) assertion that, 'when a project is

constrained or enabled during its execution, agents can act strategically to try to discover ways around it or define a second-best outcome'.

Apparent in their strategic agentic actions to counter the universities' barriers to access was the 'practical-evaluative element' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998:971) that was evident in the ways that they considered alternative pathways, weighed up the pros and cons, made decisions, and engaged in processes for gaining access to the TVET college.

Such agentic actions also expose an element of 'intentionality to define and design courses of action in order to achieve their own ends' (Archer, 2003:6). By choosing to enrol at a TVET college as a second choice after encountering a barrier to access, the respondents displayed agency that changed the direction of their lives. Giddens (1979:55–56) describes this as

> a necessary feature of action that, at any point in time, the agent 'could have acted otherwise': either positively in terms of attempted intervention in the process of 'events in the world', or negatively in terms of forbearance.

Overcoming barriers

After overcoming the structural barrier that denied them access to a university and enrolling successfully for the National Certificate in Educare at the TVET college, the respondents encountered further structural barriers. According to Rubenson and Desjardins (2009), structural barriers are created by structural conditions and can have an impact on an individual's capacity to exercise agency.

Limited transport services, finances and access to funding are among the structural institutional barriers that confronted the respondents. Structural conditions related to transport emerged as the most prominent institutional barrier among the majority of the respondents. This was acknowledged by the then Minister of Transport, Dr Blade Nzimande, who stated that 'public transport in the Western Cape is one of the worst in the country' (Petersen, 2018).

Agency, creative capacity, and overcoming infrequent and unreliable public transport as a structural institutional barrier

Respondents' descriptions of infrequent and unreliable public transport corroborated the minister's admission and exposed a public transport system which is not ideal for students who commute to the TVET college. Arriving late for classes was a common experience among the respondents. One respondent explained that the theft of cables in the railway infrastructure brought the trains to a halt, resulting in late arrival for classes:

> Public transport wasn't easy. Sometimes the people [were on] strike or the train got stuck because people [had stolen] the cables. Then I got … to the college late. That wasn't nice. (Respondent 17)

Bus strikes created further barriers to a timely start of classes, as a respondent lamented:

> And with the bus strike, I didn't know what to do to get hold of transport. I travelled with another student during the bus strike. (Respondent 6)

Using the public transport system presented a learning curve for some respondents, who, as human agents', became 'knowledgeable and enabled which implies that those agents are capable of putting their structurally formed capacities to work in creative or innovative ways' (Sewell, 1992:4). Their responses revealed how they derived knowledge from their experiences of navigating the transport routes:

> At first I walked to college. Then[, in] the second semester, I took the taxi. …it was a problem because I had to take two taxis. And so the taxi driver that always gets us in front of the college made an arrangement with us that he will pick us up at the nearest point and drop us at college. So it was only one taxi and that helped us a lot. (Respondent 12)

> My friend and I walked from Elsies River. Some days it was difficult because we didn't feel like walking and we had to walk back. Sometimes my father gave me a lift, but, most of the time, we had to walk. (Respondent 2)

Their knowledge of the public transport system enabled respondents to mobilise their creative agentic capacities to seek the most suitable modes of public transport. When they exhausted the vehicular options, they displayed resilience by resorting to walking between home and college.

Agency, creative capacity, and overcoming unsafe public transport services and violence as structural institutional barriers

Although some respondents experienced public transport as infrequent and unreliable, one exposed the dangerous conditions which generated structural barriers and daily created fearful lived experiences resulting from such perilous public transport:

> …[A]t first I was scared because I wasn't used to travelling and then I took [a] taxi … I had a bad experience once but I had to continue taking [a] taxi. I was in the taxi and I told the driver that I must get off at Pick n Pay. But he drove past Pick n Pay … he told me he was going to turn around but he drove past the stop and … said I was going with him and all this stuff and there was [also] a girl … with them. I was so scared. Then we got to Libertas. And there was … a couple trying to get in, so I jumped out. (Respondent 18)

Overcoming the dangers of the public transport system was very similar to the perils that respondents experienced in their residential areas. A respondent pointed to the creative agentic capacities to dodge bullets in order to arrive timeously for the start of classes in the morning:

> At first [I travelled by] train but I lost too much time. Sometimes I would only get [to college] at first break. And then there were times that they [were shooting] in our area. Our area is very dangerous. I had to go through [a] war zone. They call it 'gangster's paradise'. I had to walk through that area to get to the station. I live in the normal houses, but I had to go through the flats to get there. So there were a few times that I couldn't get to college because of that. (Respondent 15)

Confronting the dangers, and despite their obvious fears, the respondents displayed creative capacities for agency that featured resilience and resistance. This empirical evidence points to the necessity for such agentic actions in contexts of violence.

Agency, creative capacity, and overcoming limited government funding for student travel allowances as a structural institutional barrier

Compounding their vulnerabilities was the respondents' lack of personal finances to travel to the TVET college. Many students received a bursary to cover their tuition fees and a travel allowance from the government's National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). However, some respondents did not qualify for the NSFAS travel allowance, as they lived within a radius of less than 10 km from the college. With little money in their pockets, respondents' responses revealed their creative and innovative agentic responses as they became knowledgeable and scouted for the cheapest possible routes to and from the college:

> I used [the] bus, but, [mostly,] I took a train…; sometimes, if there [was] no other way, … I had to take a taxi. …[Although] the train is cheaper, … it's a struggle. It's a real struggle. I think the taxi is so nice, but the … taxi fare is expensive. The train is cheaper, [but] the bus … is … much better, [and] cheaper. (Respondent 10)

> It wasn't nice, because our train doesn't run the whole day. It only runs once in the morning and once at night, and, if we had to take a taxi, it was expensive to travel because you had to take about three taxis. My mom gave me R100 per week and from that I could pay my train fare, which was R60, and on a Friday I could come home [by] taxi. (Respondent 5)

Respondents who received a NSFAS-funded travel allowance explained how this changed their agentic actions:

> So, in N6, when I got a travel allowance, I decided to travel [by] taxi – two taxis home. Then my Boeta (brother) dropped me in the morning and I travelled with the taxis in the afternoon. (Respondent 8)

> [A] fellow student suggested that she pick me up and [that I] then … pay her from my NSFAS travel allowance. …I didn't like the train but the car was fine. (Respondent 15)

One of the stipulations of the NSFAS bursary was that students had to attend classes 80 per cent of the time. Students were required to sign this agreement at the beginning of each semester. Their attendance determined the amount that was paid as their travel allowance. Fortunately, this restriction was lifted from the beginning of 2019 – six months after we conducted our interviews with the respondents.

The empirical evidence suggests that creative agentic capacity is necessary to overcome barriers and succeed at a TVET college when confronted with violence and poverty.

Academic dispositional capacities for agency to achieve success

The respondents were asked the question, 'What advice would you give to students who show an interest in this course?' Their responses revealed the social–psychological capacities for agency that they had developed in order to make a success of their studies. Here we extend Hitlin and Elder's (2006) dimensions of capacity for agency to interpret the data and infer the findings in relation to an academic context. In addition, as the evidence suggests, we derive from the data a new academic capacity for agency, namely 'academic disposition'.

Academic planfulness

Citing Clausen's definition of planful competence as an individual-level construct that dictates a person's facility for making (and sticking to) advantageous, long-range plans, Hitlin and Elder (2006:41) suggest that being planful is a prerequisite for successful agentic actions. Reflecting the latter, it is evident that the respondents came to the realisation that they had to become planful and manage their time in order to complete their studies successfully. The advice they offered to interested students affirms this:

> Plan your time [and] personal life, and prioritise your different tasks. (Respondent 17)

> I [would] tell them to do their tasks and plan before the time so that [they] don't lag behind, because, once you lag behind, everything just accumulates – and that makes it more difficult. Do your tasks and do [them] before the time or on time so that you don't fall behind. (Respondent 5)

We deduce from the respondents' responses, in the context of post-school education, that, as agents, they had developed academic planful competence predominantly related to time management, which they now recommended to interested students.

Academic self-efficacy

During the course of any academic study, students acquire various academic dispositional agentic capacities to succeed. Self-efficacy is defined by Gecas (2003:370) as 'the perception of oneself as a causal agent in one's environment, as having control over one's circumstances,

and being capable of carrying out actions to produce intended effects'. Evident in the students' responses were elements of self-efficacy:

> Stay positive. Give your full cooperation. Don't [become] negative. Just do it. Don't let your work fall behind, because then you are going to struggle. (Respondent 8)

> Actually a girl already came to me about that. She applied here and she asked me, 'Do you think this course is worth doing?' [I told her] the basic things like: just … work hard; don't think because it sounds easy, you don't have to work hard; don't think because it is only four subjects, you don't have to work hard. Work hard at each subject and do your best every day, and, if your marks are good, then people will recognise that. (Respondent 18)

We derive from the respondents' responses, in the context of the TVET college, that they had developed academic self-efficacy and perceived themselves as agents who were capable of success. For this reason, they advised interested students to develop such agentic capacities in order to execute actions that might contribute to their future success.

Resilient academic self-efficacy

According to Bandura (1989:1177), 'it takes a resilient sense of efficacy to override the numerous dissuading impediments to significant accomplishments'. Some respondents identified resilient self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989) as an important capacity for academic success. Their perceptions of resilient self-efficacy were revealed most prominently as perseverance, endurance and tenacity:

> I would say that, if you don't get into university, don't give up; try the Educare course and you can get into a diploma course afterwards … you will [have] ups and downs but you must just persevere. (Respondent 4)

> [I'd] tell them to persevere no matter how hard it gets. [For example,] when we started in N4, … we didn't know what to expect. But, in N5, I got used to it and then it became easy. (Respondent 11)

We infer that perseverance and tenacity emerge as significant indicators of resilient academic self-efficacy. This suggests that resilience, which is embedded in the concept of resilient self-efficacy, is a significant element of agency.

Academic disposition

A few respondents drew attention to an academic disposition towards attending classes, engaging with lecturers, studying, and applying their academic capacities fully as a requisite for success:

> [Don't be] absent, especially if you have to hand in an assignment, because that is where you lose marks – and you never know if you can make up those marks for your year mark. (Respondent 3)

> Come to college. Don't [be] absent. Don't bunk, [and] don't follow friends. Study, [really] study. Go through your work every day. [E]ven though [everything] seems … fine, just read over it once. Just do it, [for] it helps at the end of the day. [When] studying at the end of the semester, it will benefit you. … [T]hen you can just read over the work and you will remember [it] from [earlier on]. If you read over something, it actually sticks in your [mind] and you remember it. So it helps. (Respondent 13)

This empirical evidence points to a new concept, that is, 'academic dispositional agentic capacities' that can subsume academic self-efficacy, academic planfulness, resilient academic self-efficacy, and academic disposition.

Future aspirations, intentionality and projectivity – keeping the dream of access to higher education alive

According to Bandura (2001:8),

> [a]n agent has to be not only a planner and forethinker, but a motivator and self-regulator as well. … Agency thus involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans, but the ability to give shape to appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution.

In the respondents' responses about their future in educare, they portrayed themselves as agents who are planners and forethinkers:

> I want to be a teacher, but, actually, I'm thinking about being a principal of a small crèche on one of the farms where all the farm children get together. This is actually what I want, but, if that doesn't pan out, then definitely a teacher. (Respondent 5)

> I see myself as a good educarer [who] really takes children further, but I really hope that I will be able to help children in need, especially disabled children. I learnt a lot in the N5 Psychology [course] about learners with special needs – how to handle them, and [so on]. (Respondent 6)

Similarly to Bandura, Archer (2003:2) describes individuals as agents who 'possess properties … such as thinking, deliberating, believing, intending, loving and so forth'. These are conveyed by the respondents about their future beyond the educare sector:

> As a successful teacher, I will do my BEd; and then I want to go [into a] school and … be a teacher for a Grade 3 class or [similar]. (Respondent 8)

> Hopefully, I will be finished with my degree and in my own class – Grade R to Grade 3; not higher. Those children will be taller than me. I prefer them small. (Respondent 11)

> I want my BEd and then I want to study even further. (Respondent 16)

> I want to do the 18 months [of] practical [work], and then I want to do my foundation phase [in order] to teach. In five years, I want to finish my BEd degree. (Respondent 17)

It was clear that the respondents had not lost their ambition to pursue a degree. It was evident that they were agents thinking about their future studies, intending to attend a university, and believing that they would be successful.

In plotting their futures beyond education, the element of 'projectivity' emerges which, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998:971),

> encompasses the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future.

The following serves as an example of how respondents expressed their hopes and dreams:

> I see myself … not only [as] a teacher, but also a community worker and … a student. I want to do so much stuff … [that] I can't even keep it in [my head] anymore. I want to study Grade R [and] also child psychology. But I see myself as someone serving the community, because, … during this holiday, [I was] involved with a lot of people. Actually, I'm going on a camp now. I was on a camp three weeks back as a camp leader focusing on the community – children [who] don't want to go to school anymore [and have] left school. So I was working with them. (Respondent 18)

Illustrating the social–psychological capacity for optimism (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:42) are the respondents' perceptions of themselves as agents who can direct their future prospects and life course.

Agentic capacities for transforming social relations

It is clear from the evidence that the respondents exercised agency to overcome barriers and achieve success in their academic studies. By confronting the initial barrier to higher

education, the respondents mediated the social relations in the post-school education context. However, as events unfolded, the respondents later exhibited agency that could enable them to transform these social relations. These insights corroborate Sewell's declaration that

> [t]o be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree' (Sewell, 1992:20).

Gaining access to higher education would, however, present evidence that they had transformed the social relations – that they had succeeded in accumulating prior learning and work experience to facilitate their access into higher education.

Conclusion

The exploration of a new theoretical perspective on TVET students' agency in respect of their access, barriers and success drew on sociological and social–psychological theories, and on empirical data.

For the research described in this article, agency was a useful concept to explain the relationships between students overcoming initial barriers, gaining access to a TVET college, confronting subsequent barriers to complete the N6 Certificate in Educare, and sustaining the dream of access to a university.

The sociological theories of agency served to analyse the generalised capacity of students as agents and their agency to overcome barriers. Sociological conceptualisations best describe the relationships between agency and structure.

Social–psychological concepts were instructive for analysing the relationships between constituents of students' agency and explaining how they overcame barriers and carved their paths towards success. Their agency, which comprised self-efficacy (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:40–41) and resilient self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989:1177) and was driven by planfulness (Hitlin & Elder, 2006:41), enabled them to succeed. By drawing inferences in relation to the context of post-school education through these concepts, new interpretations emerged. 'Academic planfulness', 'academic self-efficacy', and 'resilient academic self-efficacy' as social–psychological capacities for student agency enabled them to complete their studies at the TVET college successfully and project future studies at university.

Further inferences suggest a new social–psychological capacity for agency as 'academic disposition'. In addition, we derive a new construct – that is, 'academic dispositional agentic capacities' – as an overarching concept which encompasses 'academic planfulness', 'academic self-efficacy', 'resilient academic self-efficacy' and 'academic disposition'.

Theoretical insights derived from this article signify a new theoretical perspective which suggests that sociological theories and the social–psychological theories of agency are distinctive. New theoretical insights also point to some complementarity between the sociological theories and social–psychological theories of agency. Social–psychological theories of agency were useful for analysing and interpreting the relationships between students' social–psychological capacities and their exercising agency to overcome barriers. Among Bandura's (2001:6) core features of agency, intentionality best described the deliberate and intentional ways through which students sought access to a TVET college as an alternative after encountering their initial barrier, 'below minimum requirement'. Archer's sociological conceptualisation (2003:6) illuminates intentionality as a dimension of agency, asserting that 'people possess the intentionality to define and design courses of action in order to achieve their own ends'.

Implicit in the agency that students exercised in their strategies to overcome barriers is a capacity of 'empowerment', which converges with Sewell's (1992:20) proposition that 'agents are empowered to act with and against others by structures'. Coupled with this proposition, Sewell's (1992:20) theorisation that, 'to be an agent … implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree', gives meaning to the suggestion that, by overcoming barriers, students transformed social relations in a rudimentary way. Empowerment has not been explored as a potential constituent of agency as a capacity to transform social relations. A question prompted by this article, and which requires further exploration, is: What capacities for agency could enable students as agents to transform the social relations and the structural conditions that bound agency?'

Despite Hitlin and Elder's (2006:34) identification of 'sociological–social psychology' as the most appropriate empirical frame through which to investigate agency, the findings in this study cannot offer verification of this. However, the theoretical insights gleaned from the study could enable TVET college lecturers, university academics and government officials to understand students' journeys across the post-school education landscape and prompt them to reflect on strategies to expand access to post-school education as well as address structural and situational barriers that undermine success.

While we have explored a new theoretical perspective, we acknowledge that further research is required to generate deeper theoretical analyses of the issues of access, barriers to participation and success experienced by TVET college students.

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The role of 'intermediaries' in brokering training and building social compacts: Can sector skills authorities perform these roles?

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the modus operandi of the sector education and training authorities (SETAs) in South Africa – seen by many critics of the training system as largely driven by the regulatory pressures of financial compliance imposed on public-sector organisations by the all-powerful Public Finance Management Act 29 of 1999 (PFMA). The article proposes an alternative modus operandi, one informed by the literature on 'intermediaries', where the main function of such intermediary organisations is not financial compliance but the strategic 'brokering' of training compacts. The article first outlines the role of the SETAs and the problems with a compliance mode of working. In explaining the alternative of intermediation, the discussion considers some best practices of intermediation in South Africa, but concludes that such practices are not fully diffused across the entire training system. Why diffusion is so poor is revealed through interviews with leaders in the training system.[1] The analysis concludes on a positive note, arguing that the 'social compact' politics being emphasised by the new South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, could usher in a more conducive environment for brokering training and job compacts.

KEYWORDS

Functions of SETAs; compliance mode of working; intermediation; brokerage

1 The author acknowledges with great respect the contribution of the late Adrienne Bird, former Deputy Director General of Employment and Skills in the Department of Labour and Director of the Special Projects Unit in the Department of Higher Education and Training, at the time of the research for this article in 2018.

Introduction

The South African training system currently comprises 21 SETAs, with each authority established in a key sector of the economy. The training policy model adopted in the late 1990s was strongly influenced by similar changes in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, where wide-ranging sector skills councils were established to replace the narrow and craft-focused industry training boards established in the 1960s (NTB/HSRC, 1991:125). The core functions of SETAs, as defined by the Skills Development Act of 1998, are to:

- Develop a Sector Skills Plan;
- Promote and register learnerships;
- Collect and disburse the skills development levies in the sector;
- Report to the Director General of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on income and expenditure and on the implementation of the Sector Skills Plan; and
- Improve information flow regarding employment opportunities in the labour market (RSA, 1998:12–14).

The SETAs have additional responsibilities in their sectors. They need to help and encourage employers to prepare workplace skills plans and have to pay a mandatory grant to employers who prepare such a plan. SETAs are also involved in implementing the key targets of the state-led National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) in their sector. But, most importantly, the SETAs will need to establish 'awareness raising strategies to enable links with employers, trade unions, providers and other groupings to be established' (RSA, 1999:24). These networks will take the shape of both formal and informal partnerships across a wide array of public and private institutions. Such networks (between employers, ET (education and training) providers and government departments) will be the institutional vehicles for learnership programmes and other shared training activities in the sector. In 2001, Kraak (2004) rather optimistically wrote:

> This associational or networking role is at the heart of the new institutional regime for skills formation. Success here will determine whether skills development will take off or whether the status quo will remain. Underpinning the construction of this new institutional environment is the assumption that collective institutional pressures will oblige individual employers to increase their investments in and coordination of skill formation.

Dominance of a 'compliance' mode of regulation

Kraak's (2004) optimism has not been realised after 19 years of the existence of the SETAs. The main organisational problem – beyond the scourge of corruption and maladministration which has become endemic across the public sector in South Africa (Chipkin et al., 2018:19–28) – is the tight financial controls imposed by the PFMA. Ironically, the PFMA – the government's

main vehicle for ensuring diligence in the spending of state financial resources – has not been able to stop rampant corruption and theft in public-sector organisations; yet, it has crippled innovative and effective delivery of public services through the imposition of a highly bureaucratic and rigid financial compliance mode of regulation – what many call a 'tick-box compliance culture'. A recent policy review by the National Skills Authority (NSA) of the South African training system is highly critical of this 'compliance' mode:

> 'Compliance' is an approach to state governance, driven by the straightjacket of financial regulation, where the emphasis in provision is narrowed down to deliver services based on what the financial regulation prescripts demand – which are often quantitative performance targets set out by government programmes. Such compliance is an overly-legalistic reading of what a state must do – crudely interpreted by providers as the need to please the state auditors – whilst the complexities of ramping up delivery and improving performance are not dealt with in any depth by more flexible and creative methods of regulation (NSA, 2018a:314).

The NSA report argues that the exacting quantitative and overly bureaucratic demands of the PFMA as applied in the training system serve to exclude small businesses, cooperatives and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which all choose to opt out of participation because of these bureaucratic demands (NSA, 2018a:61).

An alternative perspective: Intermediation

The concept of 'intermediation' provides an alternative lens with which to understand the role and modus operandi of bodies such as the SETAs which operate in the training sphere. Compliance with financial regulations is not the primary driver of intermediation. Rather, it is fundamentally premised on the idea of brokering social compacts about jobs and employment growth (Kochan, Finegold & Osterman, 2012). Such interventions on the demand side are often aimed at changing the pejorative perceptions of employers in respect of young first-time entrants into the labour market. In addition, intermediation is about helping in the production of collective goods critical to the well-being of the national economy, but which would not arise under competitive market conditions. Intermediation is also about the coordination of multiple actors in a productive system who are geographically isolated with restricted information flows between such actors – a communicative and associational void often resolved through intermediation.

Intermediaries operate across a range of socio-economic domains, and their role varies across these spaces. Weaver and Osterman (2014) argue that labour market intermediaries are entities that connect actors in the labour market to one another. They range organisationally from labour employment bureaus, NGOs and small business development agencies to regional economic development organisations and employer associations. They undertake a wide array of activities that vary from collecting information to policy advocacy and orchestrating the coordination of new economic activities – all acts for the public good that

are not likely to be undertaken by any given organisation operating on its own. In the process, they enable cycles of feedback which help overcome information and coordination failure (Weaver & Osterman, 2014:55).

From the short discussion above, it can be seen that the role of intermediaries varies dramatically from, on the one hand, supply-side matchmaking and compensatory mechanisms aimed at ameliorating the dire effects of unemployment in the labour market, to demand-side interventions in various sectoral production regimes, on the other. Also, these differing types of intermediary may occur together, as in the example of community colleges and workforce development initiatives in the United States (to be discussed later in this article), where labour market and production regime interventions are integrated (Weaver & Osterman, 2014).

A theory of intermediation

The next section locates the concept of intermediaries within a wide body of theoretical literature. The concept is included in many contemporary theories of the economy and society, but intermediation has seldom received the attention it deserves in terms of its role in capitalist development. At least four important social science theories have developed the idea of intermediaries and intermediation; these include 'transaction cost' institutional economics, social capital theory, labour market studies and, finally, evolutionary economics.

'Transaction cost' institutional economics

'Transaction cost' institutional economics arose from the work of prominent economists such as Douglas North, Oliver Williamson and Joseph Stiglitz. They have argued that institutional intermediaries reduce the transaction costs incurred between any two or more economic parties who seek to do business with each other. The institutional school argues that almost all economic activities entail transaction costs, including the buying and selling of any commodity. Buyers and sellers have to find each other, prices have to be discovered, negotiations undertaken, contracts drawn up, inspections completed, arrangements made to settle disputes, and so on. According to institutionalist logic, these costs are best managed and kept low through some intermediate set of contractual relationships, rather than through open-market competition (Williamson, 1985; North, 1990).

Social capital theory

Social capital theory has been influential in giving intermediaries more prominent status. According to Putnam (2002), social capital is that set of mutually supportive relationships in communities and nations that facilitate cooperation and which often derive valuable collective and economic benefits for members. Social capital originates from the structures of families, neighbourhoods and local labour markets which yield valuable 'assets' to members – for example, help in acquiring the first job or being accepted as a full member of a community.

The most important of this work has been that of Granovetter (1973), who defined two types of social capital: 'bonding' social capital, which helps members bond internally within their own group; and 'bridging' social capital, which provides cross-cutting links to members of other social groups. 'Bonding' social capital is built out of the strong relationships, norms and networks which define family, community and working life. It is a resource to be drawn upon when needed, for example when searching for a job. However, it is an asset asymmetrically held between children of middle-class families and those from working-class homes and neighbourhoods. Parents from the latter group do not have the same information networks and personal contacts that parents in middle-class homes have.

It is the relationship between 'bonding' within dense, discrete networks and the process of 'bridging' with others in distant networks that is of most interest from an intermediation perspective. Narayan notes that challenges arise when people move from exclusive loyalty to primary social groups (bonding social capital), to networks of secondary associations ('bridging') whose most important characteristic is that they 'bring together people who in some ways are different from the self' (Narayan, 1999:12). Narayan argues that, 'when power between groups is asymmetrically distributed, it is these cross-cutting ties, the linkages between social groups, which become critical to both economic opportunity and social cohesion' (Narayan, 1999:13).

Burt (2003) has made important contributions to overcoming the problems of bridging through his concepts of networks, structural holes and brokerage. Structural holes occur when key actors in the policy process do not interact outside of their own group or professional community, resulting in a constriction of the knowledge flow that is crucial to the policymaking process. Conversely, actors who are well connected or forge strong ties with groupings outside of their own communities in domains such as firms, sectors, regions, colleges or universities play a crucial brokerage role in overcoming structural holes in the process of knowledge circulation (Burt, 2003:3). These brokers obtain what Culpepper (2002) calls relational information – again, a crucial input in policy. Burt (2003:5) provides examples of brokerage activity, the simplest being 'making people on both sides of a structural hole aware of interests and difficulties that others experience in other groupings'. Transferring best practice is a higher level of brokerage. Burt (2003) argues that brokers are critical to learning and creativity. People whose networks span structural holes have 'early access to diverse, often contradictory information and interpretations which gives them a competitive advantage in delivering good ideas' and being able to provide solutions to problems bedevilling the interfaces between groups (Burt, 2003:5).

Labour market studies

Leading American labour market theorists such as Paul Osterman and Thomas Kochan have been arguing for over two decades for the adoption of intermediation as a means of resolving deep-rooted labour market problems in the United States context. The main premise of their argument is that, with the demise of structured internal labour markets (ILMs) and external

or occupational labour markets (OLMs) in global economies, the need to adopt intermediary services has grown.

The collapse of ILMs and secure long-term employment was brought about largely as a consequence of the wave of neo-liberal restructuring and trade liberalisation since the 1980s. State-sponsored employment programmes have struggled to redress the absence of these structured ILM and OLM pathways from school into work, and this has led to a highly inefficient set of labour market mechanisms in the current period (Kochan et al., 2012).

Osterman (2004) writes that the old system of employment has been blown apart by a number of factors. The first has been the wave of deregulation – in airlines, banking, insurance, telecommunications, and water and energy provision – that has transformed the competitive landscape. A second factor has been the spread of new technologies that allow companies to organise work in new ways: many of these innovations – just-in-time inventory, work teams, quality programmes and outsourcing – have led to increased productivity but with leaner staffing (Osterman, 2004:156–157).

A third factor has been the changing nature of skills and the weakening incentives for employers to maintain long-term links with employees. Skills have become more general and therefore more transferable, and employers have become reluctant to invest in long-lasting relationships with workers that entail upskilling and career development. A fourth factor shaping the new labour market landscape has been the growth of outsourcing as large firms decided to focus only on their core competencies. This led to extensive outsourcing as firms disposed of their non-core business functions to external service providers. All of the above pressures led firms to reconsider their employment systems. The aggregated effect of all of these changes created higher turnover and a less secure, more volatile labour market.

In this chaotic laissez-faire environment, new labour market institutions have emerged to rebuild bridges to employers and replace the structured internal and occupational labour markets of yesteryear. These institutions have been termed 'workforce intermediaries' in the American literature. They are an emergent phenomenon, with a number of 'best practices' described across the United States.

Kazis (1998) argues that an efficient labour market on the demand side requires accurate and readily available information about local job openings and general agreement about the skills levels required for these jobs. Information is also needed on the supply side regarding the skills and qualifications of local workers. At the same time, an efficient labour market enables employers to find qualified workers in ways that minimise recruitment, remedial training, and the turnover costs resulting from poor job matches. For much of the 20th century, the dominant strategy for achieving these efficiency goals was to engage ILMs and OLMs. They are no longer there and a new labour market crisis has emerged (Kazis, 1998:9–10).

Intermediation role of local workforce investment boards and community colleges
Osterman and others cite American local workforce investment boards (LWIBs) and community colleges as examples of excellent intermediaries. In particular, it is the 'policy integration' of economic and workforce development initiatives in the United States over the past three decades that has been significant in enabling effective intermediation. This focus on 'integration' emerged with the passing of the Clinton-era Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998. The WIA requires each state governor to submit a Strategic Workforce Plan to the federal Department of Labour (DoL) outlining a five-year strategy for its workforce development system. Once a state-level Strategic Workforce Plan is approved, funding is devolved to LWIBs against their own five-year plans.

Today, there are more than 600 LWIBs and 3 000 one-stop shops which provide a range of employment and social services. They operate in decentralised settings where 'states and local governing boards [have] more power' (OECD, 2008:58–61). Many states have used the WIA and its funds to forge partnerships with the state-level agencies responsible for economic development and educational operations. This has entailed partnerships with non-profit organisations such as charitable foundations to help finance and deliver special workforce development programmes (OECD, 2008:58–61).

Social compact politics
Kochan (2013) and Kazis (1998) see intermediaries as a valuable tool in the development of social democratic politics, viewing them as pivotal in forging social compacts for employment and economic growth between governments, employers and workers. The form of intermediation understood here is for intermediaries to use their credibility and support in the community and in the workplace to 'prod employers to change firm behaviour in ways that improve job quality and opportunities for advancement' (Kazis, 2004:80). They do not accept that employer demand is given and static. Intermediaries attempt to change employer demand in ways that reduce inefficiencies and inequalities in wages, benefits, job security and advancement (Kazis, 1998:21). Intermediaries achieve these goals by working closely with employers to understand the specific needs of their sectors.

The best organisational form with which to achieve these goals is intermediaries working within what Kazis calls wider 'coalition networks' (1998:56–57) and what Kochan (2013:299) calls 'job compacts'. Kazis (1998:31) argues that employer associations initiate and/or join consortia to increase employer clout in the workforce development marketplace and to capture economies of scale that require inter-firm cooperation in skills development.

Evolutionary economics

The theoretical school of 'evolutionary economics' is a large and hybrid grouping of cognate and overlapping influences, including institutional economics, economic geography, regional and local economic development theory, and innovation studies. Nelson and Winter (1982:152) wrote the seminal work on evolutionary economics and defined the firm as a

repository of knowledge embodied in 'routines' or 'social practices' in an organisation. Firms may be expected to behave in the future according to the routines they have employed in the past.

A second key tenet of the evolutionary school is that product and process improvements in a firm are fundamentally a result of internal, localised, path-dependent and interactive processes – both in a firm and between firms operating in local clusters. The evolutionary focus is primarily on how the economy transforms itself from within. The organisational memory of past routines is a critical input to the current and future innovational capabilities of a firm.

A third major focus is on innovation and the generation of 'novelty' as the ultimate source of self-transformation. Novelty is the creative capacity of economic agents to drive economic evolution and adaptation. Innovation and knowledge are central to this process of novelty – it is the internal production of new knowledge that drives the innovation process (Boschma & Martin, 2010:5).

'Innovation' as a key concept

The substantial literature on innovation is an influential subdivision of the larger evolutionary economics school. The innovation school has a twofold focus: first, a 'systems' perspective concerned with the building of national innovation systems (NISs) and, secondly, a major focus in the regional innovation systems (RISs) literature on the spatial dimensions of innovation and place-based innovation policies (Lundvall & Borrás, 1997; Cooke, 2004).

The RIS focus is based on the idea that regional competitive advantage is increasingly innovation-based, and that innovations emerge when existing knowledge is continuously reconfigured into new combinations in local contexts. Both approaches stress interactions between industry and organisations involved in knowledge exploration, such as universities and research centres (Coenen, Asheim, Bugge & Herstad, 2017:603). Both foci – an NIS and an RIS approach – see innovation as a social learning process that takes place in a context of networks and institutions and which can be proactively influenced to build the innovation capacity of firms, regions and nations.

Watkins, Papaioannou, Mugwagwa and Kale (2015) maintain that intermediaries play a direct role in this innovation process. First, they may perform the function of information collection and exchange through various networks. Such information might be about current and emerging technologies, new products and processes, changing regulation, and potential partners and competitors. Secondly, intermediaries can contribute directly to the construction or development of a network by bringing together similar and/or complementary actors. They act as a network-selection mechanism. Thirdly, once a collaborative relationship between network members is established, intermediaries can then help to manage and develop those relationships, facilitating the collaboration process (Watkins et al., 2015:1409).

The role of the state and non-market institutions

A key issue which has not yet been raised in this discussion so far is the role of the state in the learning economy. The differences between the new model of the firm and the traditional view of the state have widened. In fact, the traditional organisational structure of the state has stronger affinities with earlier corporate models of work organisation and, in particular, the bureaucratic forms of control that reside in large vertically integrated conglomerates. The usual image of the state is that it is bureaucratic, rigid in its application of rule-based operational procedures, and inflexible in the face of change. Its mode of regulation is one of 'command and control' (Wolfe & Gertler, 2002). Overcoming this organisational gulf between traditional state structures and the new forms of networking between firms is a major task for modern governments, especially in key policy areas highly dependent on cooperative relationships, including industrial policy, enterprise training, and small-business development.

The primary mechanism, according to evolutionary economics, appears to be strategically placed institutional intermediaries who can play an interlocutor role between state and capital. Chang (2004) argues, from an industrial policy perspective, that the task of intermediary organisations is to induce private actors into new activities that they would have had no interest in entering under free-market conditions. As Chang suggests, an electronics industry that is non-existent today has nobody to advance its interests – even though it might be very successful tomorrow (Chang, 2004:167). Closing this gap – between public policy (for example, developing a new electronics industry) and the interests of a local entrepreneurial community – is no easy task.

Evolutionary economics has taught us that non-market institutions play a central role in the economy. This is because institutions, through synergistic interaction with each other, produce certain 'collective goods' such as multifunctional skills, enterprise research and development (R&D), networking, industrial clustering, and cooperative industrial relations, all of which are central elements of competitiveness in the new global economy.

These collective goods do not arise easily under purely market conditions. This, taking enterprise training as an example, is because of the 'standard externality problem', by which individual employers, faced with training decisions based purely on 'free-market' principles, most often fail to provide sufficient training for society's needs. When employers do train personnel, they tend to train in narrow companyspecific skills. Those employers who do not train, poach.

However, market failure becomes a more severe problem when considered against the complexity of the changes required in the shift up the value chain towards higher value-added production, which is the central pillar of competitiveness in the new global economy. Private enterprises and the market mechanism are not well placed to initiate this vast array of changes, precisely because the benefits to society are far greater than those accruing to

individual employers. Dynamic growth depends on investments in infrastructure being made on a scale far beyond the means of any single employer. What is required is large-scale investment in education and training institutions, R&D facilities, employer associations, innovation partnerships between higher education institutions and industry, and industrial peace. These investments are best attained through cooperation between the state, employers and civil society. Such cooperation is usually expressed organisationally, by social institutions interacting and working together to attain certain commonly agreed social outcomes (Streeck, 1992).

Organisational capabilities needed to undertake intermediation

Having outlined the theoretical evolution of the concept of intermediation, the key practical question which now arises is: How does this conceptualisation of intermediaries translate into a doable number of functions that a body such as a SETA could carry out? The theoretical literature reviewed above points to at least two capabilities that are required to perform intermediation: (1) having embedded sectoral expertise to convince actors to behave differently; and (2) possessing brokerage skills.

'Embedded' expertise of the sector

In achieving the kind of intermediation suggested above, SETAs will need to have an intimate knowledge of the sectors they operate in. More specifically, a dedicated unit of core staff members needs to have considerable expertise of the economic sector they work in, the problems faced by it, and the solutions needed – both in terms of skills development and, more broadly, in terms of moving up the sectoral value chain. This requires personnel in the SETAs who have both theoretical knowledge of the sector and practical work experience in the sector. Writing from a vocational education and training perspective, Crouch, Finegold and Sako (1999:232) argue that these intermediary agencies need to possess an authority based on 'constantly updated knowledge so that firm competencies can be ratcheted up and so that educational institutions and relevant government departments can be kept in touch with what is required'.

In South Africa, such authority and expertise do not exist across all 21 SETAs. In-house research capacity is largely absent in these sector skills bodies. The majority of staff employed by the SETAs have no industry experience – most come with prior experience of working in the school and adult education systems. Unfortunately, knowledge of formal schooling is insufficient preparation for understanding the dynamics of a complex economic sector (NSA, 2018b:63).

'Brokerage' skills

'Brokerage', that is, brokering deals among disconnected and sometimes conflicting members, is another key function needed for intermediation. Williams defines the act of 'brokering' as follows:

> Brokering … depends on the employment of a range of competencies and skills – an acute understanding of interdependencies between problems, solutions and organizations; an interpersonal style that is facilitating, respectful and trusting; and a drive to devise solutions that make a difference to solving problems on the ground (Williams, 2002:117).

Brokerage requires 'boundary-crossing' to occur. Intermediaries who help isolated actors to cross boundaries serve 'as mutually trusted lynchpins between social groups'. In short, they 'help overcome informational asymmetries, establish a common set of expectations, and facilitate goal adjustment' (Williams, 2002:108). Brokers and boundary-crossers have the capacity to bring together unlikely partners, break through red tape, and see problems in new ways which defy conventional wisdom. For Jessop (2003:18), the role of such interlocutors is to simplify a 'complex, contradictory and changing reality in order to be able to act'.

Brokerage is often required in contexts where public policy requires a defined set of social partners to work together and collaborate, but where something is at odds with their normal governance routines. In some cases, certain stakeholders are difficult to bring on board – for example, small enterprises. They tend (at least initially) to stay away from collective activities of employer associations because they have few resources to contribute to industry development or workforce management and skills. However, through the efforts of brokerage, small enterprises can become an integral part of the public-policy process – for example, through their inclusion in supply chains (OECD, 2012:24).

Good brokerage requires 'dialogic capacity' (De Matos, Cassiolato & Lastres, 2018). Dialogic capacity comprises the ability to promote problem-solving discussions among members. Discussion allows groups to overcome informational gaps because it enables them collectively to brainstorm and to devise solutions no member would probably have imagined individually. If an organisation has this capacity, 'its ability to broker deals among conflicting members gives these decisions a certain legitimacy with all members, even those who are not favoured by a given bargain' (Culpepper, 2002:777).

Extent of intermediation in South Africa

The extent of intermediation activities in South Africa is unknown: little research exists to draw on in order to make definitive conclusions about intermediation. However, in recent times, researchers have taken an interest in it. Peterson, Kruss, McGrath and Gastrow (2016), for example, in research conducted for the government-funded Labour Market Intelligence Partnership, have used the concept of intermediaries to highlight science, technology and industrial policy in three sector-specific case studies: sugarcane growing and milling, automotive component manufacturing, and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) sectoral systems of innovation. This research concluded that public–private intermediaries play crucial coordinating roles and that the potential exists for public intermediaries to contribute more effectively to systemic functioning (Peterson et al., 2016).

Similarly, Marock (2015) has examined the work of NGOs in the youth labour market from an intermediary perspective. Marock completed three 'best-practice' case studies of NGOs that aimed to put first-time entrants into work. All three of the NGO programmes had been designed to 'mitigate the access barriers faced by young work-seekers in seeking formal sector employment' (Marock, 2015:4). These barriers included not having access to social networks that lead to job opportunities and, related to this, not having job search knowledge critical to accessing formal-sector employment. Marock also touches on the reality that employers prefer to use prior work experience rather than the Grade 12 school-leaving certificate as a predictor of success in the workplace. This preference locks out first-time work-seekers from new-entry opportunities. Marock argues that it is the combination of these social barriers to entry that have triggered the labour market interventions of the NGOs reviewed. Understood theoretically, these social barriers are imposed by societal institutions and processes: they are not irreversible and can be removed or altered through purposive countervailing action – something which NGO intermediaries are good at.

Success stories in the current South African training system

Outside of this small body of academic work, there are a few examples of good intermediation practice that stand out but are as yet undocumented by scholars. For example, the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) was introduced by the Mbeki government in 2006 when there was a serious shortage of artisans and a near-collapse of the apprenticeship training system. The key feature of the scheme was to bring everybody back into the system to help solve the problem of apprenticeship training. The broker role was played by a JIPSA secretariat managed by the National Business Initiative (NBI), an employer-linked NGO. These brokerage interventions helped significantly to overcome the decline in the production of new artisans as witnessed in previous years (JIPSA, 2009; 2010). The changes introduced after JIPSA's brokering intervention were largely institutional: a Chief Directorate for National Artisan Development was established at the Institute for the National Development of Learnerships, Employment Skills and Labour Assessments (INDLELA) in 2010, with four directorates: Artisan Development; Trade Test Application and Assessment; Career Development; and Artisan Registration. The first directorate, Artisan Development, hosts a National Artisan Development Support Centre, which performs the important function of data management and dissemination (DHET, 2018:13). The directorate also hosts the National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB), which plays a critical role in monitoring the performance of apprentices in trade tests in addition to moderating trade-test results. From the outset, a consultative and cooperative approach was pursued by the chief directorate. The primary benefit of this brokering approach was that a large number of people were 'taken along' with the process to achieve a single national artisan development system, and, in this way, this large group of individuals developed a system they can relate to and 'own' (HRDC, 2013). These institutional changes led to a dramatic improvement in the enrolment and graduation of artisans in the period after JIPSA. For example, apprenticeship registrations improved from 36 703 for the period 2000 to 2005 at the end of the National Skills Development Strategy One (NSDS1), reaching 32 748 for the period 2005 to 2010 at the

end of NSDS2. This decline in numbers was largely due to the transfer of the entire Skills Development Branch from the Department of Labour to the DHET in 2009, a major institutional reform which took a long time to finalise. Enrolment numbers across the training spectrum froze in the years 2009 to 2011 until the transfer of the division had stabilised. Nonetheless, JIPSA-inspired preparations for increasing apprenticeship enrolments continued during this period and, by 2017, the total figure had reached 137 836 for the five-year period 2012 to 2017 at the end of NSDS3. Similarly, the numbers graduating as registered artisans significantly improved from the low of 2 779 artisans graduating in 2003 to 12 129 in 2012 and 21 198 in 2017 (INDLELA data).

A second example is the Centres of Specialisation (CoS) project, a DHET artisan-training initiative run under the leadership of its Special Projects Unit (SPU). The SPU plays the role of a public-sector intermediary. In its attempt to introduce a German-style model of dual apprenticeship training, the CoS has set three criteria for participation by employers: (a) they must be within commutable distance of the college; (b) these employers must be prepared to work with the college; and (c) they must also be prepared to work with the dual artisan system model so that the learner will rotate between the college and the firm. The CoS project seeks to facilitate a more frequent rotation between the college and workplace than was traditionally associated with the old South African 'block-release' system which saw apprentices spend a short period of time in practical training in between theoretical lectures at the college. In the CoS, learning has three components: theory, practice and workplace experience. The aim of the initiative is to extend it to 13 trades in 26 colleges (out of a total of 50), but, if the model works, it can grow to other occupations.

The project leader of the CoS at the time of the research described the work of the project as 'occupational intermediation'. This intermediation is premised on training nationally for one occupational category – for example, electrician – because then all trained artisans can find employment in multiple sectors where electricians are required. Currently, each economic sector has its own electrician certificate registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), making mobility across sectors difficult. For the project leader, cross-sectoral intermediation entailed striking a deal between multiple employer groups, SETAs, colleges and curriculum experts in order to build a single occupational qualification for each of the 13 trades – a massive brokering task.

Views of key stakeholders in the training system

There are many other examples of intermediation in South Africa but they are mostly undocumented. To overcome this paucity of information, four senior officials in the South African skills development system were interviewed in 2018 about their views on intermediation practices initiated by the SETAs. The interviewees were: The former Deputy Director General of Skills Development in the Department of Labour who was Director of the SPU in the DHET at the time; the Director of SETA (Sector Education and Training Authority) Support and Learnerships, DHET; the Senior Manager for Applied Research and

Innovation at the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA); and the Head of Research at BANKSETA.

The interviews sought, first, to elicit senior skills officials' views on 'intermediation' as an organisational tool to deploy in the skills system, and, secondly, whether they could report on any intermediation practices taking place in the skills system. The following are extracts from their comments, clustered under particular themes that were highlighted across the four interviews.

The limits of intermediation

Much of the interview discussion was concerned with the limits of intermediation. For example, the BANKSETA head of research indicated that SETAs do not see employers as social partners with a common vision regarding human-capital development. Instead, they see employers contractually as levy-paying organisations seeking to access the skills levy through mandatory and discretionary grants. The concept of 'partnership' in this SETA environment, she opined, was defined by two rather restrictive contract documents: the Service-Level Agreement (SLA) and the .Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) – in her view, a rather narrow and legalistic interpretation of the potential of partnership:

> The relationship that most SETAs have with employers would be around the distribution of discretionary grants either through funding windows or engagements for them to undertake workplace-based learning. But engaging with employers in terms of broader skills-related issues facing the sector does not happen in a coordinated manner but rather in isolated instances (Interviewee 1, BANKSETA, March 2018).

According to this interviewee, stakeholder dialogue in a SETA environment is closed. It is literally a linear type of engagement:

> SETAs tend to be guided by issues raised in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training. If these strategy documents indicate, for example, that capacity building of public higher education institutions is a priority, SETAs respond via discretionary grants and various interventions to support these strategies. SETAs do not fulfil the intermediation role of bringing social partners together to broker a broader mandate in a well-planned, structured manner on a frequent basis (Interviewee 1, BANKSETA, March 2018).

The Director of SETA Support and Learnerships in the DHET agreed with the above view. According to her, SETAs have in the main focused on using the 'carrot and stick' of financial incentives to get employers to deliver on projects without using additional types of mediation such as 'brokerage' and 'visioning' wider sectoral needs. Dissatisfaction by employers and

their lack of skills system buy-in present further problems. For DHET officials, this stance is difficult to work with. While, on the one hand, according to her,

> … employers disown participation in the skills system in one breath, on the other hand, employers are part and parcel of the SETA Board. But they don't use this facility strategically. In disowning participation in the system, employers say that they don't share the same vision, their enterprise needs are different, they're competitive with other players in the sector and can't cooperate. It makes working together as a collective very difficult (Interviewee 2, March 2018).

According to the BANKSETA interviewee, SETAs have not placed much emphasis on developing stakeholder engagement strategies and this has restricted their ability to broker more expansive education and training agreements. She maintained that there has been a lot of confusion in the SETAs between what actually constitutes a partnership and contractual agreements that are entered into with role players in the sectors:

> In developing the Sector Skills Plan, an entire chapter is dedicated to partnerships. It is here that SETAs can clearly demonstrate the role they play as intermediaries. However, a partnership must not be confused with a contractual agreement where clearly defined deliverables are matched with a payment. In a partnership, a number of social partners engage and contribute to finding a solution to a skills development challenge (Interviewee 1, BANKSETA, March 2018).

The absence of trust is a major contributor to low levels of intermediation, argued the senior official from merSETA, holding that SETAs are wary of the present discussions about restructuring the current SETA landscape. Moreover, she said, employers do not trust that the money will be put to better use outside the current system, which is largely about who controls the money (Interviewee 3, 2018).

Asking too much of SETAs

Here, the DHET director of SETA Support and Learnerships argued that expecting the SETAs to go beyond their current modus operandi is asking too much, because, at this stage, there is little capacity in the system to do that. She said:

> We've had to go back to basics and say to the SETAs, first get better labour market information, and then determine the next step. This is our approach now – let's go back to the basics and fix that before we start moving in a more complex direction (Interviewee 2, March 2018).

While the director of the SPU in the DHET agreed that the role of intermediaries was a valuable way of looking at improved SETA performance, she believed that the concept ran the risk of asking too much of SETAs given the lack of capacity. For example, the idea of

SETAs providing business-support services in order to improve productivity and work organisation and offering this to individual firms or a collective of firms in a cluster, was asking too much. At best, she thought, intermediation would entail partnerships between the SETAs and industry associations but not dedicated services that other organisations such as the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and Productivity South Africa (PSA) offer. This suggestion, she cautioned, still faced the problem that agencies such as SETAs, the Department of Trade and Industry, SEDA and PSA operated in silos and did not easily find each other for purposes of offering a collective basket of enterprise services (Interviewee 4, 2018).

No training on how to be an effective SETA employee

A further problem inhibiting intermediation has been the lack of sector training for SETA personnel. At the launch of the SETAs, many former school and adult education teachers were recruited, giving the SETAs educational know-how but not embedded knowledge of the industries they were to serve. The director of the SPU at the DHET agreed that this was not ideal and that it was an unplanned and unexpected outcome, saying that people with sectoral expertise had not entered the SETAs when they were formed at the time:

> We always wanted that embedded, intimate knowledge of the sector, and we really didn't get it. We always hoped that by setting up a board of social partners that they would ensure that the staff came from the sector. I fully agree with the point that they should come with real expertise from the sector, and it didn't really happen. I'm not sure whether we understand fully why the general pattern emerged that we got people who were generalists rather than sectoral experts, which I always believed was central (Interviewee 4, March 2018).

The DHET SETA Support and Learnerships official acknowledged, too, that there had been no formal training programme in the time that she had been at the DHET, nor had there been any requirement that SETA personnel should have a specific form of sectoral expertise prior to appointment (or indeed post-appointment). The interviewee indicated that SETAs were formally constituted, independent bodies and so it had been difficult for the DHET to prescribe to these institutions what training should be conducted. Ideally, she continued, all mid- to senior-level staff should have a sound knowledge base regarding the sector: for example, staff needed to understand employer dynamics and labour market processes, because, without understanding these phenomena, how would these SETA officials translate plans into supply-side policy? In her current job at DHET as director of SETA support, she said:

> …it very rarely occurred that a SETA official would articulate these employer needs and demands to me in any kind of detail. This was disconcerting for me, because I would have this problem over and over again … .And the low levels of trust currently in the system also restrict the flow of expertise to the SETAs – especially from employers (Interviewee 2, March 2018).

On the other hand, though, some SETAs did possess sector-based expertise in the form of personnel who entered the SETA from industry. For instance, interviews revealed that every client liaison officer and quality assurance officer in the merSETA was a qualified artisan who had worked in the manufacturing industry. In the BANKSETA, many of the senior leaders had come from the banking sector. However, it appeared that the challenge for SETAs was to combine sector expertise – as in the case of the two examples mentioned above – with the curriculum and pedagogic expertise needed to understand the education and training system as well. Having both capabilities should be a major end-goal, but it would seem that it was not easily achieved by the SETAs.

Compliance and the 'tick-box culture'

A final constraint on intermediation has already been discussed in the introduction – the straightjacket of performativity and financial compliance. As indicated earlier, the PFMA entails a highly bureaucratic system comprising all of the arduous tasks of supply chain and performance management. Implementing this in the skills system has resulted in a highly compliance-oriented service provision model emerging where the main objective of SETA management is to avoid incurring qualified audits by the Auditor-General. This problem has also introduced a pervasive short-termism – most often resulting in contracts of only one or two years, an emphasis on the production of quantitative indicators (even if most training situations do not lend themselves easily to quantitative measures), and a strong orientation towards avoiding risk and experimentation. Intermediation does not easily emerge in this environment because it requires openness to new ways of doing things, taking the inputs of other players seriously, building consensus, and adopting medium- to longer-term solutions. Interviewees confirmed these problems in the following comments:

> Much of the work of SETA staff is in response to head office driving them on numbers. It's all about numbers … . In fact, the service-level agreement adopted by the DHET is all numbers-based; it's not qualitative. How many partnerships do you have? How many learners registered are undertaking artisan training? How many of them qualify? How many skills programmes were entered into and completed? How many bursaries? There is nothing qualitative about it. So the DHET is actually driving this behaviour. We sign an SLA with them every year and it has become a straitjacket which restricts intermediation (Interviewee 3, March 2018).

> When you look at SETA delivery, a lot of it entails tick-box exercises. Really meaningful data is difficult to get – for example, actually measuring the socio-economic impact of the SETA. Because you don't have valid and verifiable data, what you end up with is a focus on meeting DHET SLA deliverables. Compliance with the PFMA, National Treasury guidelines and any other compliance that they have to meet to get an unqualified audit from the Auditor-General seems to be the focus of the SETA (Interviewee 1, BANKSETA, March 2018).

Conclusion

A number of key observations can be made from the above discussion about the SETA skills system.

First, SETAs were established and recruited staff (particularly in the mid- to senior strata) without requiring any expertise in respect of the sectors that staff were about to work in, nor did the SETAs provide sectoral training for staff after recruitment. This has left a big vacuum in the skills system and it explains the rapid adoption of a compliance model as the only governance model put on the table. In addition, the skills system appears unable to engage with employers or to align with small business and industrial policy.

Secondly, South Africa has experimented with 'social compact' agreements (as advocated by Kochan and Kazis earlier in this article) between the key societal stakeholders, especially in the formation of NEDLAC (National Economic Development and Labour Council) and the Growth Summit of 2003. But, more recently, under the Zuma administration, the potential impact of these experiments on the generation of 'collective production goods' such as skills formation and technological innovation has been severely muted. Gwaindepi (2014:82), for example, sees Zuma as taking the pre-2009 ideas of social compacts and a developmental state and turning them into elements of a broader populist strategy 'despite the fact that they were never developed beyond rhetoric'.

Thirdly, although there are pockets of innovative intermediation in the skills systems, it is clear that there are many obstacles to be overcome before intermediation becomes a more dynamic and influential part of the overall system. The problems are varied, from the straightjacket of PFMA compliance to the limited capabilities within the SETA system to perform anything more than the most basic of functions.

However, with the rise of the Ramaphosa administration since February 2018, committed as it is to social compacts and given the existing pockets of excellence in intermediation described in this article, a gradual introduction of more intermediation activities in the system is possible. The current debate about reducing the number of SETAs, and, in so doing, reducing their inflated bureaucracies, could provide an opportunity to rejig the capabilities in the skills system, prioritising people who have credible sectoral expertise. Proposals to restructure the many SETAs into fewer 'value chain'-driven organisations would help to develop this economic and sectoral expertise. And, finally, comprehensive training interventions for SETA staff to develop intermediation capabilities would be most valuable in this changing context.

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TVET policy in South Africa: Caught between neo-liberalism and privatisation?

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ABSTRACT

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) policy in South Africa since 1994 has stressed the vital importance of this sector in contributing to economic growth and alleviating socio-economic inequities. Twenty years after these policies were first set down and replicated in subsequent legislation, South Africa's TVET sector has not been able to contribute to the key policy priority of reducing unemployment. Moreover, the sector has had a limited impact on achieving the nation's economic goals. From the perspective of developing human capital, significant state investment in this sector has realised very low economic returns. There is extensive literature on the privatisation of education and the effects this has had on education and training policies and systems. This article draws on theoretical approaches that analyse the internal and external changes to public education and training systems as a result of privatisation. Furthermore, the article argues that both public and private TVET providers have been subjected to differing endogenous and exogenous privatisation approaches as defined by Ball and Youdell (2007). These dual approaches have affected the ability of the TVET college sector to respond effectively to South Africa's education and training needs for economic growth, despite the prioritisation of this sector in government policy.

KEYWORDS

TVET; TVET colleges; privatisation; education and training

Introduction

The privatisation of education is a global phenomenon that is taking place across both developed and developing nations. Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo (2016:7) define the privatisation of education as

> a process through which private organisations and individuals participate increasingly and actively in a range of education activities and responsibilities that traditionally have been the remit of the state.

Ball and Youdell (2007) note that vocational education and training (VET) is the most privatised sector in education globally. Technical and occupational training in South Africa has been heavily influenced by its colonial and apartheid past, which has left lasting legacies (Badroodien, 2004; Kraak, 2004). Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, policies for the South African TVET sector have adopted a range of reforms that have sought to transform and modernise the sector in order to adapt it to developmental priorities of the democratic state. These transformative policies have included both endogenous and exogenous privatisation approaches. This article argues that South Africa's adoption of economic neo-liberal reforms has led to a range of privatisation approaches in public education and training systems that affect TVET provision.

In attempting to analyse the extent to which privatisation policies have affected the ability of the TVET sector to respond to South Africa's development priorities, the article outlines the literature on privatisation, with a specific emphasis on privatisation approaches in South Africa's education and training sectors. The article then critiques South Africa's education and training policies for the TVET sector from 1994 to the present.

In adopting a political-economy approach, this article uses privatisation as a lens through which to illuminate the contradictory and countervailing policies for the TVET sector. In the critique of privatisation policies for the South African TVET sector, the article seeks to explain how, 20 years after the first policies were legislated for this sector, the TVET college sector has been subjected to differing stances affecting privatisation that do not enable this sector to align effectively with the economy or provide a platform for promoting the aims of the government's socio-economic policy.

Review of the literature on privatisation of public education and training

Ball and Youdell (2007) point to the emergence of privatisation in state education systems from the late 1980s and the early 1990s. They note that privatisation interventions were focused on the introduction of 'small state-free market' approaches to public services championed by political figures such as Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (Ball & Youdell, 2007:14). However, countries such as New Zealand and Chile also drew on free-market approaches developed by economists from

the Chicago school of free-market economics. The introduction of privatisation principles and approaches to state public systems is often commonly referred to as 'neo-liberalism'. The concept of public services being viewed as a small state alongside a free-market economy is now a dominant approach to public education globally, regardless of whether political or economic concerns have prompted these changes (Verger et al., 2016).

Privatisation policies have generated significant academic debates. Critiques of human-capital theory approaches and neo-liberalism are well known in South Africa and internationally (Valley & Motala, 2016; Verger et al., 2016). Ball and Youdell's (2007) definition of endogenous and exogenous privatisation in education is acknowledged in the academic literature on privatisation (Verger et al., 2016). Ball and Youdell (2007:16) note:

> Privatisation tendencies are at the centre of the shift from education being seen as a public good that serves the whole community, to education being seen as a private good that serves the interest of the educated individual, the employer and the economy.

Key characteristics of endogenous privatisation include the introduction of new public-management approaches from the 1970s that focus on performance management, accountability and performance-related pay and place pressure on public education systems to adopt business reforms in order to be more efficient and productive.

Verger et al. (2016) note two established theories of education policy change – namely the Globally Structured Education Agenda (GSEA) and World Culture Theory – that focus on the external influences affecting changes in education policy. The former sees the global capitalist economy as a key driver of change. This drive is led by institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which set targets and standards for education (Dale & Jesson, 1993; Robertson, 2005). Advocates of the World Culture Theory argue that similar education policy approaches are adopted globally on the basis of a common vision of a Westernised modern nation state that exerts pressure on countries, especially developing countries, to show that they are constructing similar modern states. Verger et al. (2016) also note that private providers are increasingly focusing on new education markets funded by public resources.

Streeck (2011) has noted the effects of capitalism on the public sector through underfunding and privatisation. He argues that global shifts of capital markets to tax havens, lower tax regimes and nation states which, from the 1980s, offered tax cuts, have left countries with high public deficits. This has resulted in reduced government expenditure on social security, as well as on investment in physical infrastructure and human capital. He states that privatisation was a key part of this process, which was

> carried out regardless of the contribution public investment in productivity and social cohesion might have made to economic growth and social equity (Streek, 2011:60).

Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2008) have written extensively on the capitalist market-led approach to education and training in the United Kingdom. The approach has been to massify education that is aimed at the production of high-level skills which attract high wages. In following this approach, learners invest in their own education in order to improve their chances of high-level incomes. By focusing on high-level skills, so the approach has held, expertise would be retained in the United Kingdom and lower-level skills development would be left to developing countries.

Brown et al. (2008) note, however, that, with globalisation, knowledge production has shifted away from developed economies such as the United Kingdom, as multinational companies are increasingly focusing on developing their own human capital in developing countries where labour costs are much cheaper. They argue that the market-led focus of education will not result in high-level skills being retained in the United Kingdom, because British graduates will increasingly have to sell their skills globally.

From a southern African perspective, McGrath and Lugg (2012) drew on a case study of the status of TVET in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in order to critique the notion of an international VET policy toolkit. They argued that national contexts are more important than 'generalisable laws of TVET reform'. Key features of the international VET toolkit included statistical evidence to inform evidence-based policy decisions and the use of policy to drive educational change in a context of governance steering reforms within a neo-liberal framework. They noted further that new public-management policy approaches underpinned the VET policy toolkit, including issues of performativity, decentralisation and marketisation. They asserted that some of these neo-liberal policy reforms were contested, citing as an example South Africa where

> a national belief in the need for the state itself to be performative and developmental led to a strong view that decentralisation led to poor policy implementation and, therefore, undermined achievement of developmental goals (McGrath & Lugg, 2012:700).

Following the establishment of national qualification frameworks in Australia, England, Scotland and South Africa, these frameworks are currently being developed in more than 100 countries. Allais (2012:635) argues that 'the "market of qualifications" approach is associated with qualifications reform and qualification frameworks'. She states, further, that outcomes-based qualification frameworks are 'a quintessential neo-liberal type of reform because they are focused on state regulation of service delivery, instead of the state providing public goods' (Allais, 2012:637). Allais notes that liberal market economies have weak vocational training systems and lower levels of entry-level skills training compared with coordinated market economies such as those of Germany and Scandinavia.

In a South African context, Allais (2012) regards South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as an example of a market-led intervention that is not responsive to the

needs of the economy or society. In noting that a regulatory state is not a small state, she argues that the South African qualifications framework shows how a

> policy which[,] on the one hand[,] is strongly centralizing – in terms of control and accountability mechanisms, andz standards specification – but[,] on the other, strongly decentralizing – in terms of the management and delivery of education and the development of curriculum – has been very damaging to a sector which is extremely diverse and mainly institutionally weak (Allais, 2012:637).

This is corroborated by Marais (2011:339), who asserts:

> Constant and considerable state intervention in the economy (and society broadly) is a hallmark of neoliberalism, including in the early wave of pioneering neoliberal states. In fact, what most distinguished them from their predecessors was their aggressive deployment of the state's powers and resources to advance the interests of conglomerate corporations, attack popular social formations and police society.

Kraak (2013) corroborates Allais's (2012) criticism that South Africa is an example of a market-led model of skills development similar to that of the United Kingdom. He asserts that both countries focus excessively on supply-side interventions, where, despite the fact that numbers of students are acquiring vocational qualifications every year, the anticipated increase in skilled personnel who could contribute to increased national productivity has not occurred. Kraak (2013) advocates an employer-led demand intervention for skills through sectoral skills councils as a 'radical departure from the centralised and statist approaches of the UK and South Africa'. This intervention should promote localised entities with a remit to influence firms' 'competitive strategies' directly (Kraak, 2013:5). He notes the lack of employer support for vocational training and the low levels of employment of graduates with vocational qualifications in the United Kingdom and South Africa. He also points to the need for additional policy reforms in the labour market and employment, including industrial and innovation policies.

This brief overview has outlined the significance of privatisation in neo-liberal or market-led education and training systems in South Africa. The following sections set out the conceptual framework and methodology used for this article in order to analyse the impact of privatisation policies on South Africa's TVET sector.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this article draws extensively on Ball and Youdell's (2007) definitions of privatisation with a view to examining the ways in which privatisation approaches have had an impact on South Africa's TVET sector. Ball and Youdell (2007) use

the terms 'endogenous privatisation' to describe the application of business principles in public institutions and 'exogenous privatisation' to refer to the outsourcing of public education to private providers. They note that the privatisation of education through the use of consultancies and agencies is becoming increasingly common. Ball and Youdell's (2007) definitions of privatisation have enabled the present author to show conflicting and countervailing approaches to privatisation adopted by departments responsible for education and training through frequent policy shifts in the TVET sector in South Africa. As opposed to arguing that privatisation approaches in TVET blindly follow the neo-liberal economic stance adopted by democratic South Africa since 1994, this article asserts that endogenous privatisation interventions in the TVET public sector reflect contested policy imperatives in the TVET sector and the state departments responsible for education and training. These contested imperatives lead to the reversal of many of these interventions. The use of exogenous privatisation enables this article to focus on those facets of publicly funded TVET provision that have been externally outsourced to private for-profit providers. It also favours a focus on the way in which the private TVET sector (including the non-profit and for-profit sectors) have been affected by the policy decisions that have been taken.

Methodology

The methodological approach used for this article entails a detailed analysis of South African education and training policy reforms from the late apartheid years and of subsequent reforms undertaken after the inception of democracy. Both the national and the international literature on privatisation is used to analyse a range of education and training policies aimed at South Africa's public and private TVET sectors with a view to identifying the ways in which Ball and Youdell's (2007) definitions of privatisation have been applied.

The specific policies drawn on for this analysis start with the Reconstruction and Development Policy (RSA, 1994) to show the initial policy vision for South Africa's education and training sector after democratic government had been attained. The White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995b) is discussed because this policy formally separated educational institutions from workplace training. South Africa introduced a national qualifications framework (RSA, 1995a), which established the qualification levels for vocational education and training and qualifications for workplace training. Policies affecting the TVET sector included:

- The White Paper 4 (RSA, 1998a) that defined private and public further education and training (FET) colleges (now TVET colleges);
- the FET Colleges Act of 2006 (RSA, 2006a), which established public FET colleges as juristic bodies; and
- The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) that led to TVET colleges being centralised under the national Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Parallel education and training policies that affected privatisation interventions in the TVET provision include the Skills Development Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998b), National Skills Development Strategies (DoL, 2005), and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) that reoriented skills development training to public TVET colleges.

The suite of predominantly education and training policies is a key focus of this article because these policies effectively illustrate the ways in which endogenous and exogenous privatisation have affected the ability of the TVET sector to contribute to employment and economic development. The following section details South Africa's initial education and training policies in order to illustrate the transition from apartheid education to post-democracy policies. Endogenous privatisation policy approaches were outlined for South Africa's public TVET sector from 1994 to 2009; these were followed by exogenous privatisation policy approaches during a discussion of skills development legislation led by the Department of Labour (DoL) in the same time period. In 2009, there was a fundamental reordering of education and training in South Africa and both the resultant policies and the effects this had on public and private education and training sectors are discussed here.

South Africa's initial education and training policies

In South Africa, the privatisation of education and training was noted as early as the 1980s when, in an attempt to prolong policies instituted under the apartheid government before 1994, the National Party introduced neo-liberal reforms to education and training. At that time, Kallaway stated:

> In the era of 'reform' during the eighties the state has itself bought into the rhetoric of equality in educational provision (even if it is still separate but equal), but what has been of the utmost significance for the actual shape of policy and practice has been the desire to link the planning of education more directly to the needs of production and to allow a great deal more scope for the private sector in the field of education and planning (Kallaway, 1989:254).

Kallaway (1989) also showed how the apartheid government sold off key parastatals and privatised key state functions such as housing and health in the late 1980s. Kraak (2004) observes that technical colleges were deracialised only after the collapse of artisan training in South Africa in the 1980s following the global oil crisis and recession experienced from the late 1970s. Black Africans therefore entered into artisan training without the support of parastatals to provide the workplace training necessary to achieve artisan trade-test certification.

The introduction of South Africa's first democratic government in 1994 ushered in a range of new policies aimed at overcoming the legacies of apartheid. Many of these policies were

informed by broad-based, anti-apartheid civil-society movements, including the ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training in January 1994 (CEPD, 1994). From a policy perspective, there was strong support for the introduction of American community college models led by non-profit organisations such as the National Institute for Community Education (NICE) and the Community College Association of South Africa as a way of reforming South Africa's education and training system (Raby & Tarrow, 1996). Both of these initiatives envisaged strong civil-society partnerships with the state, which was supported by one of the first post-1994 policies, the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme), in 1995.

A key economic dispensation adopted by the new democratic South African government, the RDP aimed to provide essential infrastructure that would eradicate the socio-economic inequities caused by apartheid. This document noted the severe economic crisis inherited from apartheid and, similarly to Kallaway's argument, it made an important point about the privatisation of the parastatals:

> But in recent years, under the cloak of secrecy, the apartheid state privatised or commercialised many agencies in the public sector (such as Transnet, Eskom, Telkom, Iscor, Foskor, SAA, the Post Office, Forestry and others). Often this policy, unilaterally imposed for ideological reasons, harmed basic services to the poor or reduced the ability of the state to mobilise resources for development (Kallaway, 1989:256).

Together with the technical colleges (now TVET colleges), and prior to their privatisation, these parastatals had previously provided the bulk of artisan training during the apartheid years. Lundall (1997) noted the dominance of parastatals such as Iscor in training artisans for the metal and engineering industry. Once privatised, theses parastatals ceased training artisans, as training was not a business priority. A Presidency Report noted:

> [T]he commercialisation of state-owned enterprises with a greater focus on profit-making in effect compromised training, with many of the training centres being run down (RSA, 2014:11).

The RDP strategy supported the introduction of a qualifications framework together with outcomes- and competency-based education that would cater for all South Africans, an arrangement previously called for by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) as a means of overcoming previous discriminatory education legacies. Adult education, special-needs education and early childhood education were identified as key priorities. However, the RDP was phased out in 1996 after it was realised that the programme did not successfully promote sufficient economic growth; in its stead, the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic strategy was introduced in 1996 to attract investment in South Africa (Le Roux, 1997).

The White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995b) was one of the first policies to be introduced following South Africa's democratic dispensation in 1994. This policy clearly separated education from training: the Ministry of Education was made responsible for schools, colleges and universities and the Ministry of Labour was responsible for skills development in the workplace. The 1995 White Paper noted the need to work closely with the Ministry of Labour, stating:

> The Ministry of Education recognises the Ministry of Labour's essential interest in its active labour market policy, of which the promotion of skills development outside the formal provisioning system for education and training is an integral part (RSA, 1995b:10).

McGrath, Badroodien, Kraak and Unwin (2004) commented on the formation of a National Training Strategy Initiative (1994) led by trade unionists and employers that ultimately culminated in the establishment of South Africa's NQF. This policy process largely excluded education providers, focused as it was primarily on education and training for workers in formal workplaces.

During this reconstruction period, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (RSA, 1995a) led to the implementation of an eight-level NQF that encompassed all education and training in South Africa. Key objectives underpinning the NQF were to redress previous educational inequities and to articulate qualifications across all the education and training bands. South Africa drew heavily on the experiences of New Zealand, Scotland and Australia to develop an NQF for South Africa (Allais, 2012). Ball and Youdell (2007) note that, in New Zealand, the privatisation of education policy was centrally steered by agencies such as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

The next section focuses on policy approaches in South Africa's public FET colleges (now TVET colleges), with the emphasis on endogenous privatisation approaches.

Policies for public further education and training (FET) colleges, 1998–2009

With a change in economic focus from the RDP to GEAR, education and training policies were set to regulate South Africa's public vocational education and training system. McGrath (2010) notes that the initial policy process undertaken through the National Commission for Further Education (NCFE) advocated a community-college model based on trade union and civil-society visions of a new education and training dispensation. However, at the time of the development of the Green Paper for Further Education and Training (DoE, 1998), policy advisors were drawn from the National Business Initiative (NBI), a corporate business fund. The Green Paper for FET differed significantly from proposals set out by the NCFE and a more narrow focus was adopted that largely ignored the non-profit sector and civil society in favour of reforming South Africa's state-funded technical colleges. The Green Paper for FET (DoE, 1998) also demonstrated the state's intention to oversee and steer vocational education and training.

This heightened demand for flexibility and responsiveness carries the following implications for FET:

- A shift from rigid bureaucratic planning and management to an approach which more effectively balances efficient state coordination with market responsiveness; and
- State steering, rather than state control, which encourages and rewards innovation and quality (DoE, 1998: unpaginated).

One outcome of this policy change was that the public technical colleges were renamed FET colleges and the scope of their offering was reduced to NQF Levels 2 to 4 (Grades 10 to 12), which were equivalent to the final three years of formal secondary schooling. Prior to this, many technical colleges had offered more than 90% of their curricula at NQF Level 5 (the first year of higher education). Furthermore, FET colleges were not granted autonomy to develop their own programmes; on the contrary, the provincial education departments were registered as the accreditation authorities, while the FET colleges were designated as local sites of delivery for the provision of FET (RSA, 1998a). White Paper 4 also introduced mandatory college councils for FET colleges; this was an expression of the Department of Education's (DoE) first policy intention to reform public FET colleges as endogenously privatised colleges according to business principles. An example of this was the renaming of college principals as chief executive officers (CEOs) and their deputies as deputy CEOs for academic, administrative and innovation leadership positions. The department's objective through these changes was thus to reflect the state's intention to align the colleges more closely with business principles.

White Paper 4 (RSA, 1998a) clearly demarcated separate education and training responsibilities and assigned them to different government departments:

> In the market for education and skills, the Ministry of Labour operates mainly on the demand side, while the Ministry of Education operates mainly on the supply side. The Skills Development Strategy of the Ministry of Labour provides a framework for determining the training needs in the labour market and the funding mechanisms for training. The FET policy framework provides, in the main, a strategy for suppliers of education and training to respond to the labour market needs as identified by private and public employers (RSA, 1998a:16).

In 2006, the Further Education and Training Colleges Act was passed. This Act formalised the merger of 128 technical colleges into 50 new public FET colleges through the New Institutional Landscape Policy implemented by the Department of Education (DoE) in 2001. Together with the merger process, the Act also made the 50 FET colleges juristic bodies with governing councils, which signalled a significant privatisation intervention. Also, as part of the merger process, all FET college staff were transferred from the employ of their provincial education department to become FET College Council employees. An exception to this was senior management: the CEO and deputy CEOs of each college remained in the employ of the state (RSA, 2006b).

Many older college staff had serious reservations about changing their conditions of employment, as they feared losing government pensions and so they resisted entering into employment contracts that provided only for provident funds as opposed to guaranteed pensions. As a result, some staff opted to remain in the employ of their provincial education department rather than transferring to an FET college. Akoojee (2008) shows that the number of FET college lecturers in 2003 had decreased by 10% in 2005, when the merger process was nearing completion. He raised a further concern about the varying levels of expertise on college councils that had the potential to reinforce existing inequities between historically privileged colleges, on the one hand, and under-resourced colleges, on the other.

The state introduced a further economic reform – the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) – in 2006. This initiative replaced the previous GEAR policy. A key emphasis of ASGISA was its focus on increasing skills, which included a strategy to upgrade the FET colleges (RSA, 2006a). Such economic policy was coupled with the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), which similarly stressed the need to upgrade the FET colleges in order to develop skills in both the formal and the informal economy. With workplace training being located under the DoL's learnership system, the public FET colleges increasingly focused on initial vocational training for pre-employed learners. The DoE, for its part, provided infrastructural funding for the FET colleges in preparation for the introduction of a new school-aligned curriculum. This meant that these colleges were increasingly focusing on theoretical inputs and less on artisanship and skills training for the workplace.

In 2007, the DoE introduced new programmes to the public FET colleges: the National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) programmes. These were designed to replace the outdated NATED (National Accredited Technical Education Diploma) programmes that had been offered by public colleges before the introduction of learnerships. Wedekind (2014) notes the ambiguity in policy direction for the public FET colleges at this time. From 2004, the FET colleges were recapitalised in preparation for the incoming NC(V) programmes. The NC(V) programmes were designed to replace the 151 obsolete NATED artisan programmes that had been offered by public colleges since pre-apartheid times. The new NC(V) programmes were ostensibly planned in collaboration with industry, but this was a highly centralised process that entailed minimum consultation in some economic areas. The NC(V) programmes were primarily theoretical and required candidates to pass seven subjects per year over three years if they were to complete the qualification at NQF Levels 2 to 4. The DoE's rationale for introducing the NC(V) curriculum was an attempt to align the NC(V) qualifications with the formal National Senior Certificate (NSC) at the end of senior school, which would then give graduates access to higher education qualifications and employment (DoE, 2006b). However, the public FET colleges were ill-equipped and ill-prepared for the introduction of the NC(V) programmes, and this resulted in a throughput rate of just over 5% in 2009 for the first cohort of NC(V) learners.

The universities have been slow to recognise the NC(V) as an alternative qualification to the NSC offered by schools; therefore, the uptake of NC(V) graduates in the universities has, to

date, been minimal. Meanwhile, the FET colleges were permitted to continue offering NATED programmes leading to artisan qualifications, but at reduced levels, and this led to a significant reduction in the capacity of public FET colleges to offer artisan qualifications leading to trade qualifications.

Importantly, students had to pay fees in order to attend public FET colleges, amounting to a minimum of 20% of the total costs of TVET programmes. Mainstream funding for the provision of TVET, constituting 80% of the total cost, was allocated by the central government to the provinces from 1994 to 2010, but each province had considerable latitude to decide on the actual percentage allocated to TVET colleges (Sheppard, 2017). TVET colleges in provinces such as the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and North West were seriously underfunded. This was exemplified in the case of Limpopo province, where these colleges received only 65% of the 80% conditional grant allocated to the province (Sheppard, 2017).

Enrolment in the public FET colleges during the policy period under review has remained low in comparison with that in public schools and universities. In 1995, approximately 150 000 students were enrolled, which increased to just over 300 000 in 2007 and to 400 000 in 2011. A key reason for the increase in the latter years was the introduction of public bursaries for college students, which increased from R100 million in 2007 to R1.7 billion in 2012. These bursaries benefitted some 237 908 students between 2009 and 2011 (RSA, 2014).

The policy reforms undertaken in respect of South Africa's FET college sector from 1998 to 2009 have firmly located the public vocational sector as providers of initial education and training, situated within a narrow band of education and training that equates to the final three years of secondary schooling. As part of this restructuring, apprenticeship and artisan training was effectively removed from the public college sector and key linkages with industry were significantly weakened, an outcome that is detailed in the following section. Endogenous privatisation approaches exercised through public FET college policies included the use of the state to steer policy reform and the introduction of new public-management approaches that affected staff conditions of service and attempted to reshape the management of public colleges according to business principles. The funding of public TVET as a common good was not realised, and, instead, state funding of the provision of TVET was influenced by the decentralised decisions of provincial education departments as to how TVET college funding was to be allocated. In addition, students attending public colleges had to pay fees on a 'user-pays' basis, even following the introduction of state bursaries from 2007.

The next section details a parallel policy process for continuing vocational education and training policies, one that marks a decisive intervention in the realm of exogenous privatisation.

Skills development policies from 1998 to 2009

A parallel policy on skills training was led by the DoL: it focused primarily on demand-led skills training in the workplace. Skills development legislation for occupational programmes was gazetted in 1998 shortly after the White Paper on FET (RSA, 1998a) was published. The Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998b) introduced unitised qualifications called 'learnerships' and skills programmes that combined theory and practical training in the workplace, funded through a national skills levy amounting to 1% of an employer's payroll. All learnerships and skills programmes were based on qualifications registered with the NQF. Allais (2012) notes that the South African NQF drew directly on the British National Vocational Qualifications model, which 'generally follows the model of getting stakeholders, particularly representatives of employers, to develop qualifications, which individuals can then select, to enhance their "employability"' (Allais, 2012:636). In addition, private providers could apply to the newly established sector education and training authorities (SETAs) for the accreditation of part-qualifications (skills programmes) and qualifications (learnerships) of their choice. Significantly, this skills development legislation also announced the phasing out of the time-based apprenticeships offered by public TVET colleges, which apprenticeships were to be replaced by learnerships.

Despite the DoE's assertion that the FET colleges would continue to offer learnerships (RSA, 1998a), public FET colleges were effectively no longer permitted to offer these occupational programmes. The provision of TVET resorted under the provincial departments of education, which were required to obtain accreditation from SETAs established by the DoL, which was a slow and uneven process. In addition, many SETAs established under the skills development legislation believed that, as the public FET colleges were already funded by the DoE to offer vocational programmes, the SETAs' engagement in providing learnerships or skills programme constituted 'double-dipping' or double funding by both the DoE and the DoL. This was noted in the Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training (RSA, 2012), where concerns were raised about the lack of long-term partnerships between employers and public institutions as a result of the exclusion of public providers from SETA-funded training (DHET, 2011:65). Instead, learnerships and skills programmes were offered by a plethora of newly created private providers accredited by the SETAs to access these state-funded training opportunities.

The Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998b) firmly located all workplace training under the DoL. This training included apprenticeship and artisan training delivered through the learnership system. Prior to this Act, all apprenticeships had been delivered by FET colleges in trimester and semester programmes that were coupled with work experience before apprentices wrote trade tests to become qualified artisans. The Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998b) effectively removed apprenticeship and artisan training from the public FET colleges. Instead, private providers offered outcomes-based theoretical and practical work-based programmes, accredited by the SETAs against specific levels of South Africa's NQF. Importantly, the Skills Development Act also located all continuing vocational education

and training for employees under the learnership system, leaving public FET colleges with the responsibility for initial vocational education and training.

A five-year National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS I) was introduced in 2001; it prioritised private providers offering learnerships and skills programmes. These skills development strategies were framed by indicators to monitor and record progress against key objectives. A key emphasis of NSDS 1 was to increase productivity. Kraak (2004) notes, however, that this led to the introduction of a massive bureaucracy responsible for the implementation of the NQF, and, specifically, for the delivery of skills development targets. This bureaucracy included 12 national standards bodies and over a hundred standards-generating bodies located under the SAQA. A Presidency Report (RSA, 2014) noted that the provision of training by not-for-profit and community-based providers, and youth development organisations, decreased during this period; it attributed this decline to the formalisation of training in line with the NQF that

> added onerous conditions (such as the legal requirement to be accredited and adherence to the quality assurance system) to what might otherwise have been a non-formal training environment (RSA, 2014:19).

Kraak (2008) notes that a total of 134 223 learners were registered for learnership programmes from April 2001 to March 2005. Of these learners, only 45 813 were employees in the workplace and 88 410 were unemployed. Kraak (2008) asserts that the emphasis on training unemployed learners arose from a Growth and Development Summit in 2003 that emphasised the need for training for unemployed youth. The FET colleges (now TVET colleges) were marginalised from the provision of learnerships in NSDS 1, and, owing to capacity constraints, the small number of learnerships allocated to public FET colleges were outsourced at the expense of building the in-house capacity of public colleges. Kraak (2008) notes, further, that the expansion of learnerships to unemployed learners was driven by a rapid rise in private providers who were offering supply-side qualifications in response to a new market for education and training rather than responding to employers' training needs. Most of the learnerships undertaken in terms of NSDS 1 were provided at very low education and training levels. NSDS II was introduced in 2005 and similarly stressed training in the workplace by private providers. A total of 74 244 learners were enrolled in learnerships from 2005 to 2009.

This analysis of skills development policies in South Africa reveals a significant exogenous privatisation policy intervention led by the DoL. Through the location of all continuing vocational education and training, including apprenticeship and artisan training, with private providers, public FET colleges were effectively removed from workplace-based education and training. The introduction of skills development policies involved the establishment of a massive bureaucracy for the registration and accreditation of private providers, at the expense of non-profit community-based providers. The skills development policies were also supply-led, leading to a massive increase in training by providers as a result of a new market for education and training stimulated by public resources obtained through a skills levy tax.

The following section details the reversal of this exogenous privatisation policy intervention through the consolidation and recentralisation of education and training under the newly created DHET in 2009.

South African education and training policies from 2009 to 2015

In 2009, a new policy process resulted in the creation of two education ministries, the DHET and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). All adult education, TVET (formerly FET) colleges and universities fell under the DHET, but an important shift was that the SETAs and the National Skills Fund were also located under the DHET. Occupational training was no longer a responsibility of the DoL and accredited providers; instead, skills levy funds from the 1% training tax based on employer payrolls were redirected towards public TVET colleges as opposed to private providers. As a result of this significant policy shift, the conditions of employment for public TVET college staff were changed yet again and the state became the employer of all staff. These changes signalled a significant negation of the previous endogenous privatisation approaches. They also resulted in the recentralisation of colleges under a national DHET as a national competence rather than a provincial competence; in addition, the recentralisation brought about a reversal of the exogenous privatisation approaches led by the DoL.

At the same time, it was announced that the public TVET colleges would become the preferred providers of all occupational programmes by providing learnerships and skills programmes funded by the SETAs. By 2009, public state-funded providers had previously been allocated less than 10% of all funds generated through the 1% skills levy (PMR, 2013), the vast majority of funds having been allocated to private providers.

However, the TVET colleges were poorly equipped to take advantage of their preferred provider status. A critical problem they faced in undertaking learnerships was that trainers with industry expertise were externally hired on a contractual basis for the duration of the training, because the state provided permanent employment only for educators offering NCV and NATED programmes (Needham & Papier, 2018). This meant that the TVET colleges could not retain the expertise of the industry trainers that had been used for learnerships, nor could they build internal capacity. Meanwhile, enrolment rates at the TVET colleges grew significantly with the introduction of the state-funded bursaries, and throughput rates of the mainstream NC(V) and NATED programmes have steadily increased since 2009, albeit from a very low base. Key to this trend was student access to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) bursaries, which were extended to TVET colleges for the first time in 2013.

The most recent policy process has been the development of the National Development Plan (NDP) and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013). This marked a further centralisation policy process that built on the coordinated efforts by the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) of South Africa to work across multiple

ministries. The NDP was launched in 2013; it stressed the primacy of higher education in developing innovation and knowledge. Targets were also developed for the TVET sector, namely to produce 10 000 artisans per year initially and 30 000 annually by 2030. These targets also included the expansion of the TVET colleges to enable them to train 1.25 million learners by 2030 from a base of just over 600 000 learners in 2013. The 2013 White Paper placed strong emphasis on private-industry involvement in the public TVET colleges, as stated below:

> Employers should also be in a position to advise the college system and individual colleges around issues of curriculum, and experts from industry could teach at colleges on a part-time or occasional basis. SETAs have an important role to play in promoting and facilitating links between colleges and employers. A curriculum that responds to local labour market needs or that responds to particular requests from SETAs, employers or government to meet specific development goals will result in a differentiated college system with various niche areas of specialisation (DHET, 2013:xii).

However, private providers were not supported in the 2013 White Paper, which focused entirely on public TVET provision, and the policy clearly indicated a reduced role for private provision:

> While recognising and appreciating the role of private institutions, the Department believes that the public sector is the core of the education and training system. The government's main thrust, therefore, should be to direct public resources primarily to meeting national priorities and to provide for the masses of young people and adult learners through public institutions (DHET, 2013:xv).

During this period, economic growth slowed in South Africa. Between 1994 and 2012, the average economic growth rate achieved was 3.2% (Bhorat, Cassim & Tseng, 2016). Since 2012, the annual growth rate fell from 2.2% to 1.3% in 2015. Sheppard (2017) noted that this

> level of economic growth is far short of the estimates of the *National Development Plan* of more than 5% per annum to 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2011), and far below the 8 to 10% per annum needed for a period of two decades to address the 'triple challenge' of unemployment, inequality and poverty in South Africa (Sheppard, 2017:27) (emphasis in original).

Bhorat et al. (2016) concluded that TVET college graduates were only as likely as secondary-school leavers to gain employment. These authors further asserted that the high unemployment rates in South Africa can be attributed, first, to an oversupplied labour market with low education and training skills levels in an economy that seeks skilled occupations, and, secondly, to the poor quality of schooling and education and training.

This section on contemporary education and training policies in South Africa has shown the significant reversal of the endogenous and exogenous privatisation policy approaches that the departments of education and the DoL, respectively, enacted in previous education and training policies. In asserting the role of the developmental state, the government, through the creation of the DHET in 2009, amalgamated the education and training functions of both departments, and this led to the recentralisation of the public TVET colleges as a national competence. The market for continuing education and training in the workplace that had been dominated by private providers was now redirected to the public TVET colleges, which were poorly equipped to realise these opportunities as a result of having previously been marginalised from workplace education and training. The conclusion below reflects on Ball and Youndell's (2007) definitions of privatisation to illustrate ways in which countervailing approaches to privatisation have not helped public and private education and training institutions to contribute to economic growth in South Africa.

Conclusion

Ball and Youdell's (2007) definitions of endogenous and exogenous privatisation are useful in noting the extent to which privatisation affects both the public and the private provision of education and training as a market opportunity. South Africa's initial White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995b) clearly separated the supply of initial vocation and training allocated to the public vocational education and training system and a 'demand-led' continuing education and training system in the workplace that was dominated by private providers.

This article has traced the development of parallel education and training policies by two separate government departments, the DoE and the DoL. On the one hand, these policies relegated the public TVET colleges to providing initial education and training at secondary school levels; on the other, they opened up workplace education and training to a private-provider market. Allais (2012) and Kraak (2013) have clearly shown that both of these education and training systems have been supply-led and characterised by increased enrolment rather than performing their intended function, namely addressing the education and training needs of employers.

Ball and Youdell (2007) have argued that privatisation tendencies are at the centre of the shift from education

> being seen as a public good that serves the whole community, to education being seen as a private good that serves the interest of the educated individual, the employer and the economy (Ball & Youdell, 2007:16).

The policies developed by the DoE (RSA, 1998a; RSA, 2006b) endorsed endogenous privatisation approaches through regulating public education and training, including the derogation of public state-funded staff to private college council employment, the

decentralisation of public funds to provinces which were differentially allocated to public TVET colleges, and the imposition of private fees on TVET college students. These endogenous privatisation approaches were then subsequently reversed in 2009 with the recentralisation of the public TVET colleges as a national competence and the introduction of state funding for students.

The DoL skills development legislation explicitly made provision for a market for private providers of continuing education and training at the expense of public providers; in so doing, it introduced the possibility of significant exogenous private intervention in the provision of TVET. Kraak (2013) has shown that this resulted in the supply-led provision of workplace training, as private providers capitalised on market opportunities, rather than a focus on demand-driven education and training for economic growth. This exogenous intervention has also been reversed following the creation of the DHET in 2009.

South Africa's neo-liberal economic approach has enabled neither of these education and training systems to effectively produce TVET graduates who help to overcome the critical skills shortages and contribute to national economic growth. These parallel policies have instead resulted in a separation of provision for initial and continuing vocational education and training, and have led to only minimal synergies between public and private providers that could otherwise be used to strengthen the country's education and training policies. Recent policy developments (DHET, 2013) have further limited the possibilities for public and private providers to collaborate and share expertise in what should be a coordinated TVET education and training intervention.

By using privatisation as a lens through which to view education and training policies that affect the provision of TVET, this article has demonstrated that the implementation of endogenous and exogenous privatisation policy approaches has not facilitated the building of a coherent public and private TVET sector that is capable of contributing the critical skills required to stimulate economic growth.

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BOOK REVIEW

McGrath, Simon,[1] Mulder, Martin,[2] Papier, Joy[3] & Suart, Rebecca[4] (Eds). 2019. *Handbook of vocational education and training: Developments in the changing world of work*. In 2 volumes. Springer: Dordrecht.

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Why this handbook?

The *Handbook of vocational education and training: Developments in the changing world of work* ('the *Handbook*') is as ambitious as it is significant. The editors have articulated the need for the *Handbook* as being a consequence of the 'mushrooming of new journals, the expansion of the volume of research, and the widening of international cooperation by international Vocational Education and Training institutions'.[5] The ambition of the *Handbook* is to provide a comprehensive overview of current thinking and scholarly writing in the field of vocational education and training (VET).

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2 Social Sciences Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, the Netherlands.

3 Institute for Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa.

4 School of Education, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom.

5 The *Handbook* is in the genre of both the *International handbook of education for the changing world of work: Bridging academic and vocational learning* (McLean & Wilson, 2009) and the *International handbook of educational change* (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 1998).

The two volumes it comprises are all the more significant when it is borne in mind that, despite the growth in awareness of the importance of VET and the increasingly diverse scope of delivery of VET, the field of education research is still primarily focused on schooling and on higher education.

The editors of the *Handbook* express the wish that this latest work will be seen to build on the volumes edited by Rupert McLean and David Wilson. In recognising the burgeoning debate, research and scholarship in the field of VET, the editors are justified in hoping that this publication will serve to further stimulate and nurture scholarly research and debate in VET.

This review presents an overall comment on the two volumes of the *Handbook* and does not presume to provide a synopsis of the wealth of individual papers they contain.

Who is the intended audience?

The reality of a rapidly changing world of work, together with a future which is arguably less predictable than at any other time in history, has posed challenging questions for a range of sectors and definitely for VET. The rapidly unfolding, but not universal, shift towards digitisation has stimulated concerns about the readiness of policymakers, VET institutions and employers to embrace and build upon these changes. Students and their parents have become increasingly aware that the era of a 'job for life' is long gone; policymakers and politicians need to make decisions about resource allocations that will meet the long-term needs and aspirations of their people; institutions that aspire to advise and prepare graduates to be ready for this ill-defined future face the challenge of radically redefining their programmes; and employers must reposition and adapt their business enterprises for this future in an increasingly competitive and even hostile global environment.

However, these sectors are not mere consumers of that future; they are also agents in its shaping. As agents they will be the audience for the authors in the *Handbook* and will want to shape their actions through a deeper understanding of the *Handbook*'s textured and diverse reflections on the world of work and of the interplay between the formal economy, the informal economy (sometimes called the unorganised economy) and the virtual economy.

Seeking the answers to their questions, readers of the *Handbook* will appreciate the extensive scope and diversity of international experiences of, and reflections on, VET. There are chapters on the nature of the curriculum in VET and the most desirable composition of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for a graduate to step confidently and successfully into a rapidly changing world of work (Volume 1, Parts 1 and 2; Volume 2, Parts 5 and 6); on the appropriateness of systems, infrastructure and the allocation of resources (Volume 1, Part 3; Volume 2, Part 6); on the preparation and continuing development of VET lecturers (Volume 2, Part 9); on the interface with employers and employment (Volume 1, Part 4); on measuring the preparedness and competence of graduates (Volume 2, Part 7); and on

supporting students in the demographic complexities that inform these international realities (Volume 2, Part 8).

The *Handbook* is an invaluable tool for champions of VET development and for those who wish to understand the potential of this sector for emerging and established economies to eliminate unemployment and poverty, to reduce inequality, and to promote sustainable and climate-sensitive growth. Thus, this publication is a resource for policymakers, international development agencies, initial and continuing teacher developers, curriculum and instruction specialists, and economists and leaders who are tasked with responding to the global challenges listed above.

What is the scope of the Handbook?

The *Handbook* has an impressive international participation, with contributions from scholars across 27 countries. There is a significant level of contributions from the United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa, and the *Handbook* includes contributions by scholars from every continent. However, subsequent editions may consider including VET in Canada; and, as more scholars engage in VET research, one presumes that there will be greater exposure to the development of VET in South America and the remaining 52 countries of Africa.

The *Handbook* comprises two volumes containing a total of nine parts: Volume 1 comprises Parts 1 to 4 and Volume 2 comprises Parts 5 to 9.

All the contributions have been peer-reviewed and each provides a wealth of references that will be of great value to readers. The structure is true to the title of the *Handbook*: Volume 1, Part 1, delves immediately into 'The changing world of work', and this is followed in Part 2 by a focus on 'Skills for sustainable human development'. The foregrounding of these two parts is appropriate, and it serves to establish the platform for the subsequent parts, which address particular aspects of this platform.

Part 3 takes us into 'Planning and reforming skills systems' and delves into policy frameworks, an analysis of qualifications frameworks, governance, the financing of VET, workplace-based learning, and linking student career guidance to job placement. The last of these is a particularly relevant consideration for systemic development in many countries.

Part 4 considers the nature of 'Private training' and covers apprenticeships, informal versus structured approaches, the role of public and private providers in delivering private training, and the emerging field of e-learning.

The second volume opens with Part 5, which focuses on 'Vocational learning'. This part provides a detailed reflection on what is often considered to be the heart of the VET challenge: the actual delivery of, and exposure to, the learning and teaching that will prepare graduates

for the evolving contexts in which they will find themselves once they are employed. It progresses from an insightful overview of philosophical and contextual perspectives on vocational learning to providing reflections on experiences in China, the United Kingdom and Hungary. It includes very useful inputs on accommodating cultural diversity and on the importance of qualitative research in VET.

Part 6 grapples with the tough questions of 'Competence and excellence' in VET. It deals with what is meant by competence and excellence and how this is to be stimulated and achieved. It does not limit itself to technical competencies but also explores the nature of future skills requirements and the achievement of intercultural competence.

Part 7 follows logically from Part 6 by providing a set of chapters on 'Measuring learning and instructional performance'. This takes the reader through approaches that span the Logic Design Model, outcomes assessment, performance testing, competence testing and self-assessment, as well as self-assessment and reflection, simulated assessment, electronic portfolios and professional competence diagnostics. It also explores the often-neglected aspect of adult writing skills in VET settings.

Part 8 focuses on the issue of 'Supporting learners'. Structuring effective and desirable learner support is significant in a sector which has such a large proportion of learners who describe themselves as having been unsuccessful in 'mainstream schooling'. The extent to which institutions succeed in igniting or reigniting self-esteem in such students can be the extent to which these students will benefit most intensely from the VET experience. Producing self-confident and competent graduates from VET institutions is a sine qua non of addressing the persistent undervaluing of VET in post-colonial contexts and developing the parity of esteem that is more common in systems in Germany and Switzerland.

Part 9 deals with 'VET teacher/trainer education'. For many in the sector, this is where 'the rubber hits the road', in that VET teachers are at the coalface of vocational delivery. The section provides analyses situated in Australia, Zimbabwe, the United States, Russia, Mexico, India and Switzerland, and explores pedagogical issues in the preparation of VET teachers and trainers. The chapters point to a variety of approaches that are essential to learning and teaching if VET as a sector and the graduates from VET institutions are to enjoy the parity of esteem afforded to their university peers.

What are the challenges in producing such a handbook?

The *Handbook* does not describe itself as being an international handbook, which is well advised. There are stark contextual differences between countries which value and aspire to promote VET. As a result, the particular contextual differences of systems make the transfer of one country's experience to another extremely improbable without adapting such experience to the context onto which it is to be grafted. Some examples of these contextual differences include the demographic realities of countries, some with ageing populations and

others with great youth potential; countries with almost total absorption into employment as against others with very high levels of young adults who are not in education, employment or training (the NEETs); systems in which VET must take into consideration a significant rural constituency with limited connectivity and infrastructure versus predominantly urbanised and relatively well-resourced contexts; systems that have established a parity of esteem between routes into VET and routes into universities versus systems which continue to consider university access as more valuable than VET (and reward university graduates disproportionately as a consequence); and systems that are ready to embrace an era of digitisation and those that are struggling to establish the necessary infrastructure to provide digital access to their populations. These scenarios illustrate the contextual realities that would have to be navigated in order to enable countries to benefit from one another's successes and failures.

Conclusion

The *Handbook* certainly delivers on its ambition of providing comprehensive exposure to the current thinking and writing of scholars in the VET field. While the publication is not structured to tease out the contextual differences mentioned above, the reader will find comment and analysis in its chapters that do raise these very starkly differing contextual matters. These analyses and reflections are likely to be of interest and value to policymakers, institutions and VET leaders who are engaged in developing their systems and who wish to consider their options based on the experience of others.

The enormous value of this magnum opus will lie in its affirming the role and gravitas of scholarly research and analysis of VET. The importance of VET in providing pathways for marginalised and excluded young people and adults to realise their expectations and build a more equitable, sustainable and collaborative world remains at the core of this sector.

The publication of the *Handbook of vocational education and training: Developments in the changing world of work* is timely and will be appreciated by the many students, employers, lecturers, scholars, researchers and policymakers who will no doubt acknowledge its volumes as an essential reference and a source of innovation and inspiration. The rapidly changing world of work, and its implications for VET, will require that the *Handbook* be updated and that its users be able to access such updates. Readers will surely look forward to future editions of this important work.

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Martin Mulcahy has been the founding member of several institutions and organisations in South Africa, including Mmabatho High School, LEAF College of Commerce and Engineering (post-school access to University), Community College Association of South Africa, National Access Consortium Western Cape and the Centre for Extended Learning (CEL). For fifteen years he served as a ministerial advisor to the Minister of Education, the Minister of Science and Technology and, finally, the Minister of Higher Education and Training. These positions provided an opportunity to develop an understanding and experience in the interconnected areas of policy, legislation, financial planning and reporting, implementation and related strategies, challenges and possibilities of concurrent responsibilities, as these relate to the institutional and to the systemic level.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

At least one issue of JOVACET will be published per year. Unsolicited articles are welcome for consideration and should be uploaded onto JOVACET's website online journal or emailed to the journal's administrator, Catherine Robertson, at cathy@tcrobertson.co.za.

The editor(s) are accountable for everything published in the journal and will therefore:

- Work towards improving the contents of the journal;
- Adopt peer review methods best suited for the journal and the research community it serves;
- Ensure that all manuscripts have been reviewed by appropriate reviewers;
- Ensure quality assurance processes are in place for the material that is published; and
- Uphold the highest standards of integrity, intellectual rigour and ethics.

The editor(s) will not disclose any information about the submitted manuscripts or their authors to anyone other than the author(s) and reviewer(s), as appropriate. The editor(s) will not use submitted material in any way whatsoever without the written consent of the author(s).

Submitted articles will be reviewed by two anonymous external referees. Appropriate papers will be reviewed according to their significance and validity. Articles that have been submitted must not have been published or accepted for publication elsewhere. The editor(s) are responsible for deciding which of the manuscripts submitted to the journal will be published. The decision of the editor(s) to accept or reject a manuscript will be based on the importance

of the manuscript, its originality and clarity, the validity of the study and its relevance to the journal's scope. Considerations will also include current legal requirements regarding defamation, copyright infringement and plagiarism.

Submissions may not exceed the 8 000-word limit and must contain a title, abstract of not more than 200 words and be correctly and completely referenced according to the Harvard system of referencing. Footnotes should be kept to a minimum. Tables should be positioned where they are referred to and not be submitted separately. Authors are requested to consult the author's guidelines on the website.

The article should not contain any identification of the author and should be anonymised as far as possible. The name(s) and affiliations of the author(s), as well as their email address, should appear on a separate page.

Each author will receive a copy of the journal in which the article appears. The article becomes the copyright of the publishers of the journal. The journal is freely available on the website: www.epubs.ac.za/index.php/jovacet.

CALL FOR PAPERS

JOVACET Special Edition

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1, 2020

You are invited to submit an abstract for JOVACET Volume 3, Issue 1, 2020, which will be a Special Edition with a specific focus on teacher education in technical and vocational education and training, to be published in September 2020.

Deadline for abstract submissions: **Friday, 14 February 2020**.

Abstracts should comprise a maximum of 700 words and be submitted in MS Word format via the journal website at www.jovacet.co.za or emailed to Dr Catherine Robertson at cathy@tcrobertson.co.za. Should you prefer to submit a full article, please limit the number of words to 8 000. The website will provide the style guide, which includes the abstract and list of references, or they can be provided by emailing Catherine Robertson.

This Special Edition will focus on the theme of *Professionalising technical and vocational education and training (TVET) teacher education*, outlined below. Contributors may share any recent research relevant to the theme and the TVET/adult learning sector. Therefore, submissions of abstracts or full articles are invited that respond to this call to share recent research, its conceptual framing and its findings, with a view to identifying areas of further research for exploration.

An element of vocational teacher education which has periodically surfaced since the 1990s, is the currency of skills and knowledge relative to industry requirements. For policy-makers, captains of industry and collaborating vocational higher educational institutions, industry experience is currently a prerequisite for effective vocational teaching. The value of industry

placements for individuals and organisations is commonly emphasised. As with other professions, continuous professional development (or CPD) in the form of teacher in-service programmes is ongoing, and forms an essential component of teacher development.

Industry placement is an international trend 'towards professionalising the VET teaching workforce as many countries try to increase the qualifications of the VET workforce and introduce CPD for teachers and trainers' (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2012:15–16). For critics, however, the argument with regard to industry currency is perceived as a tool of neo-liberal capitalism that contributes towards the subordination of the academic enterprise to business and the state. This subordination, or industry involvement of lecturer staff, 'has come to be justified largely in terms of economic growth and preparing students for the labour market' (Badat, 2009: 3). In some circles, industry involvement is perceived as a direct contradiction to the historical purpose of higher education. Industry involvement and demands on higher education, it is argued, could thus be detrimental to higher education in general and to students in particular.

Policy frameworks for lecturers in both technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and adult and community education and training (ACET), promulgated in South Africa in 2013 and 2015, require the placement at potential employers as a formal element of initial teacher education programmes for these types of teacher in South Africa. The introduction of the policy frameworks has resulted in the development of new teacher education programmes in the country and lively debates related to it.

Submissions should be of high quality and follow academic research/writing conventions in the social sciences. Specifications can be found on the JOVACET website or obtained from Dr Catherine Robertson at the email address above.

We look forward to receiving your submissions for the Special Issue in 2020!

CALL FOR PAPERS

JOVACET

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2, 2020

You are invited to submit an abstract or an article for JOVACET Volume 3, Issue 2, 2020, an edition with a general focus on research in post-schooling, either within the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) contexts, but also on the intersections of TVET with broader adult and continuing education and higher education contexts, to be published in November 2020.

Deadline for abstract submissions: Friday, 27 March 2020.

Abstracts should comprise a maximum of 700 words and be submitted in MS Word format via the journal website at www.jovacet.co.za or emailed to Dr Catherine Robertson at cathy@tcrobertson.co.za. Should you prefer to submit a full article, please limit the number of words to 8 000. The website will provide the style guide, which includes the abstract and list of references.

This second issue of the journal in 2020 will follow the broader theme of *Research in the field of TVET and in adult and continuing education and training*. Contributors may therefore share any recent research relevant to the theme and the TVET/adult learning sector. Abstracts or articles are invited that respond to this call to share recent research, its conceptual framing and its findings, with a view to identifying areas of further research for exploration. Submissions should be of high quality and follow academic research/writing conventions in the social sciences. Specifications can be found on the JOVACET website or obtained from Dr Catherine Robertson at the email address above.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1) CONFERENCE: POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN TVET STUDIES

The Editor-in-Chief of JOVACET and NRF Chair: TVET Studies, Prof. Joy Papier, is hosting a conference for Master's and Doctoral students in TVET-focused studies, **to be held at UWC, from 20–22 November 2019. Venue: School of Public Health**

The purpose of the conference is two-fold:

(1) to enable postgraduate students in this growing research area to share their work - particularly the scope of their studies; and,
(2) to work towards establishing a local community of TVET researchers/scholars who can support and inform one another's work, with a view to future publications in JOVACET and elsewhere.

Students are asked to make a very short presentation by way of an A3 poster, or, alternatively, a maximum of 5 power-point slides which will allow them to speak cogently (in 5–6 minutes) about their postgraduate study.

This conference is aimed, first and foremost, at the TVET community of postgraduate researchers, but we would welcome established scholars in TVET who can act as a sounding board for student presentations. Postgraduate students will benefit from these exchanges and from interactions with their peers.

Attendance of the conference is **free** and will **include catering** during the conference.

2) 'WRITING FOR PUBLICATION' SEMINAR

Prof. Simon McGrath (Nottingham University), author of a number of TVET-focused books and articles, a member of the JOVACET Editorial Committee and Extraordinary Professor to the IPSS, will facilitate a '**writing for publication**' **seminar** for prospective JOVACET authors, **on 22 November 2019 from 09:00 to 12:00**, as part of the conference programme mentioned above.

Please confirm in writing your participation in both the TVET Postgraduate Conference and the Writing Workshop by 31 October, as places are limited.

Email Lydia Steer (lsteer@uwc.ac.za) **or Jamey Santon** (jsanton@uwc.ac.za)**.**

3) NEXT JOURNAL WRITING WORKSHOP

A writing workshop for prospective JOVACET authors, **who have papers already in draft**, will be held in February/March 2020. Details to be advised in due course. Kindly indicate your interest in this by **emailing Dr Cathy Robertson** (cathy@tcrobertson.co.za) before 15 December 2019.

THE JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL, ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training (JOVACET) recognises the need for critical engagement through studies in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and adult and continuing education and training, and for encouraging critical scrutiny of this expansive knowledge area on the African continent.

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