

An exploration of the Identities of Qualified Artisans employed as  
Technical Vocational Education and Training College Lecturers.

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2015

Johannesburg

## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education, in the Graduate Programme in Education and Development, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Alice Ntombikayise Msibi declare that

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mother, whose prayers, love and support have provided guidance and comfort throughout this journey. Her profound wisdom and selflessness have carried me through most of my experiences in this research process (and life). This is as much my thesis as it is hers. I love you Ma.

To my supervisor Professor Volker Wedekind who not only introduced me to the TVET sector, but supported me through what was at times a rocky road to completion. Your continuous faith in my abilities has made a significant impact on how I see myself and the world. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my research participants who sacrificed a lot of their time and privacy to allow me to get a sense of how their lives have come to be.

Finally, to my siblings, friends and colleagues who have provided laughs, motivation and confused stares. I've appreciated it all.

Ngiwumuntu ngani nonke. Ngiyabonga.

## ABSTRACT

One of the most important contributions of exploratory research is its potential to broaden ideas on currently accepted knowledge. This research ventured to do this by exploring the life histories of the lecturers who constitute a core group within the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. Their life histories are explored with explicit attention to occupationally directed changes in trying to make meaning of the impact their identities had on their occupational decisions and vice versa.

Identity theory places emphasis on the relationships and interactions an individual has within their environment and how these contribute to the validation of their identities. In understanding this, the research utilised the Communities of Practice (CoP) theory as the framework that would provide the lens through which the participants' experiences are explored.

The findings of the research illustrate how identities have determined ones' inclination to fulfil roles competently; and how the extent to which different identities interact and allow each other to flourish will contribute to the decisions each one makes in their various CoP. The findings furthermore offer insights into critical components of the TVET arena that upon further exploration can provide robust insights into the development of the sector. The expansion of knowledge around TVET lecturers, artisan development and occupational migration are presented as areas of opportunity with the need for further probing of these in the endeavour to expand a prosperous TVET sector in South Africa.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE RATIONALE

Following former South African president Thabo Mbeki's state of the nation address in 2007 it was clear that the Technical Vocation Education and Training (TVET) sector was beginning to be seen as the answer to achieving the country's human resource development goals. The sector was understood to achieve these goals by providing the solution to the skills shortage as well as facilitating social and economic development in the country (Mbeki, 2007). The former Minister of Education Naledi Pandor had signalled this view in 2005 by releasing this statement:

There will be a massive campaign to reform further education and training programmes to reinforce the institutional reform project started in our public further education and training colleges. This will involve better matching of the requirements of the SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) and the employers they represent with public institutions providing further education and training. The recapitalisation of TVET colleges remains a priority to ensure the best articulation of our national skills strategy with the programmes provided by colleges (Pandor, 2005).

This statement was followed by various policy reforms within the sector that were aimed at equipping it to better fulfil its goal of providing the necessary intermediate skills to fulfil the national skills demands. The policy reforms were also seen through the separation of the Department of Education into the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2009. The establishment of the DHET, a department whose value statement entails "a commitment to distinction and excellence in all our work efforts to develop a skilled and capable workforce for the country" (Department of Higher Education; 2016) paved the way to multi-faceted developments in the TVET sector.

These statements and the subsequent actions taken were also in line with the international revival of the vocational and further education sector.

International perspectives on the role of the vocational education sector have been varied but can commonly be associated with economic development. Anderson (2009) sees the

vocational sector as being aligned with neoliberal productivism. This view states that the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system is designed to look at the scholar as a tool for economic development, disregarding the rest of the human experience outside of labour and production. McGrath (2012) however states that the development of the VET sector can be better attributed to industrialisation, modernisation and globalisation. He asserts that the move towards a more “western” idea of development as seen through industrialisation, modernisation and globalisation, has shifted the focus and meaning of VET. The view held by McGrath can undoubtedly be seen in the early stages of the development of the VET sector where clear links with the industrial boom (the English case) and modernisation (the South African case) created the foundations for the development of the sector. However, Anderson’s notion of productivity can be held as a more accurate account of the current vocational agenda. He states two “productivist” assumptions that he claims the vocational sector internationally are built on, these being:

1. Training leads to productivity, which leads to economic growth (training for growth);
2. Skills lead to employability, which leads to jobs (skills for work) (Anderson, 2009).

It would certainly be inaccurate to attribute these assumptions to all vocational education systems around the world but it undoubtedly does speak strongly to South Africa’s vocational agenda.

Anderson’s “productivist” assumptions on the development of the VET sector heralds skills and training as being at the crux of a successful VET sector ideology. This notion can clearly be seen as the dominant discourse in the South African case with the demand for skills being revived by pressures from the commercial sector’s growing developmental needs. For instance, candidates trained in mainstream universities may possess the required skills to access the employment sector, but in order for employers to cultivate these skills, there may be a need for on-the-job training. This may well delay the process of employers seeing returns on their investment (Technical and Vocational School Guide, 2011).

It can be seen from the above that skills and training are key elements in the international move towards the revitalisation of the TVET sector.

Developing skills not only relates to particular commercial gains, but it is also underpins national economic growth and development. This sentiment has been displayed through South Africa’s national skills strategies and various policy reforms that will be explored in

the following section. Fundamentally, there is a clear need for enhanced skills development to ensure the economic growth and well-being of any nation.

Kraak and Press (2008) argue that in the South African context, when we speak of a skills shortage and skills demands what is commonly meant is the shortage and demand for artisans. They also state that artisans are vital in both the private and public sectors, making / the skills that artisans possess reside at the heart of economic growth in South Africa (Kraak and Press, 2008).

The above notion puts pressure on the higher education sector and more specifically the vocational education and training sector. This is because the VET sector was built on the training of artisans and is still to this day, the hub of much activity in the field of engineering. The sector has continually been looked to for the development of necessarily skilled learners who can fill the skills gap for economic growth in the country.

## **1.2 NEED FOR THE STUDY**

With the Millennium Development Goals reaching an end in 2015, the renewed interest in vocational education needs to look at the role of this sector in education and development. Although interest in vocational education has been clear in international programmes, McGrath (2012) notes a lack of theoretical debate and research into this sector especially in Organisation of Economic Development (OECD) countries. This paucity of research exposes the need for studies delving into the vocational sector considering the renewed focus on it.

### ***1.2.1 Why TVET College Lecturers?***

At a national level it is the responsibility of the vocational education sector as a whole to produce practically competent learners from the TVET colleges. At the college level, this responsibility lies with the lecturers who are tasked with this undertaking on a daily basis, making TVET college lecturers key players in ensuring that the skills agenda of the vocational education sector is met. In light of this responsibility placed on college lecturers, it is imperative that academia, policy and various institutions have insights into their abilities

and make strides towards ensuring that college lecturers have the necessary competencies and are able to impart the required skills on to enrolled learners.

Although the knowledge and capabilities of college lecturers are at the centre of fulfilling the national skills agenda, an audit of TVET colleges in the Eastern Cape in 2008 released some thought-provoking results concerning the views and capabilities of TVET college lecturers. The research revealed that only 38% of educators were confident in their abilities to teach and fully convey the practical components of their subjects to learners and 34% revealed a need for a “practical up-skilling intervention” (Wedekind, 2008).

The implications of practically unskilled lecturers who feel unable to impart the necessary skills on learners are immense. Not only can these kinds of lecturers possibly deprive their students of the opportunity to get the desired results from their enrolment in the colleges but they (the unskilled lecturers) may consequently hinder the process of skills and economic development in the country (Akoojee, 2008).

The strength of TVET colleges and the sector at large lies in the staff that it attracts and retains, as they are directly responsible for fulfilling the need for teaching skills. Lecturers who do not feel equipped to teach the practical components of their subjects could also jeopardise the legitimacy of the reforms that have been advocated by Thabo Mbeki (Mbeki, 2007), Naledi Pandor (Pandor, 2005) and various education and labour policies in South Africa, all calling for more practical up-skilling of the South African workforce to ensure economic growth.

The notion by Morrow (2007) that the quality of an education system is highly dependent on the value and commitment of the educators shows the need for research into this particular group within the education system. Understanding the educators can facilitate a better appreciation and recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of any education system (Wedekind, 2008). This aforementioned understanding informed the decision to focus on lecturers in the sector for the purposes of this research.

### *1.2.2 Why Qualified Artisans?*

Programmes offered in TVET colleges fall into two major fields—engineering studies and business studies- although there are other industrial fields that make up a small group in the sector (Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath, 2005).

Engineering studies consist of a variety of learning areas such as electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, electronics, bricklaying and carpentry to name a few. All these fall under Major Occupational Group 7 as categorized by the South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO). This group is also classified as a critical skills group, making this cluster a pertinent part of the skills development agenda and subsequently economic development agendas of the country. This is why, for this research, qualified practitioners from the above-mentioned fields will be looked at.

With registration as an artisan being dependent on passing a practical trade test, learners need to have a strong applied knowledge of their specialisation. It can be argued that this applied knowledge is best provided by people who have not only written the trade test, but who also have extensive experience in the field in which they teach. This is particularly true in that the trade test is based on the manner in which one as an artisan would practice their specialisation in the world of work.

Bateman, Chappell, Mitchell, Roy (2006) reinforces this point by stating that the skills lecturers are required to impart to learners can be developed through formal training programmes or the immersion of lecturers in various workplaces. He goes on to say that the latter possibility would be the most efficient option. Bateman et al. are therefore suggesting that lecturers who have worked in the field are better equipped to transfer the skills needed for the learners in their field. This assumption by Bateman et al. coupled with the research into the practical capabilities of college lecturers in the Eastern Cape justify the need to look at the cohort of TVET college lecturers who have industry experience.

### *1.2.2 Why Occupational Identities?*

Burke and Reitzes (1991) state "... identities are the shared social meanings that persons attribute to themselves in a role (p. 242)." These meanings that they have generated, coupled with what is expected of them in that role, will produce certain actions and determine their obligation to certain organisations, actions and persons. If a lecturer has a strong teaching identity, meaning they have a strong commitment through the meaning they have of the teaching profession, they are more likely to be a better teacher and would far more successfully, based on their efforts, impart to learners what is required of them.

To understand the educators in a system, some researchers have argued that the values, beliefs and practices of educators significantly shape the outcomes of what it is they are implementing (McLaughlin, 1998).

Where the lecturers in colleges place themselves within the education system and what they identify themselves as in relation to their qualifications, their previous occupations and their current role, are the major determinants of their occupational identities. However, this aspect has not been extensively explored in academic research. Although research (Akoojee, 2008; Wedekind, 2010; Gamble, 2003) points to a need for a better understanding and appreciation of lecturers in TVET colleges, research into these educators is limited much like the scarcity of general academic research into the TVET sector (McGrath, 2012).

It is undoubtedly essential that there is an understanding of the potentially complex identities that lecturers, who are themselves artisans, may possess in order to ensure the quality of the learners that the TVET sector produces.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main objective of this study is to explore the life histories of TVET college lecturers who have worked in the private sector as artisans in order to make meaning of their occupational identities. In achieving this objective, this study looks at the participants' formation and engagements within their occupational CoP established in both the private sector as well as in the TVET sector.

In doing this, the research analyses the interactions and decisions made in light of their identities in both of their occupational sectors. Analysing the interplay between actions and identities is valuable in that actions are an expression of the relations between ones identities. The meaning that is understood of their role affects the actions and expectations of individual in those roles. Their obligation and commitment to these roles is therefore based on the meaning that they have generated and accepted of their role. If a lecturer has a strong teaching identity, meaning they have a strong commitment through the meaning they have of the teaching profession, they are more likely to be a better teacher and would far more successfully, based on their efforts, impart to learners what is required of them.

The research examined the above by exploring the below research question:

How do TVET lecturer's interactions in occupational Communities of Practice influence their occupational identities?

In probing the main research question, the following subsidiary questions were addressed:

- How did their interactions in the private sector affect their identities?
- How did their interactions in the public sector affect their identities?
- Which of the occupational identities prevailed over the other as a result of their Communities of Practice interactions?

### ***1.3.1 Definition of Key Terms***

#### ***1.3.1.1 TVET – Technical Vocational Education and Training.***

TVET is part of the post-compulsory education sector in South Africa. The TVET sector comprises of high schools, TVET colleges and companies that provide apprenticeships and learnerships. In the South African context however, TVET policies have largely been focused on making changes specifically in the colleges (McGrath, 2004). For this reason, in this research, the colleges will be looked at as the primary focus when speaking of providers in the TVET sector.

A 2009 literature review by Education International described the TVET sector as the “connection between general education and the labour market”. Taking into consideration the practical, political and analytical aspects that affect the TVET sector, in this study TVET colleges will be looked at as the entities aimed at providing education and training geared towards an explicit preparation for work. These entities are various including TVET colleges, businesses and some institutions of higher learning.

#### ***1.3.1.2 Identity***

The issue of identity is very complex. Various schools of thought contribute to the manifold ideas that are a part of the discussions around identity. Looking at identity from a psychosocial perspective one can understand it as the image of the self in relation to one's experiences of their world. This image constantly reconfigures through an individual's

experience of the world. Sommers (1994) states that the “destabilizing dimensions of time, space and relationality” as the core concepts that contribute to the ever changing nature of identity. These concepts expressed by Sommers are best investigated through methods that allow for the exploration of each. One method that takes time, space and relationality into consideration through its technique is life histories or narratives.

### ***1.3.1.3 Occupational Identity***

An occupational identity is the image of the self in relation to an occupation. This image takes into account what is expected of the individual in relation to what one believes their responsibility to be in that particular occupation. Coulter, Feldman, Hower (2004) describes an occupational identity as “the blueprint for upcoming action” as it is shaped by one’s actions, relationships, routines, responsibilities, interest and the fulfilment of one’s occupational obligations. This understanding by Coulter et al. will be used for the purposes of this research. The actions taken, along with the factors that influence these actions, will be looked at in determining the occupational identities held by the participants.

## **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Communities of Practice (CoP) theory as hypothesized by Wenger (1998, 2000, and 2006) will be used as the lens through which this research will be looked at. Although the term CoP is somewhat new, Communities of Practice have existed from the beginning of time. Wenger looks at this occurrence in relation to social learning. CoP are seen as the learning systems that are dependent on social engagement to develop an understanding and subsequently an identity.

Wenger (2006) states that a community of practice is formed by “people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour (p. 1)”. This is the foundation of the methods used to conduct this research. Understanding the communities that participants formed through their occupationally active years and the shared domain of human endeavour which formed these communities, will be investigated to gain understanding of what it is they learned in these communities, and how what they have learned through their interaction in these communities has shaped the images they hold of themselves in relation to their occupations.

### ***1.4.1 Formation of a community of practice***

A group of people who learn collectively through engaging with each other within a particular domain form a community of practice (Wenger; 2006). These CoP place social participation at the core of learning and the identity formation process (Wenger; 2006). For this research, the communities formed in both the public and private sector will be looked at, with the domain of interest being their life experiences that have shaped their learning and understanding of their occupational identities.

### ***1.4.2 Engagement in a community of practice***

Wenger states that not every community is a community of practice. What distinguishes the two is that in a community of practice, members engage in a particular domain of interest with learning from each other being the effect from the interactions. For instance, not all teachers who engage with each other during their breaks form a community of practice unless what they engage in produces new knowledge on a particular agenda that is of interest in the community. This engagement and the results of it make the group a community of practice.

### ***1.4.3 The effects of being a member of a community of practice***

Membership of a community of practice is based on a common endeavour and members must have some shared competence that enables them to engage with each other. They could all, for instance, be teachers, artisans, members of college management etc. Learning is the direct outcome of being part of a community. However, what and how one learns is dependent on where the individual is placed within the community.

In CoP there is a clear distinction between learning and practices at the core of the community and at the periphery. The issue of core and periphery is of particular importance in the community of practice theory, especially in relation to identity formation and development because of membership of a particular community.

#### *1.4.4 The effects of being at the core or periphery*

The periphery is where all members start out in a community and through continuous shared practices as a participant, they move to the core of the community where they will hold a stronger identity as a member. The positioning at the core or periphery affects, and is affected by, how much an individual participates and learns in the community. This affects how well one aligns themselves with the ideals of the group.

The periphery and core dynamics also affect the power dynamics within the community. Those at the core, sometimes referred to as “old-timers” (Wenger, 2000), have greater influence over the type of learning that takes place within the community. Roberts (2006) states that the meaning that is generated in CoP may just be a reflection of those at the core who hold the greatest power in the community. This means that being at the core of the community not only means that those individuals are strong in their understanding of the repertoire of the group but they also have influence over what those at the periphery learn and need to be competent in to become influential members of the community.

Being at the core also means that your commitment to the identity, which has been developed as a result of being a part of that community, is much stronger. This is due to the fact that to get to the core of the community, one has to gain various competencies and make meaning of their identity in relation to these competencies. This enables the individual to move from the periphery to the core of the community. As identity is formed and developed through “the shared social meanings that persons attribute to themselves in a role” (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). What is expected of the individual in relation to what one believes determines their responsibility to be in that particular role (such as an occupational role) (Coulter et al., 2004). The more one learns about a community, the closer they are to the core and the stronger their commitment will be to that community as well as their identity in relation to that community will be.

The core and periphery dynamics are of particular importance in research of this nature as two occupational CoP may be formed by the participants and where they are positioned in either one of these communities will influence how much they align themselves with the ideals of the community, their commitment to the community and subsequently, their occupational identity.

The community of practice theory is immensely important in research of this nature as the occupational identities of qualified artisans (possible community of practice) who are also lecturers (possible community of practice) in TVET colleges will be looked at. Depending on where they place themselves within the different occupational communities they may be a part of and how they participate and navigate across the different communities will determine how strong their occupational identity is and how valuable they are to the different communities they are members of. Understanding these different identities and how strong they are will help determine how much of a worthy contribution lecturers who are qualified artisans can make in the TVET sector.

## **1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### ***1.5.1 Setting***

For the purposes of this life histories study, three participants who are lecturers currently employed in TVET colleges will be the sources of exploration through interviews. All participants hold post matric qualifications in the engineering field and are qualified artisans.

These participants came from three different campuses in one TVET College. The demographics differ from campus to campus. Campus A is based in a semi-rural township with the entire population of students being from the local area. Campus B is in a predominately coloured area where the population of students is mixed but is predominantly coloured. Campus C is also based in a township close to the city with a more diverse composition of students.

### ***1.5.2 Sampling***

Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of participants. This form of sampling allows for the researcher to select the candidates according to any criteria which the researcher may have that is in accordance with their research.

Due to the complexity of doing life histories research, three participants were interviewed for the purposes of this study. These participants are lecturers currently employed in the TVET sector and hold qualifications in the engineering field as artisans. The purpose of looking at

this cohort of lecturers is that in speaking about skills shortages and skills demand, especially in South Africa, what is usually meant is the shortage and demand for artisans (Kraak & Press, 2008). Also, as all these participants are workshop lecturers, meaning they teach the practical components of their subjects, they have the prime influence in the training of future artisans.

The participants all have more than 10 years' experience working in the industry as artisans prior to them being employed in the TVET sector. In addition to their experience in industry, they also have been working in the TVET sector as lecturers for over 10 years. This enables them to have had extensive experience in both sectors to which allows them to have an in-depth understanding of previous and current occupations.

The participants were from three different race groups: Andile being a black man, Brian a coloured man, and Chris a white man. The racial diversity of the participants was unintentional but worked to the advantage of the research in that it gave differing experiences and perspectives to the research topic and findings.

### *1.5.3 Methodology*

The research was conducted qualitatively using the life histories method of collecting data. The life experiences of the participants were explored, from the phase where they chose their subject packages in high school to the present day.

Samuel and Dhunpath (2009) state that, "...stories are one lens by which human beings attempt to make sense of the complex human condition; to make some order out of the chaos of competing and contradictory experiences; to bring into dialogue the world of the real and the world of the imagination; to stand Janus-headed, looking backwards and forwards into past life experiences and anticipating the future (p. 23)."

This statement captures the rationale for the use of life histories as the methodology for research of this nature. The human condition is complex and is affected by a variety of experiences. In order to make meaning of the decisions made during these experiences an in-depth exploration of their lives is imperative.

Telling of life stories is a process that is not only aimed at documenting what happened but also recording how the story teller sees their present position in relation to the subject or topic

being discussed (Goodson,, 1992). Life histories research allows for the exploration and tracking of the influences on an individual allowing for a deeper understanding of the identities that they now possess. To get an in depth understanding of the occupational identities of TVET lecturers and the motivations around the decisions they have made is the principal purpose of this research and life histories will be the vital technique to provide this.

In telling stories, we are able to capture the relationship between ones voice as an individual and wider cultural imperatives (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Through making this connection we are able to not only make sense of the choices that the participants made in relation to the policy changes but are also capacitated to make meaning of the current position in relation to previous decisions and make insights into possible future decisions.

This is reinforces the relevance of life histories as a research methodology for research of this nature.

#### ***1.5.4 Data Collection Methods***

One on one interview-conversations were used as a data collection method. This method of conducting life histories research is very common as it enables the researcher to establish a relationship of trust with the participant as a conversation type of interview (as opposed to a structured one for instance) allows for the researcher to engage with the participant on various issues which enables the participant to open up more (Goodson & Sikes; 2001). The three series approach by Seidman (2006) was used in the interview process. This method of interviewing prescribes that three interviews are conducted with each participant and each interview tackle a different aspect of the topic. This method of collecting data is highly efficient in doing life histories research where identities are being tracked. It allows for enough contact time with the participant for the researcher to develop a relationship of trust with them thus making the information being shared more credible (Krefting, 1991). It also allows the researcher to notice pertinent issues throughout the interview process that has value in the research for further discussion.

### **1.5.5 Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using the narrative analysis approach that the researcher believes to be the most effective in the analysis of life histories. Narrative analysis helps to get a better understanding of the personal evolution that has gone on within the participants, the evolution being the defining and redefining of their professional identities. The most important element in analysing qualitative data such as life histories using narrative analysis is the creation of themes once the data has been collected. There are various methods of formulating themes when presented with narrative data. For the purposes of this research, two methods were employed: the Key-Words-In-Context (KWIC) method of analysis, and the compare and contrast method. The KWIC method of analysing the text identifies key words or phrases that will be used as the codes in this research. Key words and the immediate text were looked at to establish in what context the word tends to be used in. Repetitions in these words were noted and these key words would formulate themes. This method creates a good starting point when analysing qualitative data such as life histories (Bernard & Ryan, 2003).

The compare and contrast method enables a researcher to analyse text from different participants. “The compare and contrast approach is based on the idea that themes represent the ways in which texts are either similar or different from each other” (Bernard & Ryan, 2003, p 3). It is a rigorous analysis of the text from each participant while asking questions of the current in relation to the previous text (Bernard & Ryan, 2003). For example, “would this view be different if it was a female artisan” or “how does this differ from the previous or the statements that follow?” This method allows connections to be made between the different participants, themes and texts.

By using narrative analysis insights are shared and social knowledge evolves (Mello, 2002). This touches at the core of this research as it is premised on the idea that there are social factors that have influenced the decisions that have been made by the participants and has made them be in the position they are in currently in terms of their occupational identity.

## **1.5 SEQUENCE OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by unpacking the research questions and theories which foreground the research discussions thus enabling the reader to understand the lens through which the research will be looked at.

#### Chapter 2 – Literature review

Chapter 2 explores the relevant literature that influences this research. The views and debates that exist on all the subject matter related to this research are looked at in establishing a standpoint for this particular research project.

#### Chapter 3 – Research Design and methodology

This chapter provides an explanation and justification of the methods that were used in conducting this research. The way in which data was collected, interpreted and presented are explained and justified in this section.

#### Chapter 4 – Analysis of Data

This chapter uses the research design and methodology to make meaning of the data in relation to the research questions.

#### Chapter 5 – Discussion

The discussion chapter presents and unfolds the results of the research and the implications of the results to the research topic.

#### Chapter 6 – Conclusion and possible implications

This will summarize the ideas and understandings discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter will take a summative look at the research while proposing the progressive use of the findings

## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

This introductory chapter not only illustrated the meaning of the research topic but it also began to explicate the purpose of research of this nature. The structure of the research as introduced in this chapter will allow the research to be examined from various perspectives that will contribute to the value of future research within the field.

The literature to be discussed in the following chapter will further interrogate the background of the various facets within this research. The literature will also bring the areas explored in this chapter towards a central point of discussion while anticipating the value of this research within the field.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There are various titles that the vocational education sector has taken on. Vocational training (VT) implying training for vocational purposes with the apprenticeship system emanating from this; vocational education and training (VET) suggesting training coupled with education for the purposes of employment which gives rise to the more modern learnership system (Hollander & Yee Mar, 2009) and finally, Further Education and Training (FET) which looks at vocational education as a part of the more general education system which in recent years has become the trend for countries such as Germany, France and South Africa (Tessaring & Wannan, 2004; Wedekind, 2010). In keeping with South African trends, this education sector will be referred to as the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector with „vocational education“ referring to the type of education being provided in this sector.

Vocational education is born out of industrial revolutions and developments. This has been seen through the development of apprenticeships in England as a result of the industrial revolution in the 1970s (Dessinger, 1994) and in South Africa with the Manpower Act of 1921 making an education compulsory for mine workers and other apprentices working where minerals had been discovered (Fisher, Hall, Jaff, Powell, 2003).

Industrial growth, technological developments and globalisation have led to the TVET sector being looked to increasingly over the last two decades as the answer to economic growth. It is also being looked to as a general path to the realisation of progressive development in underdeveloped, developing and developed countries around the world (Skinningsrud, 1995; Hollander & Yee Mar, 2009).

The sector has grown in recognition since the first UNESCO International Congress of Technical Vocational Education (TVE) in 1987 to the millennium development goals pioneered by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The millennium development goals shone a particular light on the TVET sector by asserting the promotion and realisation of Technical Vocational Education and Training as

a fundamental human right (Education International, 2009) and declaring the promotion and realisation of TVET one of their strategic objectives and activities.

The renewed attention on the sector over the last decade has been seen in mandates of various organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Education International who have directed their attention towards research on the vocational education sector.

Vocational education is seen as the path to enriching a person for life through providing the competences which are necessary in a democratic society. Societal and economic development is now seen to be increasingly dependent on the strength of TVET as it provides access to skills and entry routes into the labour market. For under-privileged and marginalised groups in particular, it can be an important route towards a better life (Education International, 2009).

The 1999 UNESCO report echoes this view of TVET stating that:

Vocational education is one of the most powerful instruments for enabling all members of the community to face new challenges and to find their roles as productive members of society. It is an effective tool for achieving social cohesion, integration and self-esteem (UNESCO, 1999).

Vocational education, both locally and internationally, is now not only seen as being concerned with equipping people for employment but its focus has shifted towards equipping people for employability. The difference between these two terms (employment and employability) is first seen in the 1995 South African White paper on Education which rejected the divisions between “academic” and “applied”, “theory and practice”, “knowledge” and “skills”, “head” and “hand” (Department of Education, 1995). These divisions construct the differences between employment and employability with “academic”, theory”, “knowledge” and “head” implying a propensity only towards employment and “applied”, “practice”, “skills” and “hand” implying an education opened up to employability.

The rejections discussed above from South Africa’s first democratic education white paper have also been seen in the international sphere. The TVET sector’s purpose has been seen to go beyond assisting in the transition into the world of work, but is also expected to produce individuals who are self-employable.

Writing on the role of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Hollander and Yee Mar (2009) see the TVET sector as a critical element in ensuring people can generate their own income in times of economic stagnation. They state that the idea of vocational education for employability as opposed to vocational education for employment makes the sector less dependent on thriving labour markets that can absorb the graduates from the colleges (Hollander & Yee Mar; 2009).

The argument of employability versus employment can be seen as an argument of idealist ideas. Training that ensures everyone who has particular skills can generate their own income would be the answer to many a nations' economic troubles especially with the ever volatile economic climate of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is difficult to perceive the existence or prosperity of such a sector without a strong labour market. Bateman et al. (2006) agree with this stating that the most influential factors in this sector vary from country to country but the economy, the ever-changing structures of labour, industry, the market and the value of workers who contribute towards the economy are all factors that affect the conceptualisation of TVET structures as well as their efficacy.

Labour organisations such as Education International and the International Labour Organisation agree with this understanding of the factors contributing to the value of the sector. A 2009 report by Education International stated that although vocational education is important, it could not thrive if disconnected from the world of work; this would lead to the undervaluing of skills and aggravate unemployment (Education International, 2009). It is at this juncture in the TVET debate that the autonomy of different countries emerges as each nation develops their system in accordance with their economic, labour and industrial needs and capabilities.

## 2.2 TVET IN SOUTH AFRICA

The development of the TVET sector in South Africa, like many other countries, is closely linked with the economy and was developed because of industrialisation. The development of the sector came with the discovery of minerals in the remote areas of the country. These minerals were not only located in distant areas but they were also deep beneath the earth's surface. This created a need for larger labour forces, heavier machinery, power supplies, roads and railways to and from these areas in order to reap the fruits of the mineral discoveries (Fisher et al., 2003). Urban areas began to develop around these areas where discoveries were made which resulted in commercial farming and manufacturing also increasing. With the expansion of railways and the progression of the mining industry, classes for apprentices at the railway sites started to be offered with Natal pioneering the process in 1884 and the Cape establishing programmes for mining engineers in 1894. These classes would lay the foundations for institutions such as the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN), University of Cape Town (UCT), the Witwatersrand University and technical colleges under these institutions (Fisher et al., 2003).

Enrolment into the colleges grew considerably, but due to the protectionist policies in the country at the time this growth was mostly seen amongst white South Africans. The growth in the sector was further fuelled by the 1922 Apprenticeship Act that required that apprentices also attend technical classes. This act set the scene for how the TVET sector would remain in South Africa. During this time various acts were passed that propelled the agenda of TVET colleges. However, due to the political regime in the country, the growth in the sector was mostly represented in the white community due to the apartheid laws of segregation (Fisher et al., 2003). With economic pressures due to an insufficiently skilled population, the Manpower Act was passed in 1981, which allowed all South Africans to undertake apprenticeships. This set in motion a new course for the TVET sector (Fisher et al., 2003).

The Green and subsequent White Paper on Education and Training were the first post-apartheid policies passed and they set the landscape for the TVET sector.

In the wake of democracy in South Africa the TVET landscape was very diverse in terms of infrastructure, resources and capital. There were 150 technical colleges which were divided primarily in terms of race. The former white colleges enjoyed more autonomy, having college councils who had more freedom in terms of their budgets, their links with local industry and the employment of college staff who were considered to be Department of Education

employees although they were appointed by the college councils (Wedekind, 2010). The former black colleges were run in a similar manner to other government schools with the college management having little autonomy over the running of the colleges as well as their budgets (McGrath, 2004; Wedekind, 2010). Within the vocational training landscape there were also ex-homeland colleges located in areas such as the former Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and other training centres that were feeding the vocational sector (McGrath, 2004). This shows the diversities and complexities of the TVET sector that the democratic government had to deal with.

Accordingly, the major concern of the 1995 White paper on Education and Training was “transforming the legacy of the past” (Christie, 1996) and it set out a policy agenda that was aimed at integrating all the relevant education and training providers in South Africa.

The legacy of the past was not only related to race, but Christie (1996) and McGrath (2004) also point out the separation between education and training within the education system. This became clear by the beginning of the 1990s where colleges had taken in large numbers of non-apprentice learners. This made the practical components of the college courses not correspond with the type of learners they were now catering for as the learners did not have the practical knowledge which the sector (TVET) had previously required of its learners (McGrath, 2004).

Another issue in need of integration was the diverse post compulsory sector that comprised of technical colleges, senior secondary schooling, industry, community colleges, non-governmental organisations and private providers (Christie, 1996). Christie (1996) points out that although these providers were working towards the same goal, there were few connections between them.

The above issues were recognised by the then department of education and the White Paper on Education and Training 1995 set out to rectify these and subsequently led to the South African Qualifications (SAQA) Act of 1995 and the National Qualification Framework (NQF) that integrated the education and training sectors into one framework. This Framework would allow individuals to enter the education system at various points with their training or experience providing the access (Gamble, 2003). These acts will be discussed in detail under sub-section *2.4 Policies and Strategies on skills in South Africa*.

The dominant international and local writings around the dawn of South Africa's democracy (Christie, 1996; Skinningsrud, 1995) as well other literature from other writers (Akoojee et al., 2005; Bateman et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2003; McGrath, 2000; McGrath, 2004) have emphasised the need for a vocational education system to maintain ties with the world of work in order for it to be successful. Christie (1996) emphasises this stating that the South African economy would benefit greatly from better educated workers who possessed skills that would enable them "to be responsive to the changing patterns of work".

Such writings along with the white paper's concepts of human resource development, education with labour policies, work based skills and education as a source of economic development (Department of education, 1995) were the initiators of the relationship between the Department of Labour and the Department of Education which in the years that followed would grow with the establishment of SETAs and legislation leading to skills levies and so forth.

This relationship between the Department of Labour and the Department of Education advanced the drive for skills development in the country and consequently, the establishment of a Department of Higher Education and Training that took on some of the responsibilities of the labour ministry (Akoojee, 2012). This change advocated the move towards an educational framework that would cater to the needs of education, training and skills development which were all geared towards economic development (Akoojee, 2012).

This link between education and economic development identified post school education and more so, the TVET sector, as the paramount outlet for the realisation of this need as it is seen as the bridge between schooling and the world of work. Much debate has arisen from this move with Gamble (2003) seeing the potential for local colleges to perpetuate the disparities of the past if one is to consider the current diverse state of local colleges. He states that colleges may fall into the trap of focusing on community development which would mean the previous all white colleges would maintain stronger links with industry especially with their geographical location working in their favour. McGrath (2004) instead sees the South African TVET sector as being capable of aiding in achieving the skills agenda and sees lack of patience and incompetence in the implementation as the main hindrances thus far in the realisation of the different strategies and policies directed towards the TVET sector feeding the economy since the 1995 white paper.

The formation of the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2009 concretised the unity between labour and education. This new ministry integrated higher education, further education and training, adult education and skills development (Akoojee, 2012). The establishment of this ministry was a great stride towards the necessary direction that skills development needed to take. Historically, the disconnection between education, training and labour has been attributed as a partial cause of the skills development shortage which South Africa is facing. In speaking on the establishment of the DHET, Akoojee stated:

It engendered an expectation for the first time for the realisation of a co-ordinated and integrated post school education and training system. The proposed development of a post-school framework proposal anticipates a coherent response to the education, training and skills development challenges faced by the country (Akoojee, 2012)

The above expectation set into motion the changes in the sector that would contribute towards the attainment of various skills development goals. The vision for college was for them to offer two types of qualifications, namely, a general vocation qualification known as the National Vocational Certificate (NCV) and occupationally focused programmes which would support apprenticeships and learnerships through the Report 191 programmes and qualifications (Department of Higher Education, 2014).

These two streams of TVET qualifications have huge implications on the skills development agenda as well as this research. The NCV was introduced in 2007 and is offered at levels 2, 3 and 4. It is composed of three fundamental subjects (Language, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, and Life Skills), three core vocational subjects within one of 14 sub-fields, and one vocational elective (DHET, 2014). The NCV was introduced as the Report 191 programmes were in the process of being phased out along with apprenticeships that would be replaced by learnerships. The NCV programme is designed to expose learners to occupationally directed skills within the education environment.

This shift in focus within the TVET is indicative of the need for research into the potential implications and implementation of the above agenda.

Although to date, the Report 191 programmes have not been phased out, the NCV still remains a focus area in the TVET agenda (DHET, 2014). This further reiterates the need to

focus for focused research into the elements that enable and hinder the success of the mode of education within the TVET sector.

### **2.3 SKILLS SHORTAGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

Allais (2011) defines a skilled person as someone who can perform a task they have been trained to perform to a level that is satisfactory whereas a skills shortage is defined as a lack of employable people possessing particular skills (Mukora, 2008). A skills shortage will occur when the labour demand for a particular occupation is greater than the supply of capable people to sustain this demand. The differences in the definitions of these concepts which in practice should be working concurrently, with a skills shortage being alleviated by skilled individuals, is the base of the skills dilemma in South Africa as these definitions show the possibility of having a large population of people being skilled and still suffer from a skills shortage as a nation.

While some have argued that in the South African context the skills shortage is a result of an unskilled nation, some have attributed the shortage to a lack of skills in the fields that are in demand.

Skills fall into various categories. There are high, intermediate and low skills and skills at any of these levels can be either surplus or scarce (Daniels, 2007). Daniels points out that in the South African context this absolute definition of a skills shortage without taking productivity, meaning the relationship skills have with the world of work, into consideration has created tensions between the Department of Education and the Department of Labour. In interrogating the skills agenda, one cannot look at it without taking the education sector and industry into consideration.

The relationship between skills, industry and the vocational sector is a complex one. The vocational sector is seen as the hub of skills development and is dictated to by the department of education; however, the vocational sector in actuality is supplying the department of labour with the influence of industry. Therefore the tension that Daniels (2007) speaks of between the Department of Education and the Department of Labour is crippling not only for the economy (Daniels, 2007) but perpetuates the issues of skills shortage and scarce skills in South Africa (Akoojee, 2011; Allais, 2011; Mukora, 2008).

The need for a link between education and industry for the purpose of skills development is reiterated by sociologists who have studied the labour market who have gone as far as to say that skills are socially and politically constructed (Allais, 2011). This means that the concept of skills is dependent on the demand for a certain type of skill. The level of skilling (low, intermediate or high) and whether it is scarce or surplus is always contextualised within the country or the society in which the skill is being looked at. The issue of skills being politically and socially constructed demonstrates the need for the concept to always be contextualised when discussed.

Tilley (1987), although writing about identity formation in Europe in the 1980s perfectly unravels the state of skills in South Africa and an example can be made of this through looking at the artisans. Statistically, between 1996 and 2005 the occupational opportunities within the crafts and related fields which include workers in electricity, gas and water supply had decreased and a 19% employment rate was documented in 2005 whereas in the metal machinery and related workers category the rate was at 28% and in the extraction and building trades workers category the rate was at 48.59%<sup>1</sup> (Mukora, 2008). This shows how the relationship between industrial need and worth are contributing factors in considering the notion of skills.

Daniels (2007) puts forward another issue that is a direct result of the differences in the conceptualisation of the notions of skills shortage and skilled development. In South Africa, democracy was born into a nation riddled with inequalities and an economy that was part and parcel of that. With the legacy of Bantu education which resulted in a large number of non-white South Africans having not been afforded the opportunity to get skills hovering over the newly democratic landscape, the drive towards skilling the nation, especially those who were previously disadvantaged during apartheid, through educational and other initiatives saw South Africa aggravate an issue that was lying dormant during the apartheid era - a large supply of labour with low labour demand. As skills grew amongst previously disadvantaged people, unemployment was also raised (Daniels, 2007) as the labour market was not capable to provide for the upsurge in skilled people.

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the increase in the demand and employment rate of the extraction and building trades workers could be attributed to the 2010 World Cup which resulted in a construction boom with the building of stadiums and other World Cup related infrastructure.

Allais (2011) agrees with Daniels (2007) in terms of this issue of skilling a nation without having a big enough labour market to absorb those with the skills but sees a possible solution to be directing the vocational education sector away from fulfilling the short term needs of industry and rather having the sector focus more on providing strong curricula that opens up the learners to the ability to develop better understandings of critical concepts thus making their skills accessible to a larger pool of employment opportunities. This view by Allais aligns itself with the views of the 1995 South African White Paper on Education as well as Hollander and Yee Mar (2009) with regards to the issue of employment versus employability in favour of the idea of educating for employability.

Once again the dilemma of the role that labour plays in education and skills comes up in the above discussion. It is important that education serves a valuable purpose, not just education for the sake of educating but education so that people can enable themselves to live more fulfilling lives (Little, 2003). At this point knowledge within education has to be independent of current trends and needs and look to the future in providing knowledge that will sustain those that have been educated (Allais, 2011; Little, 2003). However, in order to enable people to live more fulfilling lives, their education and skills have to be aligned with the mechanisms that will ensure this is achievable, these would be, employment or gaps in the market for the implementation of productive ideas. Therefore, the education system cannot be of much value if it exists independently of the labour market.

## **2.4 POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ON SKILLS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The White Paper discussed above was the initial post-apartheid policy that affected education and skills development in South Africa. It was followed by numerous acts and strategies that were aimed at diminishing the inequalities in the workforce of South Africa, improving the output of people with intermediate to high skills from the education system and bringing industry closer to the education sector. In the process of conducting this research, the minister of higher education and training launched a new white paper for post-school education and training in 2014; this act will not be looked at in this section due to the retrospective nature of the research. In looking at the life histories of the participants, the acts that were in effect at the time that they discussed will be prioritised for discussion in this section.

This section will contextualise the TVET reality in which the lecturers who were participants work in. Multiple policies affect the TVET sector ranging from skills, labour, social development and education acts. In understanding this, the acts below are not exhaustive, however, the manner in which they will be discussed will allow for clarity on the dynamics that the research had to consider.

#### ***2.4.1 The South African Qualifications Authority Act***

The South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995 (SAQA Act) succeeded the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995. It established the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) which was made up of a body consisting of 29 members who were from both the Department of Education and the Department of Labour (van Rensburg, 2009). The main function of the South African Qualifications Authority was to work towards improving the quality of education at all places where it would take place, be it at schools or in the workplace. This was to be done through the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (van Rensburg, 2009).

This act took heed of the commonly held view that in order for education to be relevant especially in the vocational education sector it has to maintain ties with the world of work (Akoojee et al., 2005; Christie, 1996; Bateman et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2003; McGrath, 2000; McGrath, 2004; Skinningsrud, 1995).

#### ***2.4.2 The National Qualifications Framework***

Following from the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority, the NQF established. This framework was aimed at establishing an integrated education and training system that would encourage lifelong learning to address the inequalities of the past. It is a competency based approach to education (Gamble, 2003; Jewison, 2008; Keevy, 2005) which opens up the vocational education system to general education. It did this through the establishment of three bands within the education system. These were the General Education and Training (GET) band, which was the compulsory education band that consists of grades R to 9. The Further Education and Training (FET) band which was the post compulsory band that covered grades 10 to 12 and some programmes offered in TVET colleges. The third band was the Higher education band that consisted of universities, universities of technology and some programmes offered in TVET colleges (Jewison, 2008; Wedekind, 2010).

Christie (1996) states that it facilitated access and mobility within the system and would establish the position a person would be in on the framework in terms of their skills and knowledge which is especially important in a country where the differences in qualifications according to race were rife. Daniels (2007) and Allais (2011) agreed with Christie's sentiments stating that this framework would build the nation and give the education system more legitimacy as it would open all people to the labour market and prompt mobility for all.

The South African NQF was to serve a variety of principles guiding its conceptualisation and implementation and those pertinent to this research will be looked at in turn.

Jewison (2008) states that the NQF can be said to be a qualifications framework that was developed by SAQA but it is in a broader sense looked at as an integrated approach to education and training in South Africa. Because of this the conceptualisation and establishment of the NQF has been supplemented by various policies and strategies such as the Skills Development Act (1998), the Skills Development Levies Act (1999); the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (2001); the Higher Education Act (1997); National Human Resources Development Strategy (HRDS); the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS); the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) (Jewison, 2008; van Rensburg, 2009; Allais, 2007). In relation to higher education, the 2014 white paper on Post School Education and Training is highly influenced by the preceding SAQA and NQF considerations. For the purposes of this review, the final two that will be looked at are the skills development Act of 1998 and the Skills Levies system as these have a direct impact on the objectives of this research.

#### ***2.4.3 The Skills Development Act***

The Skills Development Act of 1998 act set out to implement strategies to improve the skills of the South African workforce (van Rensburg, 2009). Strategies such as learnerships that would lead to recognisable qualifications would be integrated into the NQF. The skills development agenda would also be funded through skills levies which were mapped out through the Skills Levies Act of 1999 which stated that employers pay 1% of payroll costs. Grants would be given back to the employer upon the department's receipt of plans and

reports. Training for the disadvantaged and unemployed would be funded using 20% of the levy administered through the National Skills fund that was also established through the Skills Development Act (Allais, 2011).

The Skills Development Act also established the National Skills Authority (NSA), the National Skills Fund (NSF), the Skills Development planning unit and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in 1998.

Skills development in post-apartheid South Africa became the joint responsibility of the Department of Labour and the Department of Education. Wedekind (2010) states that the two departments however had differing views of the role the TVET sector was to play in skills development. The differences in the ideas as to who should be fulfilling the skills agenda and how, created tensions between the two departments which later led to a lot of the responsibilities of the Department of Labour being taken over by the Department of Education (Allais, 2011; Wedekind, 2010). In addition to this, the department of education was separated into the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training and this saw the Department of Higher Education and Training take over the functions associated with the National Skills Strategy, the Skills development Act and the SETAs who were now meant to report to the higher education department (Wedekind, 2010).

The above acts, which were investigated as the research progressed, make clear a few of the research's assumptions. These assumptions being:

1. Both education and labour policies and departments share common views on skills development.
2. Education departments and labour/ skills orientated departments do not implement their common views in a harmonious manner.

The above assumptions, based on the policy landscape, also show the perpetual debate on skills and skills development in the country. What are skills? Where do you get them and how? These questions bring to the fore the dilemma that comes with achieving skills related agendas. In the early of post-apartheid South Africa there was a desperate push towards eradicating the inequalities and wounds of the apartheid past, the linking of duties and creation of a relationship with a blurry divide in terms of their responsibilities between the department of labour and the department of education seemed to be, and quite understandably so, an appropriate and reasonable way forward.

As the years progressed, agendas were set and ideas were developed and the relationship between the various departments concerned with skills development became strained.

The experiences of the participants in this research will unravel this particular issue and speak on the assumptions that one can make of the existing policies. One of the benefits of this research is looking at how the policies that have shaped the TVET and skills sectors have, in fact, been experienced by the some of the main stakeholders.

## **2.5 ARTISANS**

This research is essentially looking at artisans who are training prospective artisans. It is therefore important to make the routes to being an artisan clear along with the evolution of these routes. This section is aimed at creating an understanding of how the participants who are qualified artisans came to be that way while showing the routes which the prospective artisans they teach can take to achieving their professional goals. In explaining the requirements of the routes, the need for a convergence of theory and practice is made clear. Further on from the convergence of these two areas, the need for a facilitator of this convergence at various times in the route processes is also seen.

### *2.5.1 History of Artisan Training In SA*

The four acts that influenced the training of artisans in South Africa were the Apprenticeship Act 37 of 1944, the Training of Artisans Act No 38 of 1951 and the Manpower Training Act 56 of 1981 and subsequent regulations under this act (Fisher et al., 2003). Apprenticeships based on a very structured master-apprentice relationship served as a fundamental aspect of artisan training so much so that in the Manpower Act, artisans are not defined, instead, apprentices are defined and it is derived that artisans would be any person who successfully completes an apprenticeship and passes the relevant trade test (Mukora, 2008).

In apartheid South Africa, there were 5 regulatory conditions prescribed by the Minister of Labour in 1977 that governed the successful completion of an apprenticeship. These were:

- **Entry requirements:** the minimum age for commencement of an apprenticeship was 16 years old with a standard 7. Section 17 however, did allow for 15 year old persons to become apprentices.
- **Period of apprenticeship:** From 3 to 5 years depending on designated trade.
- **Formal qualifications:** National Certificate which were Nated N1 to N6.
- **Workplace experience:** As prescribed by the Minister and linked to the period of apprenticeship.
- **External assessment:** Successful completion of a qualifying trade test

It should be noted that prior to the Manpower Training Act 56 of 1981, these avenues were exclusive to the white population because of the apartheid regime (Fisher et al., 2003).

The apprenticeship system however could not fulfil the demand for artisan labour due to the changing patterns of employment. Adding onto this, the progression in new technologies, the demand for goods and services and the growth in the changing ways of production, the discriminatory base that the apprenticeship system was working in was not conducive to economic growth (Akoojee et al., 2005; Fisher et al., 2003, Mukora, 2008). When the National Manpower Commission (NMC) and the National Training Board (NTB) – which replaced the earlier Apprenticeship Board were set up on the recommendation of the then Minister of Labour, one of the first tasks of the NTB was to undertake research with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on artisan training in South Africa (Mukora, 2008). The results were documented in the 1985 Investigation into the training of artisans report. This report questioned the ability of the apprenticeship system to deliver the calibre of artisans that are needed to meet and future technological trends (Akoojee et al., 2005). The apprenticeship system was greatly criticised in the report that stated that many of the apprentices were being granted artisan status just by merely fulfilling the requirements of time through their apprenticeship contracts where they could acquire artisan status through completing a five year apprenticeship without having to pass a trade test (Mukora, 2008)

The report revealed the flaws in the apprenticeship model and questioned its ability to take the South African economy to the level it would want to be at. With the ushering in of democracy, the first modes to becoming an artisan were opened up and theoretical knowledge and subsequently TVET colleges started to play a more pertinent role on the training of artisans.

The South African Artisan Development Coordinating Committee which is made up of members from various stakeholder groupings defined on, June 2007, an artisans as:

...a person that has been certificated as competent by a relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance body for a qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework for a Trade listed by the Minister of Labour in the Skills Development Act as amended, which trade has a designation at occupation level on the Organising Framework for Occupations and the person is registered with the Registrar for Artisans as an Artisan for such a Trade (Mukora, 2008 p 32).

The above statement exposes all the relevant structures in the South African context that aid in qualifying as an artisan (Akoojee et al., 2005; Mukora, 2008; van Rensburg, 2008, Wedekind, 2010). The Education and Training Quality Assurance body would be the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), Ministry of Labour (government), Skills Development Act (policy), and the Organising Framework for Occupations that would be the South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO). Allais (2007) and Bateman et al. (2006) argued that there is one very important aspect that is missing in this definition and that is the providers of the skills, these being the educators at the different levels of artisan training.

In the TVET context, artisans are grouped under engineering and the recognition of the education provider is more than a technicality in defining what an artisan should be. Bateman et al. (2006) describes those that provide education and training as the devolving link in the VET sector. The state of artisan training has gone through various changes in South Africa with apprenticeships, learnerships and education and training all taking turns in being the most important aspect in becoming an artisan (Mukora, 2008; van Rensburg, 2008) the education provider has however remained an integral part of the process of becoming an artisan.

When looking at educators in the case of artisan training one cannot only look at the colleges or the classroom as there are various avenues a person may take to become an artisan and as a result, the educator will be different according to the route that is taken.

### ***2.5.2 Routes to Becoming an Artisan***

The Artisan Development Committee under the Department of Labour in December 2007 gazetted the four avenues they had stipulated to be routes that could be taken in training to become an artisan. Jeffy Mukora of the Human Sciences Research Council summarised these

avenues in a 2008 report on the state of artisan training in South Africa. The four routes were the:

- Apprenticeship Route
- Recognition to Prior Learning (RPL) Route
- Learnership Route
- Internship or Skills Programme Route (DHET plus)

The above routes to becoming an artisan further highlight the importance of practical training in artisan development. All routes have practical components in the development of an artisan to varying degrees. In exploring a teaching population that is a core factor in artisan training and feature in most of these routes, an understanding of the skill set needed in executing their roles most effectively is needed. The paths described below begin to explore this issue.

#### ***2.5.2.1 Apprenticeship Route***

The apprentice route is the historical pathway that has always been taken in becoming an artisan (Akoojee et al, 2005; Christie, 1996). An apprenticeship can span anything from 2 to 4 years and is signed by the employer and the prospective artisan. At the end of this contract the apprentice is certified as an artisan but only after they write a trade test and pass can they be registered as an artisan (Mukora; 2008).

#### ***2.5.2.2 Learnership Route***

Learnerships are built from the apprenticeship model and combine theoretical and practical knowledge to culminate in a qualification that is recognised on the NQF (van Rensburg, 2009). A learner registers for a learnership through the relevant SETA and signs year-by-year contracts that are linked to a learning programme recognised by the NQF and span, in total, from 2 to 4 years (Mukora, 2008). Unlike apprenticeships, learnerships also require a vast amount of time to be devoted to structured learning, and learnerships have multiple entrance and exit points (Mukora, 2008). After successfully completing the learnership the learner is certified as an artisan and is registered as one after passing the relevant trade test.

### ***2.5.2.3 Internship or Skills Programme Route***

After SETAs were established under the Skills Development Act (Jewison, 2008), this route was created. A learner may register with the relevant SETA for an internship or skills programme for their trade. The learner will spend a predetermined amount of time at the workplace (Mukora, 2008). Like the apprenticeship route, this route has one entrance and exit point and the successful completion of the NCV leads to certification with a passed trade test leading to registration as an artisan.

### ***2.5.2.4 Recognition of prior learning route***

A learner may register as a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Learner with the Institute for the National Development of Learnerships, Employment Skills and Labour Assessment (INDLELA) and spend a pre-determined amount of time on an artisan trade recognised by the NQF (Mukora, 2008). The RPL contract will guide the learner in compiling a portfolio of evidence. The INDLELA will assess this portfolio and if it is successful, the learner will be granted certification as an artisan and on successfully passing the trade test the learner will be registered as an artisan (Mukora, 2008). This is the route that came about because of the disparities in educational opportunities for African people in apartheid South Africa. They often have vast amounts of experience and knowledge of the field through experience, but were denied the opportunity to be qualified as artisans (Akoojee et al., 2005; Christie, 1996; Mukora, 2008)

These routes depict the importance of education in artisan training. All the avenues require an “educator” or “a knowledgeable practitioner” to provide learners with the necessary knowledge for success in the trade test and in the field at large. Akoojee (2008) and Papier (2008) have also asserted that a knowledgeable practitioner is essential in ensuring the success of any prospective artisan. This understanding has significant implications in the TVET sector that is the main conduit for achieving the country’s artisanal goals.

### ***2.5.3 Trends in Artisan Training***

The fact that the legacy of apartheid left South Africa with insufficiently skilled artisans, managers and professionals who could not adequately contribute to the labour market has been well documented over the years (Akoojee et al, 2005; Allais, 2011; Christie, 1996;

Daniels, 2007; Gamble, 2003; Jewison, 2008; Mukora, 2008; Wedekind, 2010). Various initiatives have validated this statement such as the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) identifying skilled artisans and other vocational skills as fundamental in achieving sustainable growth in South Africa (Jewison, 2008). The Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) which was launched by the government in March 2006 identified the expansion of intermediate artisan and technical skills as one of the five main target areas for intervention (Mukora, 2008) and it ambitiously committed itself to train 50 000 artisans per year over the period starting 2007 till 2010 (Akoojee, 2012).

In discussing artisans, it is important to note that, according to the South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO), artisans fall under *Major Occupational Group 7* which is the *Craft and related trade workers* group. In this group 22 priority artisanship are identified, these are:

- Engineering: Welders, Electricians, Fitters, Turners, Millwrights, Sheet metal Workers, Boilermakers, Mechatronics, Mechanics, Toolmakers and Patternmakers.
- Construction: Bricklayers, Plumbers, Carpenters, Joiners, Shutter hands, Steel fixers, Glaziers, Plasterers and Tilers.
- Other: Sound technicians, Instrumentation and Electronics Technicians.

This workgroup shows the vast types of artisans and artisan skills that are a priority. This group is also classified as a critical skills group (Statistics South Africa, 2001).

Although there have been these various initiatives to try and expand technical skills, evidence points to a major decline in qualified artisans since the 1970s. An estimated 33 000 apprentices were registered in South Africa in 1975 and by the year 2000, that number had dropped to 3 000 (Mukora, 2008). Various factors have been perceived to be causing this decline. Akoojee (2012) points to the ageing workforce as one of the major reasons for this perpetual problem, noting that an estimated 70 per cent of the currently employed artisans are expected to be exiting the workforce within the next five to six years. Kraak (2007) exposes another matter that is silently sustaining the decline in artisans in South Africa. The issue that Kraak highlights is that of learnerships. Although 134 223 learners enrolled in learnerships in the period starting 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2005, a majority of these learnerships were for non-technical fields that focused on low skills which were insufficient to perform artisan work. Mukora (2008) agrees with Kraak, stating that learnerships have not only shown to be

of little help but they have also managed to mask the problem as they come off as a viable initiative in curbing the skills shortage and the deficiency in artisan training.

It is interesting to note that as the decline in artisan certifications was becoming a pressing issue in the South African landscape, the enrolment for engineering studies in TVET colleges increased. This increase in engineering enrolment came as focus on upgrading TVET colleges became central to the DHET's agenda. Most of the upgrading went towards infrastructure in the colleges and funding to the value of R600 million went towards bursaries for learners enrolling in TVET colleges (Mukora, 2008).

Mukora states however that the results of these initiatives have not been pleasing. There were an estimated 280 000 graduates from engineering studies in the year 2000 and of them, only 34% found employment in industry. This once again shows the disconnection between education and labour that creates a ripple effect of problems in the South African economy. Mukora (2008) goes on to say that the primary cause of the dismal employment rate of qualified engineers is due to the fact that TVET courses are not aligned with industry requirements. He also states that the issue is also worsened by the increase in learnerships. Those learners who were not in a contractual agreement with any company through a learnership struggle to find employment after they qualify and leave the colleges.

The disconnection between education and labour is an issue that seems to manifest in all skills and economically related issues that South Africa finds itself in. The key in trying to grapple with this issue would be to take a closer look by honing in on fundamental aspects that will ultimately determine whether any initiative will be successful or not, the people who on a daily basis either directly or indirectly put action behind all the policies and the education practitioners at the colleges.

## **2.6 TEACHING PEDAGOGIES**

Through in-depth studies of the preparation for various professions, Lee Shulman of the Carnegie Foundation coined the term signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005). Signature pedagogies are the fundamental characteristics that will inform the way in which future practitioners in any field will be trained for the purposes of becoming professionals (Shulman, 2005). Shulman also states that signature pedagogies prepare professionals to do their work well; they determine who will and who won't be a good teacher. Signature

pedagogies are important to explore, in the teaching field but most importantly in the vocational sector where education and training are intrinsically connected. Questions of how best to deliver this sort of education are best explained by exploring signature pedagogies.

Signature pedagogies have three dimensions, the surface structure, the deep structures and the implicit structure. The surface structure is the explicit acts of teaching and learning. The deep structures are the assumptions held by the practitioner that influence what they believe to be the best ways to deliver their knowledge i.e. teach. Finally, there is the implicit structure that is the beliefs, attitudes and ideas that influence the way in which a teacher thinks of their profession (Shulman, 2005). These dimensions all play a part in developing the teacher as a professional and invariably are the structures that will also shape the occupational identities of teachers who have various work *experience* and/or qualifications.

These dimensions fit in with the assertion that Gallimore, Herbert, Stigler (2002) make that teachers do not learn from scientific research, they learn from practice, actually doing their craft. Gallimore et al. do however differ from Shulman in that Gallimore et al. believe that teachers are always producing new knowledge about their craft, as opposed to fitting into the already existing pedagogies about teaching. They may not all be learning every day but they most certainly do learn some of the time.

The views of Gallimore et al. are in line with Huberman's (1983) notion of „craft knowledge“. He states that craft knowledge is developed and thrives through constant change and reflection on known knowledge and is not as systematic and rigid as academics would demonstrate it to be. It is the process by which teachers constantly tamper with the knowledge that they know to gain a better understanding of their craft (Huberman, 1983).

Huberman also makes a distinction between three types of knowledge. These are craft knowledge, systematic knowledge and prescriptive knowledge. Craft knowledge, as described earlier, is developed mainly through experience and stands independent of theory. Systematic knowledge is codified knowledge that is acquired through institutions and systems around the field, including colleges, journal articles, research articles, associations and so on. Prescriptive knowledge is acquired mostly through policies and regulations within the field. It is knowledge that is prescribed through restrictions, what a person can or cannot, should and should not, ought and ought not to do (Kennedy, 2002).

These forms of knowledge that Huberman puts forward -- like the 3 dimensions in the signature pedagogies that develop them as professionals (Shulman, 2005) - are important determinants of professional knowledge and subsequently, professional identities.

Huberman (1983), Gallimore *et al.* (2002) and Kennedy (2002) all state that craft knowledge is characterised more by its contextual richness and is not easy to generalise. This therefore disputes the notion of signature pedagogies as held by Shulman (2005) as they are very generalizable and claim to be able to be applied across the board to ensure professionalism amongst teachers.

Gallimore et al. (2002) make clear the ways in which practitioner knowledge is developed. It is linked with practice, meaning the best way to develop knowledge as a teacher is to be in a classroom. With it being linked to practice, practitioner knowledge is also integrated meaning it is concerned with issues around practice and is interested in making connections. Lastly, practitioner knowledge is detailed, concrete and specific, meaning that a lot of the knowledge that is known and understood in the methods of delivery - for a particular subject or theme within a subject - is only applicable to that subject and cannot be applied across the board.

Practitioner knowledge according to Gallimore et al. (2002) becomes professional knowledge when it is shared, examined, verified and stored in public thus implying the need for operational CoP in order for practitioners to become professionals.

This can be the basis on which we can begin to look at appropriate methods of teaching and the educator knowledge required to be an effective educator in the TVET sector and, more specifically, as an educator of future artisans.

### ***2.6.1. Teaching in the TVET Sector***

As stated earlier, vocational educators as a proponent of vocational education have not been subject to sufficient debate or focused towards a particular aim within the field rather they have stayed a heterogeneous group of individuals going through the teaching experience in varying ways (Heikkinen, 1997). Thus vocational education has remained ever-changing in teaching perspectives.

Taking the volatility of the vocational teaching perspectives Bateman et al. (2006) list a few attributes and characteristics that the new VET lecturer needs to possess in order for them to be of value in their field. The practitioner should:

- appreciate that enterprises need skills to achieve business outcomes;
- exercise professional judgement in delivery and assessment;
- participate within a team to access colleagues and specialist skills;
- tap into wider networks for information and resources, and
- continuously update technical skills and industry-specific knowledge.

This list shows the characteristics that the “new” VET educator should possess. It is interesting to note that in the South African context, the “new” VET educator, according to Bateman et al. (2006), resembles strong traits shown by the “historical” South African VET educator. At this point it is fundamental to explore the advancement and changes in the development of the VET educator in the South African context.

Vocational teaching has commonly been supplied by industry. Professionals leave their occupations as masters of their field to pursue careers teaching in the vocational education sector (Heikkinen, 1997). This trend of professionals leaving industry to enter the vocational education sector has been an international phenomenon and debates around whether it aids or cripples the vocational education system have been rife yet silent. Comprehensive research into this phenomenon has not been extensive, but nuanced ideas in texts by academics such as Akoojee (2008), Bateman et al. (2006), McGrath (2010) and Papier (2008) have shown opinions that a thriving vocational sector, that favours competency-based practices, is likely to succeed if the teacher population has extensive understanding of industry coupled with the necessary skills and experience in the industry.

Writers such as Lynch (1996) and Heikkinen (1997) counter the above notion stating that an individual with a qualification in a particular industry coupled with relevant work experience does not necessarily mean that the individual has the capacity to teach in that field. Heikkinen (1997) also states that a vocational practitioner with relevant industry experience may struggle to disseminate the knowledge of their activity educationally due to the limitations of logic in production and business. These arguments by Lynch and Heikkinen place less emphasis on industry experience being the basis for effective practical teaching or industry based training.

Although these arguments by Lynch (1996) and Heikkinen (1997) are valid, one needs to consider the legacy of skills and how it has been provided for and developed in South Africa and internationally. The roots of artisan training are in the field, on the job, gaining practical and tangible insights into their craft and at the same time into the world of work. With that

legacy still intact today and expressed less explicitly through strategies such as apprenticeships and learnerships (Akoojee et al., 2005; Akoojee, 2008; Allais, 2011; Bateman et al., 2006; Jewison, 2008; Mukora, 2008) it would not be absolutely incorrect to state that the ideal training of artisans is in a situation where they can interact with the world outside the classroom even when they are physically in it. The ideal facilitator of a situation where an artisan can be skilled to perform a task to the level that is required would be another artisan that has been exposed to the field. The training aspect of TVET is the component that speaks the most to the need for practitioners in the field (the lecturers) to possess the necessary skills in the field alongside the educational components of the work.

Heikkinen (1997) and Bateman et al. (2006) state that VET lecturers need enhanced skills (and resources) to implement their training packages effectively and provide the necessary support for learning in the workplace. Batemen et al. (2006) goes further to state that the “new” VET practitioner must possess the ability to look beyond the curriculum and prescribed instruction (systematic and prescriptive knowledge) to fulfil market needs. Their value is in accordance with their ability to interact and understand the world of work. They need to possess a vast combination of skills to be able to be effective vocational educators. The level to which they possess or consciously acquire these skills will largely be based on the identity and more specifically the occupational identity they possess.

## **2.7 IDENTITY FORMATION**

Hogg, Terry & White (1995) defined identity as “the structure and function of the socially constructed self that mediate the relationship between social structure or society and individual social behaviour.” (par.3) The self in identity theory is seen as multi-faceted and dynamic manoeuvring a relationship between individual choices and societal norms and expectations (Hogg et al., 1995). The extent to which this theory attributes the changes in the self to the individual or society is dependent on the school of thought you adhere to. Psychologists such as Waterman (1988) and Marcia (1966) believe that the understanding of identity should largely be placed with the understanding of psychology. They state that the individual and their psyche are the most influential factors in identity formation and attribute identities to an individual’s self-chosen future that comes about because of their personal interpretation of continued experiences. Psychological and individual decisions take precedence over socio-cultural experiences and opportunities. Cote and Levine (1988)

interpret identity from a sociological point of view and oppose this way of looking at identity formation. They disagree with the idea that socio-cultural experiences and opportunities have little impact on the process of identity formation.

Theories on identity differ depending on the school of thought that a person adheres. “Social identity theory” (Alexander and Wiley, n.d.), “situated identity theory” (Hogg et al, 1995; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995) or simply “identity theory” (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Hogg et al., 1995; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Somers, 1994) differ slightly in their notions of identity but the essence of the three titles remain similar. In this research “identity theory” from the sociological perspective will be used.

The sociological perspective in identity formation is largely derived from one of the most prominent writers on the social influence on mental functioning; Lev Vygotsky who stated that mental phenomena have its origins in social activity (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Lee & Roth, 2007; Vygotsky, 1989). Vygotsky’s work (1978, 1989) is based on the notion that action cannot be looked at in a singular and inflexible way. The process leading up to and surrounding the action need to be looked at in order for the act to be fully understood. This highlights the importance not only of life histories research, but also gives the basis for gaining understanding into the rationale behind the decisions that people decide to make.

Writing on identity theory, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) harmonize with the Vygotskian idea in action stating that:

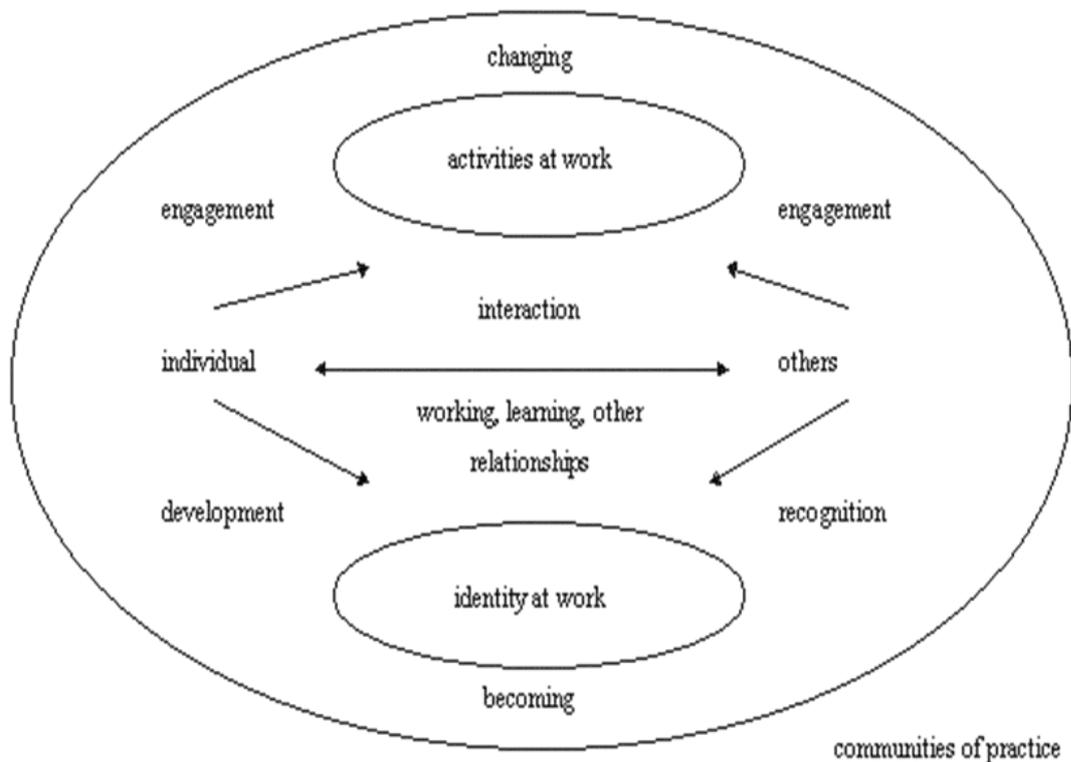
Identity formation must be viewed as shaped by and shaping forms of action, involving a complex interplay among cultural tools employed in the action, the socio-cultural and institutional context of the action, and the purposes embedded in the action.  
(p. 84)

This understanding of identity formation allows for identity formation to be more rational instead of it being an inflexible conception confined to the self (Penuel and Wertsch; 1995). It also allows for conceptions of the self to be related to a particular role a person is playing, this formation of identity in relation to the role a person plays is referred to as a role identity (Hogg et al., 1995) and, for the purposes of this research, the roles that will be looked at are those in relation to their occupation, that is their occupational identities.

### 2.7.1 Occupational Identities

Throughout a person's life, one may be employed in a variety of occupations. These occupations will vary in the level of meaning that they may have to the individual and the amount of influence they will have in an individual's understanding of the self (Polgar & Vrkljan, 2007). In a study linking Occupational Participation and Occupational Identity Polgar and Vrkljan (2007) state that occupational experiences have the potential to structure the way in which an individual views themselves socio-culturally. This understanding of the influence of occupations on identity formation is in line with sociological perspectives on identity formation as heralded by writers such as Vygotsky (1978, 1989) and Penuel and Wertsch (1995).

Polgar and Vrkljan (2007) go on to define occupational identity as "the interdependence that exists between what humans do in their environment (occupation) and their perceived sense of self over time (identity)" (p.31). Implicit in this definition is that the way in which individuals perceive themselves being based on the extent to which they can participate and engage in their occupation. The notions of „engagement“ and „participation“ are key in social identity theory and are the cornerstone to the "dynamic model of occupational identity formation" by Brown (1997).



**Figure 1. Model of occupational identity formation**

This model, proposed by Brown, has a strong commitment to social participation in various occupations as the basis for identity formation. Brown states that:

(The model) could be used as a tool for examining the ways trainers, tutors, coaches and other VET professionals develop occupational identities and how these change over time (Brown, 1997).

This model dynamically places social participation, interaction, individual construction of the self and CoP at different levels as critical contributors in the identity formation process.

These contributors tie in with the significant theoretical commitment that underlies the model, that of „learning as a social process“. The process of becoming and acknowledging who one perceives oneself to be (one’s identity) is highly influenced by the social processes the individual engages in.

In addition to having developed this model for looking at identity formation, Brown also states that, for any model, including this one, to be effective in understanding occupational identity formation, it should be assimilated with other theories such as the CoP theory.

## **2.8 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

Wenger (2000) describes CoP as “the basic building blocks of a social learning system”. He states that communities of practice contain the competencies that make up these social learning systems and are formed by individuals who learn collectively in a common endeavour (Wenger, 2006). CoP place social participation at the core of learning and the identity formation process and it is through participation in the community that a person’s value and competence within the community is increased (Wenger, 2006).

Competence in the CoP theory determines an individual’s position within the community. At the periphery, where the community member starts out, the member’s competence, identity and participation are weak and low; at the core, the member’s participation, competence and identity are stronger making them more valuable as well as more powerful within the community (Wenger, 2000; 2006).

Roberts (2006) critiques this aspect of CoP stating that although making meaning and learning do take place in CoP, Wenger fails to interrogate the influence of power in relation to the movement from the periphery to the core as a result of learning and making meaning.

Roberts states that the consequence of participation in a community where value and power differ across the individuals leaves room for the possibility of the meaning of what is learnt to be what is understood and known by those who have power (competence) within the community.

This critique is important to note in order to understand that learning within a community of practice does not necessarily mean that an individual makes personal meaning through social participation, rather that the possibility of the knowledge and competence they gain can be that of the dominant members of that community. This analysis by Roberts brings the CoP theory closer to identity theory as seen by Burke and Reitzes (1991); Hogg et al. (1995); Penuel and Wertsch (1995); Somers (1994) and Vygotsky (1989) and their understanding of the influence of social activity on the self.

Hogg et al. (1995) state that through social interaction, roles will acquire new meaning, which not only affirms the notion of identity held by Vygotsky (1989) and Penuel and Wertsch (1995), resulting from social interaction, but it also coincides with the theory of CoP which states that involvement in a community (a community which defines one's role and subsequently one's role identity) enables persons within the community to share knowledge, creating better understandings and closer affiliation with their role (Wenger, 2000; Wenger, 2006).

Hogg et al. (1995) also state "a satisfactory enactment of a role confirms a person's status as a role member" (p. 257).

In identity theory, when a role is enacted in a satisfactory manner, the person will feel positive and hold a high self-esteem within that role, making the person feel and become more valuable within that role (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Hogg et al., 1995). This positive contribution to the role will increase their competence which will impact on their position within their CoP. As Wenger states (1998, 2000, 2006), through engaging with other members of the community holding the same role, a member gains competence in the performance of their roles which in turn will determine whether they will be at the core of the community (where they are part of the most valuable) or at the periphery where the boundaries between the different communities they are a part of have a greater influence on how they enact their role.

Therefore, the stronger the role or occupational identity of an individual, the better their performance within that role, which increases their worth as this places them at the core of the community of practice.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In looking at the various theories and policies related to this research, one gets an understanding of the research area where this research is being set.

By exploring the theories, policies and facts within this research area, the necessity as well as the paucity in this research area became clear. With this being the case, this chapter went beyond outlining the theoretical scope of this research, but also began to give light on the possibility of further research within this area. The following chapters will provide moreinsight into this, with the final chapter providing explicit research recommendations.

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explain the research design and methodology of this research project with the aim of unpacking the logic behind specific approaches that have been taken in establishing how to go about obtaining trustworthy and credible research results.

This research is aimed at looking at the life histories of lecturers who are artisans with the purpose of establishing their professional identities. Their lived experiences with a particular emphasis on their associations and social learning patterns as well as, their CoP, are at the centre of the data collection and analysis process

Detailed rationalisations of the theories and methods employed from conceptualisation of the project objectives to the collection of the data; the analysis and the ethics surrounding the entire process will be discussed in this chapter.

### 3.2 RESEARCH SETTING

This study was set in Pietermaritzburg and the participants will be residing and employed in TVET colleges.

The amalgamation of TVET colleges around the country in the year 2000 saw 44 public technical colleges of KwaZulu-Natal being merged into 9 TVET colleges namely Coastal TVET College, Elangeni TVET College, Esayidi TVET College, Majuba TVET College, Mthashana TVET College, Mnambithi TVET College, uMfolozi TVET College, Umgungundlovu TVET College, and Thekwini TVET College.

The participants for this research were drawn from three different campuses in an urban TVET College. These campuses are referred to as campus A, campus B and Campus C.

The workshop courses in this college are offered at three of the four campuses that are a part of the college. These campuses offer a variety of engineering courses. Campus A offers

welding, bricklaying, carpentry and plumbing. Campus B offers electrical (phases 1-3), auto electrical, radio and TV electronics, refrigeration and air conditioning, motor mechanics and motor electrical. Campus C offers motor mechanic, fitting and machining, boiler making and welding. Participant 1 teaches bricklaying in campus A, Participant 2 teaches electrical and auto electrical in Campus B and Participant 3 teaches fitting and machining in Campus C. The table below illustrates the distribution of the participants across the different campuses.

	<b>Field</b>	<b>Campus A</b>	<b>Campus B</b>	<b>Campus C</b>
<b>Pilot Participant</b>	Carpentry	X		X
<b>Participant 1</b>	Civil, mechanical	X		
<b>Participant 2</b>	Electrical, auto electrical		X	
<b>Participant 3</b>	Mechanical			X

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### *3.3.1 Research Paradigm*

The interpretivist paradigm looks at the meanings of actions from the actor's point of view. Interpretivists reject the mechanical assumption of uniformity and the supposition that incidents would occur in the same way at different places and times (Gage, 1989). For this reason, when undertaking this research, three different participants were looked at as, although their occupational decisions have taken them in similar paths, the incidents that have led to this point in their careers can be looked at in different ways.

Bartlett and Burton (2009) also state that in this paradigm the norms and values are ever changing and are dependent on the alterations in the social fibre that influence the meanings that people make out of particular events. Therefore at the core of this paradigm is the meaning of actions in relation to interactions, meaning it seeks to show how peoples' actions are influenced by social interactions and tries to make meaning behind these actions. this justifies the use of the CoP theory in this research where their interactions are shown to influence actions and how they make meaning of their actions..

A paradigm taking on this particular stance to looking at research is of particular importance especially in exploring issues in developing countries (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997) as it opens up the scope to debate understandings and the formulation of different types of knowledge, as opposed to the age-old belief of transferring knowledge blindly across borders.

### ***3.3.2 Research Participants***

The research question is of the utmost importance for a researcher when deciding the type of sampling method to use. The best way to answer the research question will determine the most appropriate sampling method and for the purposes of this research, the most effective sampling method is the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique, also referred to as judgment sampling, allows a researcher deliberately to choose informants (participants) based on qualities that will contribute to the research project.

#### ***3.3.2.1 Purposive sampling and criteria***

This method of sampling allows the researcher to seek out appropriate informants to provide information in order to ensure the quality of the data gathered. To achieve this, the reliability of the participants has to be warranted and purposive sampling ensures this through its “inherent bias” (Tongco, 2007) of specifying the type of participants that will be used for the purposes of the research project.

Using purposive sampling the following criteria was used to choose the participants for this study. All the participants:

- Are employed as lecturers in a TVET colleges;
- Are qualified as artisans by passing the relevant trade test;
- Teach the practical components of engineering studies;
- Have more than 10 years’ experience in the private sector and more than 10 years in the TVET college sector.

Although it was not part of the criteria, all the participants are male. This gender bias is due to the difficulty in finding female participants who fulfill the criteria required of the participants for this research.

Participant 1 is a qualified bricklayer with 10 years working in the TVET sector and, prior to entering the education sector, had been working for 15 years for a mining company.

Participant 2 is a qualified electrician with 13 years teaching in the TVET sector and 13 years in the private sector.

Participant 3 is an electrician and trainer with 16 years' experience teaching in the TVET sector.

As life histories delve deep into lived experiences and generate vast amounts of data from the interactions with the participants, it is recommended that a research project of this nature have no more than 4 participants (Seidman, 2006). In this research project, the data generated from three participants was used for the findings and discussion and 1 pilot participant was also interviewed.

The pilot participant had traits which resembled those of the 3 participants that were used; this is to ensure the credibility of the lessons learnt from interviewing him as the pilot. Like the 3 participants, the pilot participant had passed his trade test and worked for 10 years as an electrical artisan in the private sector prior to joining a TVET college as a lecturer, where he stayed for 5 years prior to leaving to teach in high school.

### *3.3.3 Methodology*

The research used qualitative methods to generate data and findings. Harwell (2011) describe qualitative research as "flexible and open" enabling the data it generates to lead and speak on its own to reach certain understandings.

They also state:

Qualitative research methods focus on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspective, and thoughts of participants-that is, qualitative research explores meaning, purpose or reality (Harwell, 2011; p 148).

Crossley and Vulliamy (1997) concur with the above statement asserting that qualitative research understands that a person acts towards the world in a way that is to their understanding and not in a way that is viewed by an outside observer.

Qualitative research can be conducted and analysed using various paradigms and Crossley and Vulliamy (1997) affirm that qualitative research through interpretivist, constructivist and positivist paradigms has been popular for decades. They also state that qualitative methods of research provide a good understanding of an education system in relation to the various contexts that it may exist in across different nations and enables research, especially in

developing nations, to have more credibility. This is of particular importance in a country like South Africa that is developing and has a diverse education system and more specifically in the TVET sector where vocational education is being developed and delivered in a variety of circumstances. It is safe to state that an approach that allows for the diversities and complexities in creating understandings to be considered is of great value in the SA context.

To achieve the above outlook, within the context of this research, the life histories approach is a widely used methodology for generating credible qualitative data, especially in education research...

It is important to note the differences between life stories and life histories that will be looked at for the purposes of this research. Life stories can be viewed as in-depth biographies that enable a participant to tell the story they choose to about their lives (Breen and McLean, 2009). It is the life as told and experienced by the person telling the story (Goodson, 1992). Life histories on the other hand are co-created by the researcher and the participant. The researcher acts as the catalyst for the unfolding of particular experiences in relation to the wider social context (Breen and McLean, 2009; Goodson, 1992). Fundamentally, the main difference between the two approaches is that life histories research gives the researcher greater power to fulfill a particular research agenda and because of this, for the purposes of this research, life histories was used as the methodology.

Goodson (1992) states that life histories not only allows the researcher to document the way in which things happened but it also gives the researcher insights into how the participants sees their current self in relation to past events. Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) also attest to this stating that:

„Life histories“ is a research method that provides a lens into the complex nexus of individuals and communities, socio-cultural conditions and teacher professional development (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010; p 37).

They go on to state that: Identity is constituted in relation to broader social, cultural and political discourses negotiated through relationships with others (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010; p35).

In stating this they affirm that looking at life histories in broad contexts through semi-structured conversations with persons of interest, one can get a greater understanding of the various identities and decisions that an individual may hold professionally and personally and how these differing identities potentially affect each other (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010).

She also states that the professional development of the teacher cannot be disconnected from the personal life of the teacher. She states that her research found that teachers “invest their personal identities into their work, erasing boundaries between their personal and professional lives” (Bathmaker and Harnett, 2010; p37).

This statement clearly encapsulates the rationale behind this research methodology; the project looks at a pertinent and current education issue such as TVET colleges and the identities of this relatively new community of lecturers in the sector.

In this project, the participants were seen three times in an enabling room for an in-depth analysis of their experiences from the time they were given the opportunity to choose the subjects they wanted to study in high school to their current lived experience as TVET college lecturers. To ensure unhampered unfolding of all experiences, the participants were given the opportunity to speak freely for the duration of an hour about their lived experience within a particular period or context. A few pertinent and broad questions were asked at times to ensure that the necessary data was generated.

### ***3.3.4 Data Collection Methods***

#### ***3.3.4.1 Interview-conversations/ unstructured interviews***

Seidman (2006) refers to interviewing as a “basic mode of enquiry”. He states that at the heart of in-depth interviewing is not only to find the answers to questions or hypotheses, but also to develop an understanding of a particular lived experience. Interview-conversations or unstructured interviews place more emphasis on the respondents’ account and understandings of their lived experiences (Bartlett & Burton, 2009), which is why for this research this method was employed in collecting data.

As stated previously, each participant was interviewed three times. In the first interview the participants were given a time frame to talk about all of their experiences, in the second interview, they were asked to talk about specific experiences within the given context and in the third interview, a few more pertinent questions were asked in order for them to delve deeper into the experiences they had spoken of in the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview. The question asked at the beginning of each interview session served as a lens through which the participants could look at their lives without interfering with what they may feel fit to share. Seidman states:

Every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness. Individuals' consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions on the concrete experience of people (2006; p 9).

This statement shows the importance of conducting unstructured interviews in exploring an individual's consciousness (identity in this case) to fully understand social and educational issues (such as engineering lecturers in the TVET colleges) through their experiences (their life histories).

#### 3.3.4.2 *The Three Interview Series*

This approach to interviewing that is intended for narrative interviews was initially designed by Dolbeare and Schuman (Seidman, 2006) and has been modified by Seidman (2006). As the title would suggest, it is conducted by interviewing each participant 3 times. This method of interviewing allows the researcher to make meaning of the experiences of the interviewee by looking at the data through various contexts across the three interviews. Opting for one interview in which a researcher aims to get all the information in life histories research minimises the legitimacy of contextualized meaning.

This is especially important when dealing with qualitative data and research methods. Contextualising the data is essential, particularly when conducting life histories research.

The structure in this interviewing approach is very important. Each interview was dependent on the previous interview. The first interview established the context of the participant's experiences. In this interview, the participants were asked to share as much as possible about their experiences in relation to the research topic within a specific period. They were asked to speak of their experiences from the time that they chose the subjects they wanted to take in high school to the present where they are working as lecturers in TVET colleges.

The second interview reconstructed the details of experiences relative to the topic mentioned in the first interview. The lived experiences of participants when working in industry was focused on, as well as their present lived experiences in the TVET colleges. Questions were asked to direct and probe participants in this interview session, but interference was kept to a minimum. The purpose of the second interview was not to get opinions from the participants of their experiences; rather it was to reconstruct the experiences made by them that influence the meaning of those experiences.

The third interview reflected on the meaning of the experiences and looked at in the previous two interviews. This interview required the participants to look at their various experiences and interact to give meaning to how it has affected their present situation. In this interview a lot more questions were asked in order for the participants to reflect on specific experiences and help them to make meaning of these experiences. In doing life histories research some believe in keeping questions to a minimum in order to get a more meaningful understanding of the participants without the risk of questions and questioning influencing the participants' responses (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010, Seidman, 2006). However, as Van Manen (1997) states, it is important to not let "the method rule the question" instead a researcher should allow the research question to dictate the ways in which the method can be modified to align itself with what is being looked for in the research. This is why the researcher employed the three series interview approach to doing life histories. The third interview was modified by making it semi-structured as opposed to it being in order to fully answer the research question.

Gaining success in this interview approach is reflexive. The final results will be credible insofar as the process is adhered to all the way through. Seidman (2006) highlights factors that contribute to ensuring that the use of this method of data collection is successful.

The first issue is to respect the structure of the interview process. In this research the open-ended structure of the first two interviews had the participants speaking about specific experiences in context. Thereafter a semi-structured last interview reflected on the experiences mentioned in the two previous interviews; this was adhered to by all participants.

The second issue is the length of the interviews. Seidman suggests 90-minute interviews as the ideal amount of time to conduct each interview. The amount of time a researcher chooses to devote to the interviews is at the researcher's discretion, but all interviews are required to take the same amount of time each in order to ensure uniformity. For the purposes of this research, the pilot interview showed that 75-minute interviews would be sufficient to get the most out of the data collection process and therefore all three participants were interviewed for 75 minutes.

The third issue is the spacing of the interviews. Seidman suggests giving a day between each interview, which will allow the participants to reflect on the happenings from the previous interview. It also permits them to feel the difference between the different interviews and

lastly for them to not lose sight of the process, as this is the danger when an interviewer waits too long between the interviews. In this interview process all the participants were allotted a week for all the interviewing which enabled the researcher to interview them every second day. There was however one instance where the second participant had to be seen on consecutive days for personal reasons.

### **3.3.5 Data Analysis**

The researcher used the narrative analysis approach to analyse the data. Using narrative analysis places the story itself (as told by the participant) as the “object of investigation” (Powell and Renner (2003)).

Various methods can be employed when conducting narrative analysis. For the purposes of this research, the formation of themes was the most important aspect when analysing the narrative data obtained. Powell and Renner (2003) make the distinction between emergent themes and pre-set themes. Pre-set themes are those that the data formulates prior to the researcher’s analysis. With pre-set themes, the researcher has very explicit expectations from the data that has been collected, and in the analysis, the researcher will aim at proving or disapproving a particular point or idea. The issues that keep recurring in the data generate emergent themes (Powell & Renner, 2003). The data collected will create themes that will serve as points of analysis for the research. In this particular research project, emergent themes informed the data analysis process.

The methods that were used to identify themes for this research were the „Key-Words-In-Context“ (KWIC) method of analysis and the „compare and contrast“ method.

Key words or phrases from the interview notes and transcripts were identified using the KWIC method. An examination of these words or phrases, as well as the surrounding text, identified the way/s in which the word or phrase is used and subsequently understood by the interviewees. This method generated the codes, categories and themes that emerged from the data.

Powell and Renner (2003) state that when a theme is established, it needs to be broken down to a point where no other theme can be established from it. This is to ensure transferability and comparability across the data set, which is why within these themes there are categories

which not only show how the theme is broken down but also illustrate how the theme can be understood in various contexts.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that themes are “abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs” which is why simply identifying them is insufficient to make valuable insights into the data that has been collected, which is why this research has taken three different approaches to analysing the data.

The „compare and contrast“ method of analysis followed the KWIC method. This method rigorously analysed the text from each participant while asking questions of the current in relation to the previous text (Bernard & Ryan; 2003). The „compare and contrast“ method enabled the researcher to make connections across text in the process of making meaning of how participants experience and understand similar occurrences.

### **3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Anderson (1990) states, “all human behaviour is subject to ethical principles, rules and conventions”. This is why research that looks into personal lived experiences needs to comply with various ethical requirements in order for it to be socially acceptable, reliable and valid. Various institutions and writers have put forward what they consider the basic principles for conducting ethically sound research (Anderson, 1990; Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010; Seidman, 2006) but as Bartlett and Burton (2009) state, all research needs to be looked at individually to weigh up the ethical implications of the research being conducted.

#### ***3.4.1 Informed consent and debriefing***

All the participants involved in this research project were informed how the research would proceed prior to the interviewing process taking place. An informed consent form was read through with each participant to ensure full understanding of what would be expected of them as participants and the researcher’s responsibilities.

#### ***3.4.2 Right to discontinue***

Research that complies with ethical standards is required to give participants the right to discontinue participation in the research at any point in the research process. This was outlined in the informed consent form and explained to them during the initial briefing.

#### ***3.4.3 Confidentiality***

Confidentiality is at the core of ethically sound research, especially if the research methods entail unpacking personal experiences such as life histories (Anderson, 1990; Seidman, 2006). Therefore, anonymity was attained by using pseudonyms when referring to the names of the participants and institutions where they were employed.

### **3.5 HANDLING OF BIAS**

Writing on the trustworthiness and reliability of the qualitative research process, Krefling (1991) states that:

“In qualitative research, truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants. Truth value is subject-oriented, not defined a priority by the researcher”

The above is of particular importance in life histories as the research is based on reflection and individual understanding. It is pertinent in life histories research for the researcher to be open to the idea of multiple realities and for the role of the research to represent these multiple realities (Krefling, 1991). In adhering to this, this research purposively sampled a diverse group of participants who could potentially contribute to diverse understandings and experiences of their occupational identities.

Life histories research can also perpetuate certain biases as the base may move from being an account of the truth into an account of the participant’s feeling towards the truth or their experiences. In order to curb this, the research employed a „three interview“ approach that allowed for the unpacking of various topics over a course of a few weeks. Adding to this, the data was triangulated with the researcher’s personal experiences as a tutor in the National Professional Diploma in Education – Vocational Training (NPDE-VT).

It has been suggested that a qualitative study is credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions (Krefling, 1991). This makes the truth value the most important criterion for the assessment of qualitative research. The focus of the research may not be on unraveling the actual truth, but rather the value of the narrative presented in the absence of the explicit truth.

## **3.6 LIMITATIONS**

### *3.6.1 Gender*

The participants in this research are all male. This is due to the difficulty in finding female participants who fulfill the criteria required of participants for this research. Although this issue emerged as the research process proceeded it is important to note the issues of transferability that may arise as a result of this. Goodson states that:

Men and women tell their stories differently, they portray the lived experience of social relations in different patterns... Male and Female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths (Goodson, 1992, p227).

The experiences of male participants may be interpreted and understood differently by females - this may affect the themes that would be formed and the findings of the research as a whole.

### *3.6.2 Contextualisation of participants' knowledge*

It seems to be unethical to offer a version of someone's life (or indeed of any social phenomenon) without making clear the nature of the gaze that is being brought upon it (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010).

This statement exposes the importance of contextualising narratives from research participants. The way in which experiences are understood and shared will be influenced by the beliefs and ideas that an individual may hold. These may not be easy to be expose in the research process as a thorough analysis of understanding may constitute a thesis in itself. Without delving intensely into the issue of positionality, the research methods and design take heed of the understanding that the knowledge acquired from participants is valid insofar as it is understood in relation to the participants social and professional context.

## **3.7 CONCLUSION**

Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) state that the power of an individuals' understanding and the knowledge they possess may not be known to them and it is vital to conduct educational research that not only creates meaning, but also meaning that can contribute to a change. This is why the focus of the major aspects of this research methodology is on the participants and their understanding of their lives (in the backdrop of the TVET sector). Dhunpath (2000) also

makes a valuable point in speaking on research methodologies and its responsibilities. He states that educational research needs to look at itself as a living contradiction that acknowledges the weaknesses of human beings and their ability to theorise and make meaning of processes, especially those related to their professional development. The approach that this research has taken notes the value of this notion in the in gathering and making meaning of the data. The methodology that employed not only allowed for an accurate interpretation of the data, but also opened the research to various other areas of exploration within the domains of lecturer professional development, identity formation and the TVET sector.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The fourth chapter serves to discuss the findings of this research. In-depth three part interviews followed by an analysis of the transcripts from these interviews resulted in the content discussed in this chapter.

Various literature has been used in imputing the findings, with a particular emphasis on the CoP theory as theorised by Wenger (1991, 2000, 2006, and 2011). Making meaning of the data also used identity theory.. The writings of Hogg et al. (1995), Burke and Reitzes (1991) and Penuel and Wertsch (1995), all of whom derive their theoretical stance from Vygotsky's social identity theory, were gauged with during the analysis process. Commitment will also be looked at as a by-product of the above two theories and further analysed using relevant literature.

This chapter sets out to make meaning of the findings that are of relevance to the research topic. The topic aimed to explore the life histories of TVET college lecturers who have worked in the private sector as artisans in order to make meaning of their occupational identities. In achieving this objective, this study looks at the participants' formation and engagements within their occupational CoP established in both the private sector as well as in the TVET sector.

This was done by unpacking the findings of the participants in a manner that creates an understanding of their actions in the communities that they established throughout their working lives. From this, an exploration of how the research participants' actions affected their occupational identities is prepared.

The main research question "how do TVET lecturer's interactions in occupational CoP influence their occupational identities?" dictates that the experiences of the participants be looked at from both the private sector, where they worked as artisans, and in the college sector where they worked as educators.

Using this comparison in discussing the data enables one to trace the points in the participant’s life experiences where decisions affected their communities as well as their identities.

Looking at their experiences comparatively also allows for the experiences of the participants to expose various dichotomies that may exist in similar contexts. Contextualising data in life histories research is imperative to ensure the credibility of the findings and the usefulness of the discussions that follow.

With the above understandings as a guide, the data has been divided into 5 critical themes, these being *Boundaries*, *Learning*, *Competence*, *Values* and *Multi-membership*. These themes have been derived from both the literature and the findings.

#### **4.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THEMES AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED**

The research question created the rationale behind the methodology used to collect the data. The methodology went on to justify the method of analysis used. In order to do justice to the research question and the data collected resulting from the questions posed, the different phases of the research process had to slot in with each other. In affirming this, Powell and Renner (2003) state that narrative research presents the researcher with a wealth of information and it is up to the research question itself to dictate the data that will be of use in fulfilling the researcher’s agenda.

In order to make meaning of the data collected, the researcher employed the interpretivist paradigm. Using the interpretivist paradigm with the theoretical framework (CoP theory along with identity theory) as lenses through which the data was viewed, themes were then developed. The themes developed are therefore critical concepts from both the CoP and identity theory that emerged from the data collected.

Theme	Categories	Theory
Boundaries	Race Qualifications	CoP

Learning	Professional training	CoP
Competence	Professional training	CoP
Values	Time Security	CoP theory Identity theory
Multi-membership	Family men	CoP theory Identity theory

Penuel and Wertsch (1995) state that:

Identity as a self-chosen description of the person takes place within action. Identity formation must be viewed as shaped by and shaping forms of action involving a complex interplay amongst cultural tools employed in the action, the sociocultural and institutional context of the action, and the purposes embedded in the action.

The above notion on identity formation further validates the importance of using interactions within CoP as the theory through which one approaches an exploration of occupational identities. The themes that are developed in light of the CoP theory enable the analysis to be focused on matters in the various occupational contexts that have a role to play in identity formation.

## **4.3 THEMES**

### **4.3.1 Boundaries**

In CoP theory, boundaries not only create the distinction between different communities but they are also a strong part of the learning process. To be at the core of a community of practice, your experience and your competence need to be closely aligned. When one is at the core of a community of practice, ones identity in relation to that community is stronger. Due to the close alignment of experience and competence at the core, an individual is more likely to perform their role more astutely. At the boundaries, competence and experience move

away from each other creating fertile ground for learning to take place (Wenger, 2000). At the boundaries either a foreign competence or a different experience from that of the community, especially for those at the core exists. These boundaries, which Wenger states “are usually rather fluid”, arise from “different enterprises; different ways of engaging with one another; different histories, repertoires, ways of communicating and capabilities” (2000, p. 232). In this research, the two categories that have an effect on the participants’ experiences at the boundaries are race and qualifications. These categories affected either the experience or competence of the participants in such a way that they (experience and competence) begin to diverge.

#### **4.3.1.1 Race**

Given the political history of South Africa, race would inevitably have a role to play in a study of this nature. Although the restrictions created by apartheid laws were not explicit in the workplace, the participants’ experience of race at the boundaries and their social interactions as a result of these laws were clearly evident.

The participants were from three different race groups and this was an important aspect of their experiences and perspectives in relation to the research topic and findings.

The experiences of race differed between the private sector and public college sector. The data collected showed more explicit impacts of race in the private sector, as opposed to the college sector where data related to race was more ambiguous. This distortion in the findings in the different sectors may be attributed mainly to the fact that all three participants began their careers at a time when racially segregating laws were explicitly enforced. By the time they all entered the college sector, apartheid laws had been repealed and their experience of race became almost entirely based on their own interpretations of circumstances.

With that observation, race played a critical role in their educational and professional decisions and the establishment of the different communities that the participants came to be members of in both sectors.

##### **4.3.1.1.1 Race in the private sector**

Race was an important factor for all three participants in their decision to enter the different engineering fields and subsequent CoP. Andile made the following statement when speaking about his decision to work in a mining company after he obtained his Junior Certificate (the equivalent of a grade 10).

It was not much of a choice for one to choose what career especially for artisans because with those it was more reserved for whites or you must be a coloured at least to do bricklaying or painting (Andile, Interview 1).

This statement speaks to the political situation of the time. Due to the apartheid labour laws, career choices were limited for some individuals. The labour laws can be said to be the initial influencers of boundary interactions by these participants.

The above statement also reveals that the boundaries that were already being set prior to them entering the artisan community. Their race would be a determinant of the type of communities they would be a part of and, as a result, would affect what it is they learned at the boundaries. Wenger states that boundaries “arise from different enterprises, different ways of engaging with one another, different histories, repertoires, ways of communicating and capabilities. That these boundaries are often unspoken does not make them less significant” (2000, p. 232). Although in the above statement Wenger is speaking of social boundaries, he still makes meaning of the impact of the explicit apartheid laws that created boundaries based on race. The racial laws became the basis upon which communities were formed and how people engaged within it.

While factors like academic capability (affecting their competence) also came to the fore, their experience of race was the main determinant of the occupational community they could be a part of. This was seen with Chris who stated that he was highly skilled and passionate at woodwork and would have loved to go in that route but was discouraged by a friend who told him “it’s going coloured”. This experience by Chris relates more to the above statement by Wenger. Chris’ social understanding of the racial setup at the time affected the career decisions he made. He chose the community he would be a member of based on his understanding of race.

Once again, the boundaries created by their understanding of race kept this participant from entering the community which he felt he was most competent to be a member of.

It was also evident in the findings that race contributed to the ways in which they communicated in their CoP.

Andile worked at a gold and uranium mining company which, according to him, was the only company willing to hire black people at various levels within the company. The company promised promotions to all staff after the completion of certain in-house training programmes. However, when the black staff completed this training they did not get

promoted within, the company stating that other employees (of all races) would not take them seriously or respect them if they were put in positions of authority due to the fact that they were black. Here it can be seen how their competence (in their work) and their experience (of their field) are separated by their race. Consequently, as a community of black competent artisans, they began to motivate each other to work towards promotion by acquiring the necessary qualifications and showing professionalism and respect towards each other at all levels within the company. This experience exposed clearly the issue of methods of engagement in relation to race.

The formation of communities they became members of (in their various companies) were determined mainly along racial lines and the methods of engagement were dependant on the members' experience of their race at the boundaries.

White men dominated the electrical engineering field and Brian, being a coloured man, entered the field as part of a minority. As a result, he did not get well integrated into any CoP in the private sector and remained at the periphery of the larger electrical engineering community. He did not engage with many of his colleagues as they did not see him as an equal, although they were all doing the same type of work. He does state that, in some of his employer companies, he was delegated unpopular work. This would be tasks such as supervising the black workers on a site at Mooi River in the early hours of the morning during winter. Unlike the first participant, he did not establish a community with other electricians who shared with him the experiences of hardship as a minority group in the field. He remained only a member of the larger electrician community, which kept him at the periphery, unlike Andile who became a part of a community (black workmen) within a larger community (gold and uranium miners).

Hogg et al. (1995) state that through social interactions roles acquire new meaning. This means that simply acting out a role is not sufficient to make meaning of it. Rather, the social interactions within the communities where these roles are explored have a great impact on what the meaning of the individual's role is. This is seen in both Andile and Brian's experiences although their individual interactions were vastly different.

Andile's participation in the artisan community was validated by his social interactions in the community of black artisans. Through encouraging each other as black artisans to perform better, they positively affirmed their identities as artisans. Burke and Reitzes (1991) and Hogg et al. (1995) have written about positive affirmation in communities and their

connection to identity formation. They state that when a role is enacted in a satisfactory manner, the person will feel positive and hold a high self-esteem within that role, making the person feel and become more valuable within that role (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Hogg et al., 1995). Although the hardships associated with them acting out their roles were evident, their social interactions within these roles determined the meaning they made of their roles, thus affecting their identity. As seen in the evidence discussed above, Andile formed a strong community with other black artisans who were experiencing similar hardships as opposed to Brian who went through his occupationally related hardships on his own. The differences in their interaction in this regards affected the view they had of themselves as artisans and also affected future interactions within that community.

The issue of race also came to the fore in relation to trade tests. Andile and Brian both passed their trade tests on the second and third attempt respectively. Brian made clear his belief that the reason behind him not qualifying on the first two attempts was due to his race. He stated that by the time he passed his trade test he had already trained other white students who qualified on their first attempt although he believed that some of them were not competent enough to pass the exam. Interestingly, the only participant to pass his trade test on the first attempt was Chris, the white participant.

The issue of race affecting trade test qualifications is debatable, and the circumstances around it could be contested, depending on the stance one chooses. For instance, Chris who was the only one to pass his trade test on his first attempt, did not attribute race to this achievement. As questionable as the issue may be factually, it shows an important aspect of the boundary process. Wenger (2000) states:

Boundaries can create divisions and be a source of separation, fragmentation, disconnection and misunderstanding (p 233).

This statement by Wenger is clearly supported by the trade tests issue. The participants' experience of their race diverged from their competence as artisans and created the "separation, fragmentation, disconnection and misunderstanding" for the participants in their artisan communities.

They were separated within the larger artisan community into smaller racially defined communities in the private sector. This not only created a disconnection between them and their colleagues from other racial groups but also, as seen with Brian (in the private sector) and will be seen with Chris (in the TVET college sector), a disconnection with their fields in

general. As it will be discussed later in the chapter, the consequence of this is a lack of commitment to their identities established in these communities.

#### 4.3.1.1.2 *Race in the College Sector*

The issue of race permeated the college sector as well. The communities established by Chris were based on race. The staff members who he established a rapport with and engaged with on issues related to work and leisure were all white. This was not coincidental as he stated, “I tried to be friends with the black people but it just doesn’t work” (Chris, Interview 2).

As a result of race being a determinant of the community which was established by Chris, as opposed to specialisations, the learning that took place in this community did not aid in bringing him closer to the teaching community. They engaged on social issues for the most part, particularly about golf. Work related issues and learning that would lead to some form of occupational growth was not a matter of interest in the communities he established.

Andile and Brian on the other hand established CoP in the colleges based on their field of expertise as opposed to race. They were, however, of the opinion that their race made it difficult for them to get better integrated into the larger teaching community. Both stated that due to management being predominantly white or Indian, their views as black and coloured teachers were not seen as significant. Although they were competent as artisans, their experience as non-white tradesmen put them at the periphery of the teaching community. At this point policy was also dictating that all teachers have teaching qualifications but Andile and Brian stated that their race also made the need to get these qualifications all the more important. As a result, both participants had the understanding that they had to gain new competencies such as teaching qualifications to bring them closer to the core of the teaching community. This is seen with both participants being enrolled in University of KwaZulu-Natal’s (UKZN) NPDE-VT programme at the time of the interviews.

As defined by Hogg et al. identity is “the structure and function of the socially constructed self that mediates the relationship between social structure or society and individual social behaviour” (1995, p255). This definition sheds light on the occupational decisions made by the participants as influenced by racial interactions. The way in which their social structure in relation to race and their behaviour as a result of this experience led to particular understandings of themselves in that social context. In accepting that an understanding of the self has direct bearing of ones’ identity, these racially influenced occupational interactions can

be seen to have an indirect effect on the participants' occupational identities. This led to differing understandings of who they were in the artisan and college sector, thus influencing their identities.

The issue of race is of particular importance in identity formation in that, unlike the other themes explored in the research, as a social attribute, race is fixed and an involuntary factor in the identity formation process.

#### **4.3.1.2 Qualifications**

The qualification one holds has a great effect on an individual's experience in any group. Wenger expresses this by stating, "Sit for lunch by a group of high energy particle physicists and you know about boundary, not because they intend to exclude you, but because you cannot figure out what they are talking about" (2010, p. 125). The qualifications that one holds in an occupationally focused community create a point of departure for the group's interactions. This does not mean that the community will only engage in matters related to their commonly held qualifications, rather, the qualifications serve as a marker of the boundaries that form the community.

The ability to partake and make a valuable contribution to the shared practice of the community affects the competence and experience of the community. Therefore, qualifications will contribute to the level at which one can participate in the shared practice and inevitably, whether one stays at the periphery or moves to the core of a community.

##### **4.3.1.2.1 Qualifications in the private sector**

Moving from one community to another had an effect on the boundary interactions in relation to qualifications for all participants.

Only one of the participants had passed their grade 12 at the time that they entered the artisan community. This was Andile who had chosen subjects that would get him a career in engineering after he got his Junior Certificate. Brian and Chris both failed their grade 12 and entered the artisan communities as a consequence of this. Both stated that not getting their grade 12 qualifications directly led to them entering the engineering field. In relation to this, Brian stated:

In standard 8 I took a commercial stream, I thought I could own my own business... I had big dreams. Another thing that was driving me was that I wanted to be a chartered accountant (Brian, Interview 1).

Having had ambitions that did not align themselves with his circumstances, his social life took a turn for the worse. He got involved with the wrong crowd and as a result failed his matric. Without a grade 12 certificate, he entered the artisan community without the necessary qualifications to integrate himself fully in the community. This can be seen as the point where Brian established himself as someone who would only be at the periphery of this community. The first company he worked in was the same company where his father was employed and although he was entering the community with guidance from someone who was more knowledgeable, the available data does not show this as having an effect on his experience.

Chris had a similar experience. He also failed his matric, stating that it was his mother's fault as she had taken him to an academic school whereas he had wanted to attend a technical school. Unlike Brian, Chris actually had a love for woodwork, which is in the artisan field. However, as a result of him not being afforded the opportunity of going to a technical school, he became delinquent and failed standard 9. He then got employed in the same company as his father as a messenger boy on the railways.

All three participants worked towards getting the necessary qualifications in their fields through apprenticeships and trade testing. The ways in which their qualifications affected their access into the artisan communities can be seen as having an effect on the level of commitment to the artisan communities they were a part of in the private sector.

Apprenticeships are the historic route to becoming an artisan. (Akoojee et al., 2005) put them all in the professional environment of an artisan from a very young age. This ensured that they not only honed in on their understanding of the theory related to the field they were in, but it gave them the practical experiences that were needed to perform their duties as artisans effectively. This enabled them to engage in the shared practices of the artisan community.

Although having the appropriate qualification is the determinant of entry into the communities, upon entry the individual can engage in activities that define their role. The nature of this engagement is what determines the extent to which an individual can move from the periphery to the core and commit to their identity.

Andile who had a matric qualification geared towards engineering stayed with the company he had worked for 17 years. During that time he enrolled in various in-house training courses

that would elevate his competence as an engineer. The interplay between his experience and his competence led to him moving closer and closer to the core of the artisan community. This led to a higher level of commitment to his artisan identity even after leaving the artisan community to join the teaching community. This will be discussed further in subsection 4.3.1.2.2. As a result of not having had an innate interest in the field, and having entered the artisan community as a result of circumstance more than choice, Brian and Chris did not strongly identify themselves as artisans. Chris's lack of commitment was also shown with the promotions and other career growth opportunities that he was afforded in relation to being an artisan that he turned down without referring to specific reasons for this.

#### 4.3.1.2.2 *Qualifications and becoming a TVET lecturer*

When they entered the TVET sector, experience and competence diverged the most for all three participants. All participants had the necessary qualifications that were supplemented by extensive experience in their respective engineering fields. However, none of them had any teaching qualifications.

All the participants were initially employed to teach the practical components of their subjects in the college workshops. Their knowledge of the practical components of their field from their experiences in the private sector enabled them to engage with the artisan lecturers whose community they were entering. As a result, all three participants became well integrated into these communities and engaged within the community on a variety of community related issues. Andile stated that as artisan lecturers they discussed various issues around how their programmes were being run and how they could be improved to better equip learners with the ability to succeed in the field. This showed that their experience as artisans created platforms for engaging with others in the lecturing community, which aided in developing a shared practice. This shared practice, in the case of Andile, was illustrated through the establishment of a Close Corporation (CC) by the workshop lecturers who had worked in industry. This CC was set up to provide various kinds of civil engineering services and would recruit students to work within the company to gain experience. Andile's integration into the artisan lecturer community revealed the strength that experience has in establishing a shared practice that can develop a repertoire in the community.

The establishment of the Close Corporation by Andile and other artisan lecturers at his campus actions the words expressed by Wenger (2001). Their qualifications and experience

as artisans allowed them to form a community in the college sector that was established based on their knowledge as artisans.

The three participants did, however, experience difficulty in getting integrated into the larger TVET lecturer community as a result of their qualifications. The larger TVET community questioned their competence as teachers. The issue of tradesman versus academic came up repeatedly across all the interviews. As they were tradesmen who had no qualifications in teaching, or strong theoretical qualifications in their fields in the form of degrees and other higher education qualifications, they were side-lined in the TVET lecturer community.

Brian stated:

The problem in the colleges is 99% of the staff is academics... Every time they have a problem they come to my doorstep for help... I don't mind it but I don't get credit for it. That same guy I was teaching that thing a year later you'll hear "Very well done to Mr So and So, he's become a senior lecturer (Interview 2)".

This statement shows how their experiences were far removed from their competencies in entering the TVET lecturer communities because of their qualifications. Although they were competent as tradesmen, which gave them the access to the artisan lecturing community, not having the necessary teaching qualifications made their competence questionable in the eyes of the TVET community. This resulted in their competence being more detached from their experiences when they entered the workshops.

Andile and Brian ventured on to get education qualifications by enrolling in the NPDE-VT programme and both spoke of continuing their teaching related qualifications so as to get better integrated into the TVET lecturer community.

Regarding qualifications, Andile was closer to the core of the artisan community with his matric qualification, trade test pass on the second attempt and the various in-house programmes in which he enrolled. Although he was willing to integrate himself into the TVET community through enrolling for teacher related programs, he did not identify himself as a teacher although he showed himself to be committed to the teaching occupation. Blustein et al. (1989) when discussing the relationship between what he calls an ego identity and commitment, explores the state in which Brian finds himself. In exploring an ego identity one takes into account various interpersonal and ideological issues. Therefore, this identity is formed by ones exploration of these issues. An occupational identity would also be formed in

this sort of way as it takes into account both ideological and interpersonal issues. Commitment to this identity (ego or occupational) is measured by a clear definition of the self across the issues that influence the identity. This means that a definition of the self that remains the same across the various situations that is dictated to by ideology and society informs commitment to that identity. What is seen in the case of Andile is a definition of the self which lacks commitment as it changes according to his interpersonal and ideological experiences. He may identify himself as an artisan but there is no clear commitment to this occupational identity.

Brian struggled to get integrated into the artisan community in terms of qualifications having only passed his trade test in the third attempt and only achieving his matric qualification much later on in life (he was a lecturer in the college when he achieved this). He showed a stronger allegiance to education and worked the hardest towards becoming integrated into the TVET community.

Wenger states, “If competence and experience are too close, if they always match, not much learning is likely to take place” (2000, p 233). Chris’s experience at the boundaries in relation to entering the TVET community of practice showed this. Chris was at the core of the artisan CoP - these being the larger community, which refers to the sector as a whole and the smaller communities established in the companies he worked for. Having been at the core, and having the power that he had as a result of being there, his experience and his competence were so closely aligned that he had no desire to navigate the boundaries of the new (TVET) CoP. He expressed this by stating, “If you have a teaching diploma you do more work. I don’t need that (Interview 3).”

He took no steps towards obtaining integration into the TVET college community of practice and chose to stay at the periphery of the larger community, which was shown through his associations and his qualifications, or lack of.

#### **4.3.2 Learning**

Professional training was the base upon which learning took place. There was a distinction in the role that their qualification played and the role of their training. As discussed in the previous section, qualifications served as an instrument for forming or accessing existing communities, whereas their professional training allowed them to practice their profession thus allowing for learning to take place.

An essential part of any community of practice is learning. Learning takes place through shared practice, whether explicit or implicit. The learning process in communities creates a collective intention and may cumulate the development of resources from the shared practice. This measures the value of a community. Wenger et al. reiterate this by stating:

The learning value of community derives from the ability to develop a collective intention to advance learning in a domain (Wenger et al, 2011 p.10).

In this research, learning is seen as the process of acquiring the necessary abilities that enable one to be an active and competent member of a community.

The research will look at the collective or individual learning process that enabled individuals to move from the periphery to the core of the community by enabling them to be members of the community that are more active.

#### *4.3.2.1 Professional training*

Professional training was an important determinant of community membership. The communities that individuals find themselves as members of will be, in part, because of their professional training and this, in turn, will serve as a good ground for exploring occupational identities.

Professional training creates shared practice in the occupational communities. It does this through the recognition of certain abilities that serve as the basis for participation in the community. These abilities can be acquired through the actual training or experiences that come about because of this training.

Abilities that were acquired in relation to professional training were central in entering the different communities. Practical abilities specifically enabled participants to learn the various nuances in the different private sector communities they entered.

##### *4.3.2.1.1 Professional Training in the private sector*

Apprenticeships were common for all participants as access to the artisan communities in the private sector. Apprenticeships as a form of professional training not only honed in on their abilities to execute artisan related duties but apprenticeships exposed them to the meaning of what it is to be an artisan. It also created an understanding of what it meant to be part of an artisan community. Through apprenticeships they acquired abilities that enabled them to gain the competencies necessary to become an artisan and enter artisan communities.

Andile expressed this by stating that during his apprenticeship he learnt a lot about what it was to be an artisan in his field:

We worked with dangerous substances so you know we learnt a lot about safety, first aid, safety act (Andile, Interview 2).

Brian shared the same sentiments on learning that built resilience to the adverse factors that came with being an artisan during and after his apprenticeship. He stated that racial segregation was the major learning tool in relation to resilience that affected professional training. Being deployed to work in politically adverse communities, and having to take on responsibilities that were unfavourable mostly characterised his experiences as an artisan.

For Andile and Brian, the dangers and struggles that came with becoming artisans developed the necessary abilities that enabled them to be active members of the artisan communities. Their resilience to the factors helped them gain the necessary abilities to be active members of the communities of which they were a part. Andile, Because of having been exposed to dangerous substances in the work place, learnt a lot about dangerous substances and through his personal effort took to learning more about safety in the workplace especially when working in dangerous environments.

Brian, because of having been exposed to the hardships of the artisan workplace, also learnt important abilities that would enable him to be a more active member of the artisan community. Resilience was the ability learnt by this participant during this time, which was an important ability to attain in order to be a member of the artisan community. The ability to take the various factors that came about as a result of being a member of a community that proved to be difficult to be a part of as a person of colour at the time would prove to be the most important ability needed for people to integrate into the artisan community.

Chris started as a „messenger boy“ in a railway company where he eventually applied for an apprenticeship. Through this experience as a passage to entering the artisan community, he learnt the importance of working hard to get to the next level in his career. He also gained insights into the hierarchies within the artisan community. Understanding the various hierarchies in the artisan community is imperative as a means of learning the necessary abilities needed to be a competent member of the community. By understanding the hierarchy system, one understands the power dynamics of the community. This enables new members to understand how knowledge is developed in a community, which is an essential ability

members need to understand in order for them to engage fully in the shared practice of the community.

De Laat et al. (2011) explored the issues above, and their role in learning in a community of practice. In explaining the differences between a community and a network, they state that a community of practice “refers to the development of a shared identity around a topic or set of challenges. It represents a collective intention – however tacit and distributed – to steward a domain of knowledge and to sustain learning about it” (p.9).

This exposes the strength of the communities especially in the private sector. There was a clear “topic” in the form of a challenge that they all had to deal with which created sustained learning in their communities.

#### *4.3.2.1.2 Professional training in the college sector*

The abilities acquired as a result of having entered the artisan communities helped them enter the TVET communities. Their ability to be resilient and work hard ensured them access into the TVET communities. This can be seen as all three members believed that the positions they held when they entered the TVET sector were of a lower standard in relation to their previous employment. Andile stated:

When I started in the college I was getting paid the amount I was paid when I first started at Eastrand Gold and Uranium (Interview 2)

This situation was true for all three participants however, due to them having learnt to be resilient in the private sector they all stayed and worked hard to make it back to the level they were at in terms of their occupational worth.

All three participants, upon entering the TVET sector, came across various factors that made it difficult for them to be fully competent members of the community. The main factor was the issue of their professional worth resulting from the differences between the Department of Education and the Department of Labour. The Department of Labour recognised their abilities as artisans and saw them as fit to be members of the TVET communities due to their professional training in the private sector. The Department of Education on the other hand did not view their professional training as sufficient for them to enter the TVET community as active members. The Department of Education exposed this view by employing all participants on a contractual basis for several years and requiring all the participants to enrol in other programmes that would enable them to acquire the necessary abilities for them to be

active and valuable members of the TVET community. Taking into consideration that all participants at this point were all family men who were over the age of 40, employed on a 6-12 month contract without security in terms of renewal if further professional training were not taken, a high level of resilience to the adverse factors of being a member of this community was needed.

All three participants altered the curriculum and some even offered supplementary classes to learners to ensure they were adequately prepared for the world of work as artisans. This was above and beyond their prescribed duties as TVET lecturers. The inclination to work hard, which they learnt in the private sector, enabled them to tackle the issue of professionalism in the TVET community better. The level to which they showed professionalism in their new occupations, enabled them to engage better in the communities they established.

When all participants were asked to define professionalism, they all commonly saw it as the ability to execute ones' occupational responsibilities fully and properly. All understood professionalism to be beyond qualifications and more of a choice to perform occupational duties competently.

Professionalism, viewed in this manner, became a vital ability for all other members in the communities that the artisans were a part of in the TVET sector. Their disgruntlement with the state of professionalism in the TVET sector was expressed through statements such as:

“TVET college lecturers do not take themselves seriously” (Brian, Interview 3)

“Some people in the college do not do their job” (Chris, Interview 3)

For the participants, executing the duties designated to them in their role was important. Their professionalism in the public sector aided them in moving closer to the core of their communities.

#### **4.3.3 Competence**

Having competence in a community is seen through the ability to perform roles effectively. Competence is an important aspect in getting recognition in a community as it allows members to engage and learn from each other. In all communities there are shared competencies that allow members to engage and learn from each other. These competencies will be looked at under this theme.

In the previous section learning was looked at as a theme. Professional training, work related problems and engaging with college management emerged as the categories that steered the learning process in the communities. To ensure that learning takes place within the communities in relation to these three categories, certain competencies that diverged from their experiences had to be acquired. This is because experience is the basis for gaining competencies. The competencies gained lead to learning and subsequently the establishment of an individual's position in a community.

There is therefore a triangular relationship between competency, learning and experience. The competencies that one accumulates which lead to learning within a community are inextricably connected with one's experience.

As a result, in order to gain insights into competence, one has to look at it through the lens of experience. In this research the participant's experience in relation to what they have learned (through professional training) in the private sector will be looked at as will new competencies that diverged from their experiences in the private sector that had to be acquired for them to become active members of the college community.

#### *4.3.3.1 Competence and Professional Training*

Wenger (2000) states that,

In a social learning system, competence is historically and socially defined... knowing therefore is a matter of displaying competences defined in social communities (p.226).

This means that every community has historically defined modes of measuring competence that become the norm by which a person's integration into the community is defined.

This social definition of competence is seen at its clearest in relation to professional training. This is the training that one goes through to become qualified in the field that exposes one to the competencies that an individual needs in order to enter a community. In order for one to become active in the community and move closer to the core, their experience needs to reflect an understanding of these competencies. Wenger (2000) addresses this by stating, "...socially defined competence is always in interplay with our experience."

The relationship between competency and experience can be clearly demonstrated by this research and will be looked at in both the private sector and the college sector.

#### 4.3.3.1.1 *Competence and Professional training in the Private sector*

All three participants had over 10 years of experience working in the private sector and although their experiences differed extensively, they all had a clear understanding of their roles and position in the private sector community of artisans.

Being a part of a professional community connotes a certain degree of shared practice. All three participants engaged in various shared practices as a part of their explicit or implicit professional training.

The first practice was working with tools on a daily basis. All three participants worked in workshops or out on the field throughout their experience as artisans in the private sector. Their ability, which reflects competency, was a result of their professional training and it determined where in the community they would be placed.

Practical work constituted a large part of the participants' experience as artisans. Indications of competence in this regard were seen through promotions and their ability to move across the artisan sector.

In terms of promotions, Andile showed this clearly in his experiences as he spoke about having started out as an apprentice and he moved "up the ladder" to become an attendant, then an operator and then by the time he left the sector he was a foreman.

These promotions were an indication of competence in their field resulting from their training. Andile had achieved various training certificates within the company during his tenure and as a result his practical competencies were heightened and so was his experience in the practical workings of his field. This situation was also observed with Chris who entered the railways as a messenger boy, thereafter applied for a 5 year apprenticeship which he was able to complete in two and a half years. His competence in the practical components saw him make steady and rapid progress in his field throughout his time in the private sector.

For all three participants competence in terms of their practical abilities was demonstrated by their ability to manoeuvre through the private sector. This was exhibited clearest with Brian who during his time in the private sector worked in 13 electrical firms. His competence as an artisan made it possible for him to move to different companies. Competency in his practical abilities was of special importance for Brian, as in the electrical field he was part of the

minority as a coloured man, which according to him he had to be a “spot on” worker in order to be able to move up in the system.

Another indication of their practical competencies in the private sector was their ability to avoid injuries while working in the sector. Aside from Chris (who sustained a back injury while working on the railways as a young artisan), the participants were able to avoid major injuries which were a common occurrence in the field and were recognised by all as the cause of the ending of most careers.

The issue of injuries in the workplace was more than a determinant of competence for Chris,. It became the cause for the ending of careers and, in one instance, a life. Chris’s son who worked for a railway company was involved in an accident at work that not only ended his career but also his life. This incident although it did not happen directly to Chris, affected his experience greatly. He explains that following this incident, he no longer felt the need to engage in many of the shared practices that were a part of the artisan experience. He left his field of practice and started training prospective artisans. He later left the private sector to become a TVET college lecturer.

#### *4.3.3.1.2 Competence and Professional Training in the College Sector*

The experience of working with tools and being well inclined towards the technical aspects of being an artisan enabled all the participants to enter the TVET college sector as lecturers in the workshop. This meant that their experience would remain the same with practical work being at the core of their day-to-day work in the colleges.

However, they had to learn a new competency that diverged from that required in the private sector and would enable them to be active members of their new community. This competency was teaching.

An old saying goes “just because you can do it, does not mean you can teach it”. This saying expresses clearly the divergence of competency and experience that the three participants experienced as they came into the college community.

This new competency was critical in becoming integrated into the TVET college lecturer community.

Being able to teach their subjects effectively and with good results from all learners were the indicators of having this competency. The process of acquiring the competency of teaching, like in the private sector, was dependant on professional training in the field. This meant that in order for the participants to acquire the ability to teach in their classrooms, they had to enrol in a teaching programme.

With none of them having had a teaching qualification, various difficulties were experienced when entering the college community. Andile, who was considered by the Department of Labour to be qualified to teach in a TVET college, was rejected by the Department of Education. This was a result of his having no teaching qualification and was therefore seen by the education community as not possessing the necessary competencies to be a lecturer. He was eventually “conditionally” employed by the Department of Education on renewable 6 month contracts. This situation was true for all the participants who were all initially employed on renewable 6-month contracts. All three of them were initially employed on a contract basis for over 4 years because they were not qualified teachers.

It became clear that gaining teaching qualifications, which would verify competency in teaching, were necessary in gaining recognition in the college lecturer community.

The link between competence and teacher qualification has been questioned in much literature with some writers such as Walsh (2001) purporting that there is little evidence that proves that teaching qualifications and pedagogical knowledge have a link with student performance. Walsh states “...there is no credible research that supports the use of teacher certification as the regulatory barrier to teaching” (p.5)

Although a considerable number of educationalists have contested this statement by Walsh, it is quite telling of the way in which occupational CoP work. Although the value of a professional qualification is questionable in terms of the ability of one to fulfil their occupational obligations, the “certification” (qualification) does however become a “regulatory barrier” to entering the community of these professionals. As seen in this research, there was a clear correlation between enrolling in teaching programmes and mobility within the community of college lecturers.

Andile and Brian both enrolled in teaching programmes to gain this competency and stability within the college lecturer community. Andile stated:

I started doing teaching courses so I could be more stable as a teacher  
(Interview 3).

Andile and Brian both enrolled in the National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for similar reasons. Both wanted the security and stability that comes with being a professionally qualified educator. They both understood that if they were to be successful in the classroom and influential in the colleges, they needed to get these qualifications.

They both saw the influence that lecturers who had academic qualifications in teaching had in the colleges. Brian stated:

They don't recognise us as teachers, they see us as blue collar workers, even if you make so many improvements. Those that come in with their masters and what have you but know nothing about how to be an electrician have all the power in the college (Interview 3)

Chris echoed the above statement by stating:

They don't want to listen to my ideas (Interview 2).

The above statements expose the way in which they were viewed in the community of lecturers due to them not having teaching or academic qualifications. Their competency was questioned and as a result they had little influence and room to move around in the system.

Not acquiring the necessary competencies through educator qualifications in the college community made it difficult for Chris to engage in work related problems that he faced as an artisan lecturer. Andile and Brian who decided to gain this competence saw themselves being able to engage more with the college community and were able to deal with problems related to race, safety and management that they faced in the college sector. They both spoke of various experiences related to interactions with their colleagues in the colleges at various levels where they were able to debate matters constructively related to the work they do.

#### 4.3.4 *Values*

Factors that motivate or influence decisions, actions and ideas are described as values. These factors may not be an explicit requirement for the community members but serve as a contributor to the members' participation and integration into the community. These values

may be collective, being held by all members, or individual and will affect the level to which members participate and commit to a community.

Blustein et al. (1989) exploring the ego's identity formation process, show the importance of values in the formation and commitment to an identity. Blustein et al. (1989) write that the identity formation process takes into account the exploration of ideological issues such as "philosophical, religious, political, and the vocational domain" (p.196.). This means that the values that an individual holds affect the way in which their identity is formed. Blustein et al. go on to state that the "attainment of a clear sense of self-definition or ego-identity" (p.196) stemming from the held values exposes commitment to that particular identity.

Footnote (1951) was the first to introduce the concept of commitment to analyse an individual's line of activity in the process of establishing an identity. He argues that in playing out the roles of an identity, there needs to be motives and incentive to make this role playing meaningful. Commitment is not dependant merely on playing a particular role; rather the motivations for playing those roles are the key to committing.

The value of respect showed itself to be a great influence in their commitment to ones' occupational identity either as an artisan or as an TVET lecturer.

#### *4.3.4.1 Respect and perceived worth of the occupation by the community*

Respect as a value played a vital role in the experiences of all three participants. As a value, respect did not affect the way in which they viewed themselves in relation to their occupations; rather it affected their decisions in relation to the views held by communities associated with their occupations. This was clearest in the education sector.

When speaking about respect in the college community, all the participants' experiences were understood in relation to their work colleagues who were qualified teachers whom they refer to as the "academics".

Andile stated: "Those who are academics will look at those who're skills development as not being equal to them" (Interview 2). Both Participant Two and Three echoed this view and stated "We are not recognised in the colleges, even when you make a lot of improvements you are just seen as a blue collar workers, their trade is not seen" (Brian, Interview 2) and "I

didn't have a teacher's diploma so I was seen to be at the bottom of the barrel in the college." (Chris, Interview 1).

The low level of respect in the colleges for the artisans or skills development lecturers was a common experience for all three participants. This lack of respect was primarily a result of the fact that all three participants did not hold teaching related qualifications and were therefore not seen as equals in the community of teachers. This issue of respect resulted in different kinds of behaviour from the three participants as discussed below.

Andile and Brian ventured to get teaching related qualifications. The reasons for this decision were multiple and covered various values. However, it does show a certain level of commitment to their identities as TVET lecturers. This act of enrolling in a teacher qualification represents Foote's (1951) ideology on commitment to an identity. The decision by the two participants to embark on a process that would give more meaning to the role that they were playing as lecturers shows a level of commitment to their identities as TVET lecturers.

Chris chose to opt out of this process and chose not to embark on any processes that may elevate his status and help him gain the respect of his colleagues on the TVET sector. He chose to not involve himself in processes that would add any meaning to his role as a TVET lecturer. Although he understood that being an unqualified teacher diminished the level of respect that his colleagues in the TVET sector afforded him, this did not concern him. He was not interested in taking on any tasks that would add more meaning to his role. To emphasise this he stated, "I don't want to teach the other things, there's too much admin."

What was also interesting to note, looking at the participants' experience of respect, was how their career change, from artisan to lecturer, was perceived by the communities in which they lived. There were clear similarities between Andile and Brian's experiences in the community as lecturers. Both participants believed that as college lecturers they gained a greater amount of respect from the community. Andile stated that he believed that he had gained more respect from the community as he was now working in a sector affiliated with the government. He also went on to say that this new found respect has made him change his behaviour so it can be better aligned with the status he now holds in the eyes of the community.

Aligning behaviour to the identity that one possesses is at the core of identity formation in social identity theory. Alexander and Wiley (1981) stated that in forming identities “we define the phenomena of social action in terms of the dispositional attributes that flow from the perspectives of given perceivers of the event field (p 274).” Simply put they affirm the importance and influence of the environment on the actions that one takes in the process of establishing an identity. They go on to say that it is an “ongoing process establishing, affirming, modifying, and sometimes destroying situated identities (p 274).” Meaning that the environment one is immersed in will have a definite impact on one’s behaviour and identity.

This also ties in with Wenger’s (2000) notion of alignment when speaking about identity formation as a result of participation in a community of practice. He states that the alignment as a mode of belonging is expressed through ensuring that our “local activities are sufficiently aligned with other processes so that they can be effective beyond our own engagement” (p.228). This level of belonging shows a great level of affirmation of one’s identity and commitment to a community.

Brian shared the same sentiments as Andile, stating that in his community he is now seen as the “top mayor”, which in his community means you have a highly respected occupation. He stated he could clearly see a difference in the way he is now treated as he lives in a community that has a substantial number of men working as artisans. It was clear to see that the respect he was getting from the community was a result of the higher status of teaching in his community but also because he could now do things he previously could not do. The sort of assets he has acquired and the opportunities to travel that he has gotten because of being in a TVET college (workshops and training in other provinces and countries i.e. Belgium). These new experiences which have come about because of being in the TVET college sector have elevated his status in the community.

The issue of respect has a clear link with the perceived worth of their occupation from any community they are members of. Where their career is seen to have a positive impact on the sector (in the college) or in their own lives (in their home communities), respect is afforded to the participants. It also ties in with the issue of security as their ability to acquire and maintain a certain kind of lifestyle has enabled them to elevate their status in the community and gain the respect that they now have.

There was a clear distinction between the participants’ perceived worth of their occupation and their occupational worth in the eyes of the community. Both the individuals and their

community's perceived worth of the occupation played a role in the way that the participants engaged and understood their worth in the field they were in.

### Perceived occupational worth by the community

The perceived worth of the occupation was divided between the private and the public sector. In the communities that Andile and Brian were a part of, the artisan field was seen in low regard. This was due to a lack of understanding by the community about what it is they do. Brian made the following statement in expressing this:

We are just seen as „blue collar“ workers. They don't see our value in the economy (Interview 2)

This statement is revealing of the community's belief system and how value is generally equated to sometimes superficial understandings of a particular field.

Andile made statements that concurred with that of Brian. He realised that the community did not see beyond the overalls they wore on a daily basis to work. Their value was equated to their appearance.

Brian further analysed this understanding by the community and stated that people are not informed about the role that artisans play in the community and are therefore unaware of the value they add to the community (Brian, Interview 3).

In comparison, as teachers all participants were seen as respectable members of their community. This was in part due to the fact that the teaching occupation historically had high recognition in their communities. In South Africa historically teaching was one of the few professional occupations that were open to black South Africans and qualifying as one was seen as an achievement. The participants in their communities could still see this historical understanding of teaching. Andile stated:

You get seen as better because you are in a field that is associated with government (Interview 3)

This statement reveals the history of the South African black communities where the occupations that were associated with government such as teaching, nursing and being a police officer were respectable occupations in the community.

Teaching also provided, for the participants, a clear link between the occupation and the value of the outputs to the community. The value of teachers in a community is known and does not seem to be affected by the individual.

This means that the results of what it is they do on a daily basis in their occupation can clearly be seen in the community through the educated youth. Their status in the community was clearly elevated when they entered the teaching field. This was seen through acquiring certain assets such as houses, as discussed in section *4.3.4.2 Security*.

Although the view that the community held of the occupation was not the sole determinant of the participant's identities, it most definitely did make an impact on the way in which the participants connected their personal lives with their professional lives. In writing about multi-membership, Wenger (2000) states, you are not only one particular thing at one time. This goes beyond identifying yourself through various roles as it will be discussed in section *4.3.5 Multimembership*, but also the communities that one is a member of. which influence the identities that one holds on to.

Wenger (2000) further explores this aspect of identity when he writes about a healthy social identity. This is explained as one that promotes connectedness, expansiveness and effectiveness. Briefly, these three aspects of a healthy social identity entail making “deep connections with others through shared histories and experiences” (p.239), “involving multi-membership and cross multiple boundaries” and “should enable action and participation and be socially empowering rather than marginalising” (p 240).

These three aspects show the role that the community will play in forming not just any occupational identity, but a healthy one.

#### *4.3.4.2 Respect and perceived worth of the occupation by the individual*

As stated previously, the data collected showed that there was a difference in the perceived worth of the occupation by the community and the worth as understood by the participants themselves.

In the private sector, all three participants saw the worth of the occupation itself as being high; however, Andile and Brian's view of themselves within the community was low.

The worth of the artisan community was seen through its contribution to the economy and society. The participants, through outputs of their work, explicitly saw this contribution, be it

through structures that were built, minerals that were mined or knowledge that was transferred.

Brian shared his experience of building the main hall at Hilton College and the pride that came with knowing that he developed a structure in one of the country's most prestigious education institutions.

Andile also spoke of the value that being a miner was to South Africa's economy.

We knew that as we were working every day in dangerous situations, the economy was going to benefit from this labour (Interview 2).

Chris also saw a lot of value in his occupation and like Brian, connected what he had done while working on the railways with economic growth. He stated:

We produced the most railway trainees here in Pietermaritzburg and many of them went on to be some of the country's best engineers. They created a lot of advancements in engineering and they were trained here by us (Interview 1).

It was clear that all three participants held the artisan occupation in high regard. This is an important aspect of identity formation, the way in which one views the value of an occupation. In defining occupational identities, Polgar and Vrkljan (2007) stated that occupational identities are "the interdependence that exists between what humans do in their environment (occupation) and their perceived sense of self over time (identity)." It is clear from this definition that perceptions of the occupation are important in establishing an identity in relation to the occupation. What one believes the occupation to be, its importance or lack of, will affect the way in which one identifies themselves in the occupation.

There was however a deeper level of understanding of the worth of the individual within their immediate artisan communities. Andile and Brian showed this most explicitly.

The artisan community as a whole was seen to be of high importance but as individuals within that community, they believed that they were not seen to be of much value. Brian stated:

After training and working as an artisan, in a white company you were seen as an artisan, but a B grade artisan (Interview 1)

This statement of low worth in the company was echoed by Andile, who spoke of how one's value is based on how secure your future is and in the artisan community there is very little security.

This issue of security in relation to occupational worth became the deciding factor for all three participants to enter the college sector. In this sector, all three participants saw the value of their occupation to be very high. They saw the value that teaching has in the community and in the country as a whole. Brian went as far as to state:

I am worth more as a teacher. I would never go back to being an artisan as I feel as though I would be doing the country a disservice (Interview 3).

Andile echoed this statement by declaring:

As a teacher you can see the importance of what you are doing in your own community (Interview 3).

Chris concurred stating:

Teaching people to become artisans is more important than being one (Chris, Interview 3).

These statements by the participants show the connection that the participants made with their occupation to their surrounding community. The ability to connect what it is one does in their occupation with the world in which the occupation exists is an important aspect of building an occupational identity. Wenger (2000) speaks of this notion in relation to the various modes of belonging. The stage at which an individual can align their actions within a community with their world is an important aspect of creating a “healthy” identity.

Interestingly, all three participants saw their value to be high in the college sector. They all believed that they were of high value in the education sector due to their experiences as well as qualifications related to artisanry. They believed they had much more to contribute to the college sector than the qualified teachers. Andile made this point by stating:

Because I have worked as an artisan for many years I know what skills and competencies are needed in order for one to be a good artisan. I have that understanding with me as I teach (Interview 3).

They also saw their worth in the college sector through their understanding of the economy. They saw how much more they could contribute to the economy as qualified artisans who are teaching, as they would be producing more artisans. Brian stated:

In the TVET sector there are very few skilled teachers and that’s what the sector needs. The minister says we need skills and skills and skills. The problem is we only got academics there. 98% of the staff are academics. Yes, they can take a calculator out and work out the tangent and so on... we

can all do that, the difference is now with the new programmes out like the NC(V) now they have to demonstrate. (Interview 2)

Such statements that show how they see their value are critical in the determination of the levels of participation. There are different forms of participation that are outlined by Wenger (1996, 2000) in community of practice theory. These are engagement, imagination and alignment.

Engagement is the foremost mode of participation as it entails doing things together and looks at the ways in which people who are members of a community engage with each other. Imagination encapsulates an individual's construction of the self within the community. This is the point in the process of participation where an individual begins to scrutinise their worth within the community in relation to their participation. Lastly, connecting other processes such as ideas, interpretations and actions with that of the community one is participating in is referred to as alignment. These three modes of belonging constantly interplay in the process of contributing to the formation of, or commitment to, a particular identity. In relation to occupational worth the mode of participation that was observed the most was that of alignment. All three participants connected their interpretations of the needs of the economy and society to their participation in the community of artisans and teachers.

#### **4.3.5 *Multi-membership***

Inherent to the theory of identity is multi-membership. This is because individuals do not identify themselves as one thing at a time. Wenger expresses this with the statement "our identities are not something we can turn on and off. You don't cease to be a parent because you go to work. You don't cease to be a nurse because you step out of the hospital" (Wenger, 2000, p.239). Different identities are always at play in all individual's experiences and although each identity is not as strong as the next, all have influence over each other and over experiences within communities. Wenger (2000) also states that communities that allow for interplay of the different identities that members may hold are more likely to engage the whole identity of the individual and foster greater commitment amongst the members. In this research the common identities held aside from being artisans and lecturers will be looked at to determine how they have affected their professional identities.

##### **4.3.5.1 *Family men***

The participants used for this research were all male. This unintentional feature in the sample did however open the research to another key aspect in community of practice participation

and identity formation. Having all three participants as men who had families meant they were all members of this group, which for this research will be referred to as “family men”.

Membership into the community of family men is based on having an immediate family (spouse and children) that have been a part of the participants’ journey from being artisans to being educators in the TVET college sector.

The effects of being a family man varied in the different occupational communities that the participants participated in. The experiences varied but can be placed into three categories for both the artisan and teaching community. These three categories were „time“ and „security“.

#### 4.3.5.1.1 *Effects of being a family man in the artisan community*

##### i. Time

Holding identities of father and husband whilst participating in the artisan community proved to be a difficult task for all participants. Participating in the artisan community oft-times meant that travelling was prevalent and the possibilities of having to relocate were also high, and if these two weren’t the emerging issues, working late or what some of the participants referred to as odd hours was a consequence of participating in the artisan community. The commitment to being an artisan would therefore take away from their ability to adhere to their family commitments.

Andile stated:

Working night shift was difficult because it would disturb your sleeping patterns and all the things you are supposed to do during the day you cannot do because you are sleeping. Sometimes you can’t fulfil your family duties at home (Interview 1)

Although this was the case with Andile when he was working as an artisan, time, or rather the lack of time, continued to be an issue on the college sector as he had to move away from his family for his teaching position.

Brian who, amongst the three participants, had relocated the most number of times during his artisan career also expressed similar situations which caused discontent. Chris, interestingly, never allowed the issue of time to affect his family time. He refused offers to move to other cities and provinces even if it was for promotions citing that he did not want to be away from his family. He sacrificed his career progression as an artisan in order for it to not affect his identity as a father and husband.

The experiences of the tensions between the participants' identities as artisans and their identities as husbands and fathers appeared as an important issue.

## ii. Security

As discussed in section 4.3.4 security was a major contributing factor to the participants' decision to leave their occupations as artisans. The value of security is a result of the identities as family men. Having dependants makes the need for security much higher to the point that it is seen as more than a way of creating a comfortable lifestyle, it actually becomes a value.

All three participants indicated that the uncertainty in the private sector made it difficult for them to commit to that occupation, as they were family men.

Brian shared that he, at some point as an artisan, had to move out of his own house with his wife and his daughter, as he could not afford to pay the mortgage due to the end of one of his contracts. He was unemployed for nearly a year so they decided to move in with family and rent out his property. Reflecting on this experience, he stated:

That's when I began to realise that I can't live like this forever. I don't want to ever be put in that situation again (Interview 2)

Andile also in reflecting on the needs of his family stated:

You need to have your own house for your family and things like cars but you can't get that when you are working in a sector where the work can run out at any time (Interview 2)

Chris also shared similar experiences about the uncertainty of the private sector. After getting a promotion in one railway firm, he found himself unemployed 2 years later as "steam was dying out and diesel was coming in so they needed people with different skills (Interview 2)"

These experiences of their identities as family men in relation to their occupational identities as artisans show conflicts in two ways. Firstly, the conflict that exists between the self and the new identity in relation to what is socially acceptable within that identity. The second is the conflict between the two identities in relation to them being properly enacted.

The first conflict is unpacked by Hogg et al. (1995) when they state that a role (occupational) identity is made up of behaviours that others expect and see as appropriate in that role. They go on to say that the "satisfactory enactment of roles not only confirms and validates a

person's status as a role member but also reflects positively on self-evaluation” (Hogg et al., 1995; p 257).

With this understanding of role identities, be it occupational or otherwise, the conflict between the self and the expectations of others is almost inevitable. The expectations from their roles as artisans required that they oft-times deviated from what they saw to be of importance to them in the quest to fulfil their identities completely as artisans. The taking time away from their family duties and not being able to accumulate assets had to be neglected in the quest for them to fulfil their roles as artisans. Although the issues they spoke of were shown to be of great importance to them, fulfilling their identity meant that these issues would need to be reprioritised.

#### 4.3.5.1.2 *Effects of being a family man in the college community*

##### i. Time

After transitioning into the college sector all three participants agreed that they now had more time to be with their families. The ability to have the time to take care of your family responsibilities was a value for them and they were better able to experience this when they were working as educators in the college.

Chris stated:

When you are in the college you know you can go home at the end of a day, if you have extra hours of work to do that’s your problem but at 4 (o’clock) you know you can go home (Interview Three).

Brian also shared the same sentiments now having more time to spend with his family and also progress as a father through enrolling in educational programmes. He enrolled in the UKZNs NPDE to get a teaching qualification. He believes that enrolling in this programme has enabled him to be a better father as he is now able to understand and relate better to his daughter’s experiences as a university student.

For Andile, the issue of time was slightly different to the experiences of Brian and Chris.

In getting employment as an educator in an TVET college he had to relocate from Mpumalanga to KwaZulu-Natal. Although he now had the time, which he had been longing for while he was working as an artisan, it was still difficult for him to execute his fatherly duties as he was far from his family. He stated:

It is hard to be far away from your family especially when you know there are things that need to be done but I can see that they can handle it. They are coping with me being here (Interview Two).

Being away from his family was definitely an emotional issue for this participant; however, he was able to find great comfort in the incentives that came with security.

## ii. Security

In relation to security, all three participants felt more secure to be educators in the college sector than being tradesmen. Initially all three participants were employed on a contract basis at their respective colleges. After this period, which lasted for four years, they were all offered permanent employment at their colleges.

Being permanent employees had a great impact on their roles as family men. There were expectations that came with being fathers and husbands that they were now able to live up to in this new occupation.

All three participants spoke of being able to do things they were previously unable to do as artisans. They were now able to make long term financial commitments like buy property and cars. Brian also spoke of how he was now able to finance his children's studies with ease. Andile in speaking of his ability to pay for his children's school fees also made this statement:

If you are working in a college you can also have your children study there for free so that can help you (Interview 3).

Although none of the participants took up this opportunity, knowing that this was available to them made them feel more secure as family men as they now had options for their children that they never had before.

## 4.4 CONCLUSION

Having generated themes related to the research agenda, this chapter was able to interrogate all the relevant aspects of the participants' lives without being overly inclusive of all data collected. This was of particular importance in conducting life histories research, as this form of data collection can have a researcher finding oneself with abundant information which may be fascinating but strays away from the research scope.

The themes and the discussions around the themes from the data collected have laid the foundation for critical discussions in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to discuss the findings presented in Chapter 4. In discussing the findings, the main research question, which is “*how do TVET lecturer’s interactions in occupational communities of practice influence their occupational identities?*”<sup>E1, C12</sup> and the sub objectives will be broken down in order to make conclusions from the data that are relevant for the research questions.

Seven questions that speak to the five themes as well as the three research sub-objectives were formulated on which to base the discussions. These questions analyse the research topic in a manner that allows conclusions to be drawn from the data that speak directly to the research objectives.

These questions will be asked of their experiences in both the private sector and the college sector. The table below illustrates how the questions relate to the research questions, the themes and literature.

The questions confirm the themes when examining the research sub-questions as outlined in Chapter 1 section 1.3. The questions use identity theory to make meaning of the findings in chapter 4 in relation to the research questions in order to address the research objective.

**Table 5.1**

Research Question	Analysis Question	Theme	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did their interactions in the private sector affect their identities?</li> </ul>	How were these communities established?	Boundaries	Communities of Practice
	To what extent did the community of practice determine the individual's actions?	Competence	Communities of Practice
	To what extent did their interactions in the communities of practice affect how they viewed their role as artisans?	Learning	Communities of Practice and Identity Theory
	Did they make decisions in their occupational communities that put their occupational identities above their other identities?	Values	Communities of Practice and Identity Theory
	Did their interactions in their communities of practice allow for their other identities to flourish?	Multi-membership	Communities of Practice and Identity Theory
1. How did their interactions in the public sector affect their identities?	How were these communities established?	Boundaries	Communities of Practice

	To what extent did the community of practice determine the individual's actions?	Competence	Communities of Practice
	To what extent did their interactions in the communities of practice affect how they viewed their role as artisans?	Learning	Communities of Practice and Identity Theory
	Did they make decisions in their occupational communities that put their occupational identities above their other identities?	Values	Communities of Practice and Identity Theory
	Did their interactions in their communities of practice allow for their other identities to flourish?	Multi-membership	Communities of Practice and Identity Theory
<b>1. Which of the occupational identities prevailed over the other as a result of their communities of practice interactions?</b>	To what extent did they participate in the activities expected of community members?		Participation on Communities of Practice
	How much did their decisions in the community affect the decisions of other community members?		Power In Communities of Practice and Identity Theory

## 5.2 DISCUSSION WITH ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

### 5.2.1 How were the communities established?

The CoP were established through shared practices that were influenced by their race and qualifications.

Race in both cases determined the type of access participants would have in the communities. This was due to explicit racial boundary creation in the private sector and through personally held understandings of their experiences of race in the college sector. Race whether explicitly or implicitly experienced was the initial determinant of the communities that were established. The impact of race on their career choices is highly significant in that no individual has control over their race making it an inherent part of your identity. External factors such as laws and qualifications may change - your race will not. Therefore the impact it has on any experience affects ones identity the most as it is a recurring factor in understanding oneself.

If race allowed for positive community formation, it allowed for greater participation. If race created positive occupational spaces, as in the case of Andile, it allowed for greater interaction, especially about matters related to their occupation. However if race did not allow for positive manifestation of their occupation, as in Brian's case, it diminished the individual's participation in the community. Positive interactions in communities have a strong impact on the identities that one holds. Adding onto that, in order for an identity to manifest in an individuals' life experience it has to correlate with other identities or determinants of identities that the individual already holds. In this case, any identity that one is to at a later stage show a commitment to has to align itself with other identities such as their race.

As the main determinant of occupational boundaries, it then had a significant impact on the second category in this theme which was qualifications.

It was evident across all participants that the choices they made in their boundary interactions in relation to their qualifications were greatly influenced by race. Following from this, their qualifications also determined the communities that one could establish and remain a part of.

All the communities they formed in their occupational lives were affected by their qualifications to varying degrees. The skills that were necessary in doing what was expected

of them in their occupation meant their qualifications also had an important impact on the communities that were established.

The impact of their qualification was dependant on how it related to their race. The way that their qualifications complemented their race determined their occupational interactions.

For example, all participants had the appropriate qualification for the communities they were members of, however, depending on their race within their qualification orientated communities, they could either easily move towards the core of the community or stay at the periphery.

Even when race was not an explicit determinant of occupational community establishment, it determined whether the interactions within the occupational groups would create definite CoP.

### 5.2.2 To what extent did the communities of practice influence the individuals' actions?

In both the private sector as well as in the colleges, the CoP influenced the individuals' actions. This was due to the shared practices that had established both communities.

The shared practices in the two communities were different but showed some similarities. In the private sector, the shared practice was working with tools and in the college sector the shared practice was the teaching of practicals. These shared practices in both communities were common for all participants. However, their power within the communities was determined by how strongly the shared practices were performed. Meaning, how much of the shared practices were done by all in the communities in a similar manner, if at all.

The participants who had stronger shared practices and had performed duties in a similar manner with their counterparts within the communities moved closer to the communities' core. In the private sector this was seen with Andile and Chris whose practices within their communities were shared by their counterparts as well. Brian, who was part of the racial minority within the community, was unable to partake in the activities with the rest of his community members. Although the community was built on shared occupational practices, there were differences in the activities that constituted the shared practices. Brian experienced

this with always being appointed to do the most unfavourable tasks in his specialisation's scope.

In the college sector, they all engaged in the same shared practices as they were all put into the workshops to teach. Although the shared practices and the activities within their communities were similar, their competence became the factor that contributed the most to whether they would be closer to the core of the community or remain at the periphery.

In the college sector, all participants were on the same footing in relation to where they could be placed in their new communities. With the effects of race not being as explicit in this sector as it was in the private sector and with all three participant having no experience or qualifications in the field they were now in, they had more power over where in the communities they were placed. This meant that although all three participants may not have been very influential in their occupational communities, they all possessed a great deal of power to move closer to the core of their new communities.

Both Andile and Brian used this power to move closer to the core of the college community and went on to study towards relevant qualifications that would enable them to be of greater value in their communities.

### 5.2.3 To what extent did their interactions in the communities of practice affect how they viewed their role as artisans / lecturers?

Through their interactions in the communities, they gained certain understandings of their occupation which led to all participants making varied decisions about their occupational commitments. Apart from the shared practices which are an inherent part of occupational CoP, other interactions will occur amongst CoP. From these interactions, there are lessons learned which contribute to an understanding of the community.

In the private sector, they all participated in manual labour daily which led to them making meaning of their own value within the community, especially as middle aged men (at that time). Although all felt highly competent in the work that they were doing, they became conscious of their value within their community in relation to their age and how much they valued their occupation as family men who were middle aged. From their interactions, they

all realised that the value they could bring to the field and themselves within their occupations was highly dependent on what they valued as middle aged men.

Similarly, their interactions in the college sector led to them understanding not only the value of teaching as an occupation, but the value they could bring to the field of education as experienced artisans. Having interacted with lecturers who only had teaching qualifications without industry experience, they realised how much having experience in industry was of higher value for their learners and in the education field at large.

Their interactions also spoke a lot to the kind of power they had in these communities. Although the shared practices were stronger in the private sector and the lessons were common for all participants, they did not necessarily possess the power to make meaningful contributions to their community or have the desire to learn more. To a certain extent, what they learnt through their interaction in their artisan communities in the private sector led to them eventually leaving the field. Conversely, in the college sector, their interactions showed them how valuable they were to the sector. This led to them not only having a desire to stay in the communities, but also to move closer to the core of their communities. This was seen with Andile and Brian enrolling in lecturer development qualifications. Having made the decision to enrol in educator programmes, they allowed themselves to learn more about the shared practices of their new community of lecturers. By honing in on competencies related to their shared practices such as having a better understanding of curriculum and improving on their teaching methods, they began to have the power to move closer to the core of their communities.

Having not learned lessons that would enable them to move to the core of their communities in the private sector, they all ended up in the college sector where their learning enabled them to move closer to the core of their new community.

#### 5.2.4 Did they make decisions in their occupational communities that put their occupational identities above their other identities?

In the private sector, the participants all participated in activities that were not favourable to their other identities. Their working hours were the main issue that contradicted with their identities as family men. Being away from their family and being unable to be present at important family occasions was a consequence of their occupational commitments. Other

issues such as security and respect also came to the fore as matters that contributed to their occupational identities and other identities, especially their identities as family men, being in conflict.

These issues did not however contribute to a stronger artisan identity in that they were procedural acts that could not be taken away from the artisan experience. They were obligated to work the long hours, they could not change the ideas of society on the level of respect afforded to artisans and they could not make companies give them permanent employment to ease their security concerns. They obliged out of compliance but felt a great deal of disdain from participating in these occupational acts.

All participants did explore the meanings of these issues, particularly in relation to their identities as family men. The meaning they made from the issues that were an intrinsic part of the artisan experience led to them leaving those communities.

In the college sector their experiences were considerably different. The main identity that came to the fore for this research was that of being family men. This is not because they do not have other identities that they hold, but being family men was a great determinant of many occupationally directed decisions that the participants made. It can be said that their identity as family men was the identity that steered their careers in a particular direction.

Having moved to the college sector, the three occupational issues that had caused conflict between their identities were to a large extent alleviated. They were now working reasonable hours and felt able to fulfil the duties of their other identities without sacrificing what was expected of them in their occupational identities. Also, having become permanent staff in their colleges, they were able to provide for their families in a manner that they had always envisioned should be done by family men. They expressed this through purchasing assets such as property.

In summary, when they entered the college community the instances where their various identities conflicted were minimised. This led to a greater level of comfort in fulfilling their obligatory acts within their communities and enabled them to flourish in the communities.

### 5.2.5 Did their interactions in their communities of practice allow for their other identities to flourish?

The nature of their work as artisans as well as the communities they established in the artisan sector meant that they constantly had to make choices between their identities as artisans or their identities as family men. Although more financially rewarding, being an artisan made very little room for their identities as family men to flourish. From smaller issues such as respect from the community which was low as a result of their inability to make long term financial commitments, their status as family men diminished considerably when they were artisans.

However, the communities within the artisan sector were made up of men who had similar profiles to them, mostly at the beginning of their careers. As a result, in the early stages of their careers, a few occurrences enabled them to recognise their identities as family men. This was seen with the swapping of shifts to take care of family commitments.

Fundamentally, their identities as artisans did not allow for their family-men identities to flourish. Their identities as artisans seemed to be more selfish in that in order to show commitment and competence as an artisan, your identity as a family man would have to be to a large extent disregarded.

In the college sector, their experiences of both their occupational identities as college lecturers and as family men flourished. The activities associated with being a competent lecturer made it possible for them to fulfil their duties as family men. The need to make decisions of one identity over another was diminished greatly leading to them not having to choose within or outside their communities.

## 5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter served to make meaning of the data that was collected and introduced in the previous chapter. In achieving this, the chapter sought to clarify the connection between the themes, literature review and the theoretical framework.

The discussions in this chapter gave light to potentially new areas of discussion in the future within the field. It did this by interrogating the decisions made by the participants in relation

to their wider and diverse environments various factors have contributed and may continue to contribute to their commitment to the sector.

These new insights and recommendations will be reviewed and refined for discussion in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

#### 6.1 The contribution of this research to the field

The development of the TVET sector in South Africa, like many other countries, is closely linked to industrialisation and economic development. This research looked at the factors that affect the development of the TVET sector by exploring the communities established by lecturers in the colleges and in the private sector.

Research of this nature is invaluable in the South African context. The TVET sector has gone through vast changes, yet has not been explored at length through academic research. The continuous changes in the budding sector affected even this very research. The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande made a statement at the 2014 Induction of TVET college lecturers that TVET colleges will no longer be referred to as such, rather they will now be known as Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. The 2014 white paper on the post-school system that includes the TVET colleges shows slight changes in policies related to the management of colleges but also takes the sector in a direction that justified the statement made by the minister and also added to the value of this research. With the 2014 white paper looking at establishing community colleges and expanding the TVET colleges, the need for qualified and committed staff will in years to come become more and more of a priority in delivering Dr Blade Nzimande and future ministers' agendas for the sector. This research makes a small contribution to this.

## **6.2 How the findings relate with the literature review.**

### *6.2.1 TVET in South Africa*

The experience of the sample lecturers corroborates a lot of the research discussed in the literature review. The Education International (2009) research discussed in chapter 2 stating that the VET sector cannot thrive if it is disconnected from the world of work was explored in the findings. The aforementioned literature suggests that qualified artisans have a better understanding of the skill set needed by learners to ensure their employability. Although the research did not focus on the quality of educators that qualified artisans would be, it did look at the competencies, learning and values that they held which contribute not only to their identities but to their commitment to fulfil their duties effectively.

In pursuing their duties, there were frameworks and policies that laid the foundation for the various experiences that the artisan lecturers had. The NQF and SAQA legislation were an integral part of the experiences as they integrated the education and training sectors into one framework. From the perspective of the literature and lecturers interviewed, the recognition of various skill sets through a framework that enabled workers to move across different education and training sectors has to make the paths effectively clear and accessible for professionals moving from industry to the TVET sector. Although the framework does a great job at outlining the skill set that an individual needs to have in order to be considered for a certain qualification, it does little for individuals moving across industries. For the artisans interviewed in this research, there was a clear disconnection between the Department of Labour's value of their skills and that of the Department of Higher Education and Training.

This disconnection between skills, industry experience and vocational education was seen through the experiences of the participants. The three participants, who all fell in the scarce skills categories, were in the industry for a long period prior to joining the education sector. According to the skills agenda and the available literature on skills shortage by the likes of Mukora (2008), one of the primary causes of the dismal employment rate of qualified engineers is the fact that TVET courses are not aligned with industry requirements. One would think that individuals who have the skills and experience of the industry would be of high value to a sector that has this challenge. However, the participants' experiences did not attest this. All three participants did not only find it hard to get integrated into the educator community, but even when they became a part of this community, their understanding of

skilling and industry was not used by the colleges in a manner that reflected their worth. As a result, the research showed that the participants favoured aligning themselves with their artisan identities, as this was the community where their worth was most valued. This is telling of the disconnection between industry and education. The skills shortage affects both education and industry in similar ways however; the industry can only absorb individuals with a skill set which works in favour of the market needs, whereas education, especially in terms of the curriculum offerings does not always reflect this. The lecturers who were part of this research all concurred with the disconnection that the colleges, especially the curriculum had with industry. Although they had an in-depth understanding of the competencies needed to be employable artisans, their inputs and value was not recognised due to the fact they were not considered qualified educators. This is quite interesting in light of the fact that teaching in the South African TVET sector has been starved of research and academic influence creating knowledge on the role of the educator.

Although there are teaching practices that are of value across the sectors, the pedagogies necessary for disseminating knowledge to learners in the TVET sector have not been extensively researched in the South African context. The previous generation's artisans came into TVET colleges with developed skills and were typically taught by other qualified and experienced artisans. The various changes in the TVET sector have led to many practitioners of the sector being academically qualified teachers without necessarily being experienced artisans. The knowledge of the craft by a qualified teacher will differ to the knowledge of the craft by an experienced artisan. This will then affect the pedagogies one may understand to add value to the learning experience of students.

These internal conflicts and debates around the pedagogies of value for the learner led to all the participants questioning and some making concrete decisions on the identities they have committed to.

The formation of identities in this research was as complex and multifaceted as the theories explored in the literature review. Vygotsky's theory of identity looks at the individual's behaviour in relation to their different roles to deduce one's identity. An individual holds on to various identities throughout their lives and even throughout their day. The various roles that one has and their understanding of themselves within that role create or validate a particular identity, which affects their commitment to it. Commitment to an identity is important in that it determines how effectively one will be willing to enact their role.

Commitment determines the levels to which one will go on to enact the roles associated with that identity. This is a noteworthy point that was explored in this research. Their commitment to various identities, be it fathers, artisans or educators, influenced many of the decisions they made in their roles as TVET college lecturers. This is of great importance in the current TVET state where qualified personnel to make up the lecturing staff are greatly needed. The understanding of commitment to performing ones role effectively also speaks to retention which may not be an explicit aim of this research but it should most surely in future research be looked at to properly interrogate the functioning of this thriving sector. Adding on to the above, one's interactions and behaviours are the cornerstone to making sense of the identities one holds. This was the reason for the way in which this research was conducted from the interviewing methods to the interview questions.

### **6.3 The implications of this research for people working in the fields that have been studied**

#### **6.3.1 *Implications* for policy and lecturer retention**

Although the research did show a level of commitment by the participants to the occupation of teaching, their identities stayed as artisans. The commitment to teaching was commonly due to the understanding that as an occupation, being an artisan was less secure than being a teacher. This understanding was further exacerbated by their age. With that being said, a closer look at these finding in relation to the skills development agenda of South Africa needs to be taken. Although some time has passed since the beginning of this research, there are certain issues that have remained constant.

- Artisans as a broad category in the skills shortage list are still in high demand in South Africa,
- The TVET college system still has a high number of lecturers who have come from teacher training institutions without work experience in the areas in which they teach,
- Professional development programmes which look at the pedagogical up skilling of TVET lecturers are underdeveloped.

These three constants paint a telling picture of the vocational education sector in relation to artisan training. It also tells a story of the disconnection between labour and education especially in relation to the engineering sector. As discussed in the literature review and

explored in the narratives with the participants in this research, labour and education have been seen to be at odds in terms of trying to reach their goals. The TVET sector has continued its focus on increasing the number of qualified engineers in the country, and this intensified need has seen quite a number of lecturers from the private sector migrate to the education sector. This in turn perpetuates the already existing problem of a lack of artisans in the private sector. Although this research spoke to a certain age group of individuals who had moved, mainly for security reasons, they did speak at length of younger lecturers who have also been absorbed into teaching as a result of being unable to find employment in the private sector. This raises various questions such as: “How is it that we are in desperate need of artisans when qualified engineers are teaching in TVET colleges?” and “What are the implications on the sustained progress of a sector that is dependent on an employee population that is in it as an interim measure while they wait for better opportunities?” These questions need further investigation.

By no means did this research venture into trying to prove that an artisan as a lecturer is the best kind of educator for the practical components of engineering studies in TVET colleges, but it did try to:

- Look into a growing group of people in a developing sector,
- Look into a phenomenon which is not only international but historical in the way in which the sector has grown in South Africa,
- Explore the decisions made by a group of people who could be integral in the prosperity of this sector and make sense of their possible commitment to it.

These three explorations open up the field to vital questions that would be of value for further exploration if the sustainable development of the sector were to be ensured.

#### **6.4 In which direction should further research go?**

In discussing the direction that further research should go, it is of importance to look at the existing research and dominant discourses in this research area in relation to the focus and findings of this research.

In doing this, themes and dominant ideas from the literature review that have an influence on the findings will guide the process of recommending the direction in which further research should go.

- i. Writers such as Lynch (1996) and Heikkinen (1997) purport various notions around the idea of lecturers from industry being the ideal candidates to teach in TVET colleges. They argue that the ability of individuals to practice in their field does not necessarily transfer to their ability to teach in their field. One's ability to do does not equate to one's ability to teach.

Although these arguments by Lynch and Heikkinen are valid, one needs to consider the legacy of skills and how it has been provided for and developed in South Africa and internationally. These kinds of statements need correlation with the kind of curriculum offered in the colleges. With the curriculum the lecturers who were interviewed comprising of highly practical content, research into the appropriate educator and methods need to be explored in greater detail in the South African TVET context.

- ii. Research from academics such as Akoojee (2008), Bateman, McGrath (2010) and Papier (2008) have maintained that a vocational sector that favours competency-based practices has a greater propensity to succeed if the teacher population possess specialised understanding, skills and experience within industry.

Should this international phenomenon be anything to go by, the need for industrially qualified artisans to teach, at least the practical components of the TVET curriculum, is pertinent in the development of the sector. However, further research also needs to look into the validity of this premise. Are qualified artisans in fact the best to deliver the TVET curriculum? Are they the best choice for an ever-changing sector? Are they the best to fulfil the educational agenda of the sector? Moreover, if they are not, how does one train lecturers who have the requisite mix of skills?

- iii. The South African TVET agenda has always been intertwined with economic agenda, from its conception and throughout its evolution and to its current state. A few question therefore need to be asked around the outcomes for the

TVET graduate and the roles of the TVET lecturer - *“What is the educator expecting the learner to have gained by the end of the interaction?”*

This question posed at the end of the teaching pedagogies section in the literature review is important in understanding the value of different individuals within the education system. This is especially important because the TVET sector in South Africa is under continuous reform for the purposes of serving a larger community. With that being said, in order for this service to be of value, one needs to ask, what is it that learners should have gained after their experience in the TVET sector? This can also lay the foundation for future research.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research delved into an area within the TVET sector that has not been extensively explored by literature. By examining literature in identity formation and its impact on commitment, as well as the CoP theory and its stance on occupational competence, the research was able to capture the meaning of critical elements of an evolving TVET sector.

Identity theories as well as CoP theory have been long debated in the academic sphere. These theories have a close association with research into occupations and in this body of work assisted in making conclusions that have progressive implications on the future development of the TVET sector.

As mentioned at various stages of the presentation of this research, the TVET sector cannot succeed in its intentions to flourish while serving its main purposes for the community and the South African economy without a committed and competent work force. Taking that into account, in South Africa, the value of TVET lecturers has not been defined in literature, policy or practice. This perpetuates the difficulties experienced within this sector at all levels.

Without claiming to fill this paucity completely, this research has taken a step in a much-needed direction. The findings pose valuable questions while providing inventive understandings of the TVET sector.

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