

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON  
APPROPRIATE RURAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH IN MAVALANI VILLAGE, LIMPOPO**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education in the School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

**NOVEMBER 2013**

**PIETERMARITZBURG**

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to critically analyse government policy on appropriate rural vocational education and training in the light of perceptions of youth in Mavalani Village, Limpopo. The stance that I take in this study is that rural youth need to participate in education and training policy-making because they are the ones affected by these policies. I argue that meaningful policies are ones that are developed by people they are meant to serve. The literature review and theoretical framework indicate that neo-liberalism has negative impacts on VET internationally and in South Africa. Although there are social, political and cultural aspects in the education and training of South Africa, the economic aspects are more dominant. I use the theory of Food Sovereignty to counter neoliberalism which promotes the rights of business at the expense of people's livelihoods and lives. Food Sovereignty is for the right of natural persons to own and control their own destinations, although it takes food production and distribution as the point of departure. This qualitative study is framed within a critical paradigm where I look at power relations in society and how people can strive to change their circumstances. I used purposive sampling where I selected participants based on my knowledge of the population in question. The findings of the study indicate that VET in South Africa needs to be improved to better serve the interests of young people. The findings suggest that there are a lot of changes that need to be made in VET in the country, and that Community Learning Centres need to offer VET that is community-based and relevant to local development and context. The findings are in line with the theory of Food Sovereignty in that they encourage community participation, collective action and communal ownership, as opposed to neo-liberal capitalism where private ownership is 'the order of the day'.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Lucky Maluleke, declare that the whole of this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucky Maluleke', is positioned above a horizontal line.

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Lucky Maluleke

**NOVEMBER 2013**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge that I am because we are, and without other people I would not be. There is nothing worthwhile I would do without other people in life. It was not easy, but it was a worthwhile experience. I owe a huge profundity of gratefulness to the following people:

- ❖ First and foremost I thank God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, for his everlasting grace.
- ❖ Those who participated in the research for this thesis. Thank you – without you, this would not exist.
- ❖ My friend and brother, Thabo Mavundza for making it possible for me to come to the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the first place. Without him I do not know where I would be today. I thank him for his selflessness, and for sacrificing his pocket money to help me apply for admission.
- ❖ My Supervisor, Dr. Anne Harley for working together with me for two years without giving up on me. I know I get confused sometimes but she kept me going. I also thank her for encouraging me when I was feeling down. Furthermore, I thank her for all the energy, enthusiasm, passion, and care for my studies and life. Without her, I do not know what I would do.
- ❖ South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for removing the financial burden on me and for giving me an opportunity to write and publish the first article in my life. What more can I ask for under the sun?
- ❖ Professor Volker Wedekind for all his effort to get me financial assistance from SAQA. I also thank him for taking his time to read my work and make comments, and for asking critical question. Furthermore, I thank him for his moral support that he showed me over the years.
- ❖ Professor Wayne Hugo for giving me a reason to stay in the School of Education as an undergraduate student, and for making me realise that the field of Education has a lot to offer. I also thank him for his moral support over the years.
- ❖ The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for providing me with financial assistance and for inviting me to conferences and for inviting me to publish articles.
- ❖ Jane Quin, for supporting me throughout my studies and for introducing me to the Critical Paradigm and Social Justice. I also thank her for suggesting that I be supervised by Dr. Anne Harley.
- ❖ My friend and brother, Felix Ifeanyi Okoye, for mentoring me throughout the two year duration of my Masters Programme, and for sacrificing his time to help me with my school work.
- ❖ Britt Baatjes, for editing my work in a very short space of time. I know I did not give her enough time but she did not complain. Most importantly, I thank her for charging a reasonable fee.

Due to limited space, I would like to stop here. I however acknowledge that there are many people that I owe my gratitude to.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ABET</b>	Adult Basic Education and Training
<b>ASGISA</b>	Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
<b>CETC</b>	Community Education and Training Centre
<b>CERT</b>	Centre for Education Rights and Transformation
<b>CLC</b>	Community Learning Centre
<b>COSATU</b>	Congress of South African Trade Unions
<b>CRDP</b>	Comprehensive Rural Development Programme
<b>DHET</b>	Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>DPLG</b>	Department of Planning and Local Government
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DoL</b>	Department of Labour
<b>DRD &amp; LR</b>	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
<b>ETDP- SETA</b>	Education, Training, and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GEAR</b>	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
<b>HSRC</b>	Human Sciences Research Council
<b>IDP</b>	Integrated Development Plan
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>ISRDP</b>	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme
<b>NARYSEC</b>	National Rural Youth Service Corps
<b>NATED</b>	National Technical Education
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Employment, Education and Training
<b>NGP</b>	New Growth Path
<b>NPC</b>	National Planning Commission
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NSDS</b>	National Skills Development Strategy
<b>NSFAS</b>	National Student Financial Scheme
<b>NYP</b>	National Youth Policy
<b>PALC</b>	Public Adult Learning Centre
<b>PEST</b>	Political, Economic, Social and Technological
<b>PSET</b>	Post-School Education and Training
<b>RDP</b>	Rural Development Framework
<b>RDP</b>	Reconstruction Development Programme
<b>SAP</b>	Structural Adjustment Programme
<b>SAQA</b>	South African Qualifications Authority
<b>SETA</b>	Sector Education and Training Authority
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training

## CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

**Community Learning Centres:** These are proposed by the Task Team on Community and Education Training Centres (2012) as new institutions that address the learning needs of both adults and youth through literacy, basic education, and vocational and occupational programmes. They are referred to as 'Community Learning Centres' because they are meant to be located within communities and the learning programme will be community oriented. They will build on the experience of the Public Adult Learning Centres and will focus on various programmes, for example literacy, vocational and occupational courses, Adult Basic Education and General Education and Training.

**NEETs:** 'NEETs' is an acronym for 'not in employment, education and training' (DHET, 2012; Ramose, 2013). It is used to describe the growing number of young people (between the ages of 15 and 24) who are not at school, not working, and not receiving any form of education or training. 'NEETs' is closely related to out-of-school youth, so I will use these two concepts interchangeably to refer to one/similar group of young people in the country.

**Rural:** There is no single agreed definition of the concept of 'rural' (Coburn et al, 2007). Acker and Gasperini (2009) define 'rural' as settlements with small populations and geographical spaces often dominated by farms, forests, mountains or deserts, and poor government services. For Gardiner (2008) 'rural' refers to those areas in South Africa in the countryside where black, poor people live, particularly the former homelands or reserves of the apartheid regime. For the purposes of this study I will use Gardiner's understanding of 'rural' because the village in question fits well within this category.

**Rural Vocational Education and Training:** I use the concept of 'Rural Vocational Education and Training' (Rural VET) to refer to education and training for both really useful knowledge and skills meant for rural development and rural people. I include the word 'rural' because the study is mainly concerned with rural out-of-school youth and their education and training that can be made possible through learning institutions like the CLCs.

**Vocational Education and Training:** In literature there is no agreed definition of what vocational education and training (VET) is. For the purposes of this study I use the concept of 'VET' to refer to education and training whose primary role is to equip citizens with 'skills' needed to perform particular tasks - particularly physical skills and abilities - offered by various institutions, which include Further Education and Training Colleges, non-governmental organisations, community learning centres, government departments, and companies. Both theory and practice are offered.

**Youth:** The concept of 'youth' is understood differently, for example, for the United Nations youth are persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2009), whereas the South African National Youth Policy defines youth as persons between the ages of 14 and 35 (South Africa, 2009). For this study I take into consideration the South African definition. So when I use the word 'youth' I refer to a group between the ages of 14 and 35.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY ORIENTATION .....	1
1.1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2. RATIONALE .....	1
1.3. STUDY BACKGROUND .....	2
1.4. MAVALANI VILLAGE .....	3
1.5. KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	4
1.5.1. Main Question.....	4
1.5.2. Sub-Research Questions .....	4
1.6. STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION .....	4
1.7. CONCLUSION.....	5
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
2.1. INTRODUCTION .....	6
2.2. NEOLIBERALISM .....	6
2.3. NEOLIBERALISM AND VET .....	7
2.4. NEOLIBERALISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT .....	9
2.5. NEOLIBERALISM AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.....	10
2.6. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT .....	10
2.6.1. Socio-Economic Policies .....	10
2.6.2. Vocational Education Training Policies and Legislation .....	12
2.6.2.1 Neoliberalism and VET in South Africa .....	13
2.6.3. Rural Development Policies .....	15
2.6.3.1 Rural provision of VET in South Africa .....	17
2.6.4. Youth Development .....	18
2.6.5. Community Learning Centres .....	18
2.7. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY .....	19
2.8. A NEW PARADIGM FOR VET .....	21
2.9. CONCLUSION.....	22
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN .....	23
3.1. INTRODUCTION .....	23
3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM .....	23
3.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH.....	24
3.3.1. Naturalistic Features of Qualitative Research.....	24
3.3.2. Subjectivity of Qualitative Research .....	24

3.4.	SAMPLING .....	24
3.5.	SELECTION OF SITES AND PARTICIPANTS.....	25
3.5.1.	Selection of Sites .....	25
3.5.2.	Nature of Participants .....	25
3.6.	METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION .....	25
3.6.1.	Community Mapping .....	26
3.6.2.	Community Timeline .....	26
3.6.3.	PEST Analysis.....	27
3.6.4.	Focus Group Discussion .....	27
3.7.	DATA ANALYSIS .....	28
3.7.1.	Data Transcription.....	28
3.7.2.	Theme Identification and Coding.....	28
3.7.3.	Data Analysis and Interpretation .....	29
3.8.	TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	29
3.9.	LIMITATIONS .....	30
3.10.	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	30
3.11.	RESEARCH EXPERIENCE.....	31
3.12.	CONCLUSION.....	32
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION.....		33
4.1.	INTRODUCTION .....	33
4.2.	VILLAGE MAP .....	33
4.3.	VILLAGE TIMELINE.....	34
4.4.	PEST MODEL.....	35
4.5.	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT/LONG DISCUSSION .....	35
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION .....		55
5.1.	INTRODUCTION .....	55
5.2.	HOW DO YOUTH FROM MAVALANI VILLAGE UNDERSTAND THEIR SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS? .....	55
5.2.1.	Social Problems .....	55
5.2.1.1.	Theme One: Problems Related to Education.....	56
5.2.1.1.1.	Lack of Purpose to Complete High School .....	56
5.2.1.1.2.	Lack of Guidance, Support and Resources.....	56
5.2.1.1.3.	Poor Quality Rural Education.....	58
5.2.1.1.4.	Teenage Pregnancy .....	58



5.2.1.1.5. Bad Friendships .....	60
5.2.1.2. Theme Two: Poverty and Unemployment .....	60
5.2.1.2.1. The Effects of Poverty .....	60
5.2.1.2.2. Unemployment .....	62
5.3. WHAT ARE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS? .....	65
5.3.1. Theme Three: Collective Action .....	65
5.3.2. Theme Four: Improvement of VET.....	66
5.4. WHAT UNDERLIES GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON VET FOR RURAL PEOPLE/YOUTH, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CLCs? .....	66
5.5. WHAT DO YOUTH THINK OF THESE GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND WHAT DO THEY PROPOSE?.....	67
5.5.1. What do youth think of government in general? .....	67
5.5.2. What do youth think of VET in South Africa in general?.....	68
5.5.3. What do youth propose as relevant rural VET? .....	68
5.5.4. Should learners pay? .....	72
5.5.5. Accreditation and Certification .....	73
5.5.6. Teachers .....	74
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .....	76

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **STUDY ORIENTATION**

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

There is very little provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in rural areas, and this has created challenges for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to provide post-school education and training for adults and youth in rural areas (DHET, 2012). This study investigates what sort of skills the youth of Mavalani village, Giyani, in the Limpopo Province consider to be relevant for self-reliance in their context, and contrasts this with existing policy on vocational education and training (VET) in South Africa. This chapter outlines the research problem and objectives which the study aspires to achieve, and the research questions and sub-questions to be addressed. It also presents a background and a brief overview of the research setting. It concludes by raising the issues the reader can expect in subsequent chapters.

#### **1.2. RATIONALE**

Research is one of the formal methods of inquiry that exists in the world and it is usually done with a motivation to solve a particular problem or to satisfy curiosity about a particular issue (Babbie, 2005). I was motivated by the current political economy, neo-liberalism, which I believe undermines the efforts on education, skills development and training processes in rural places in South Africa. As already stated, my particular interest is in rural youth whom I believe are susceptible to, and marginalised by, this globalised, neo-liberal context. I sympathise with the enormous challenges facing the South African education and training system and am convinced that integrating people into policy-making from grassroots level would respond to their context in terms of skills development.

The increasing impact of unemployment among youth is a serious issue especially within rural and disadvantaged areas. The youth can become stuck without employment because they are waiting for someone to employ them. This thus necessitates education and training that can make young people productive in the context in which they live. Hence the necessity of education and training that will make young people realise that they are subjects of their own development. I believe that this research is important to me, the participants, and the policy debate around VET in the country. I believe that the use of participatory research methods and the critical paradigm has played a role in raising critical awareness amongst the youth of Mavalani about the issues concerning VET.

When rural education policies are made, rural people are not consulted, and their experiences are neither fully understood nor appreciated by policy makers, and rural development is not framed by rural people who face harsh challenges (HSRC, 2005). I am of the view that the youth of Mavalani are faced with similar challenges. The people need to participate in policy-making and implementation of policies that affect their lives because they are the ones who are affected by these policies (HSRC, 2005). In the context of Mavalani, rural people (including the youth) understand their circumstances better than outsiders, but have never been integrated in deciding on issues of rural development, vocational education and training that inform their lives.

I therefore resolved to undertake a critical study that sought to find out how the marginalised and disadvantaged (with reference to youth from Mavalani village) can contribute to structuring their own development; critically engage how VET can benefit the unemployed youths within their context; and deepen understanding and contribute to the existing literature on how youth can contribute in making government policies on VET.

### 1.3. STUDY BACKGROUND

The beginning of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw noteworthy changes of the market and technology, and the world became an arena of competition (Baatjes, 2008). This phenomenon, referred to as globalisation, accompanied by neo-liberalism, has pressurised countries, corporations and the workforce to increase their productivity and to be competitive in the global market (Ibid.). The ability to compete and the level of productivity are believed to be dependent on skills, human resource development, or simply ‘human capital’ as referred to by Schultz (1961).

While this major focus on skills is international, it is also very common in South African education and training policies, as I will show in Chapter 2. The 2012 *Green Paper on Post-school Education and Training (PSET)*, hereafter referred to as the Green Paper, proposed a new institutional form to cater for both adults and youth, provisionally called Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) (DHET, 2012), which provides an opportunity to do something different.

Based on the above context and rationale, I resolved to undertake research from a critical perspective, which theoretically challenges and critically analyses the views of the South African government on VET, particularly as these relate to rural youth. In this dissertation I will talk about VET in general and ‘rural VET’ in particular, a term I use to describe VET designed specifically for rural people and rural development. My position, as will be seen throughout the thesis, is that VET should not only focus on skills required for urban development and global competitiveness, and by employers. I argue that VET needs also to focus on skills needed for rural communal development, self-sustenance and sustainable livelihoods, and should not be treated as a commodity but as a basic human right.

As stated in the *Green Paper*, the DHET formed a team of experts, referred to as the Task Team on CETCs, later referred to as the Task Team, to investigate the suitable provision of post-school education and training for both adults and youth, including those not in employment, education and training (NEETs) in the country (DHET, 2012). The Task Team prefers the concept of ‘Community Learning Centres’ (CLCs) to CETCs. The Task Team’s argument is that the term ‘CETC’ is actually limiting in scope and in what the newly proposed institutions will offer, but the term ‘CLCs’ it is not limiting (Task Team, 2012). For this reason, and for the purposes of this research, I will use the concept of CLC. According to DHET (2012) this new institutional type will be merged with the already existing Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) to better serve the learning and training needs and interests of both adults and youth.

This study was conducted with youth from Mavalani village in Giyani, in the Limpopo Province, with a focus on appropriate rural VET from the perceptions of youth from the village. In 2011 I conducted a study (in Mavalani village) that focused on what is appropriate education for rural development (Maluleke, 2011). The study found that participants value VET, so in 2012 I decided to undertake a study that pays special attention to VET for youth

living in rural contexts. I chose Mavalani village primarily because it is the place I come from, and I am concerned about education, training and rural development in the village.

In addition, after the release of the *Green Paper*, I felt motivated to conduct a qualitative study within a critical paradigm that seeks to find out what youth of Mavalani village perceive as appropriate rural VET that can be offered by these proposed CLCs, because I realized that VET is an important government policy and it is gaining popularity and support. It should be borne in mind that the focus of this study is on VET, not Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. Although I will talk about FET colleges as important institutions for vocational education and training, my main focus is VET and CLCs in a rural context.

#### 1.4. MAVALANI VILLAGE

Mavalani is a rural village located in the eastern direction about 15 km from Giyani town, in the Limpopo Province. It falls under the Greater Giyani Municipality, in the Mopani District. The town itself is located approximately 185 km from Polokwane, the capital city of Limpopo. The Greater Giyani Municipality is comprised of 30 wards, ten traditional authority areas and ninety-one villages. Mavalani village falls under Ward 20 which comprises three villages, namely Mavalani (the largest), Mbatlo (middle-sized), and Bon'wani (the smallest. In the entire Giyani area, Giyani town is a major place for employment opportunities, both formal and informal; shopping; as well as recreational facilities (Greater Giyani Municipality, 2010).



**Limpopo Province**

Drawing from the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for 2010-2013, there were approximately 247 657 people in the Greater Giyani area in 2007. Statistics for Mavalani village only are not available in the IDP 2010-2013, but the ward as a whole comprised of approximately 10 382 people in 2007. Mavalani alone comprises of about 1 267 households (Mopani District Municipality, n.d.). The Greater Giyani Municipality (2010) warns that these statistical figures are not reliable since they come from the 2001 Census and the 2007 Community Survey. The 2011 census shows that the province did not experience high population growth since 1996, while Mopani District experienced declines (Lehohla, 2012).

Although agriculture is an important economic activity in Greater Giyani, factors such as the long distance to the market (mainly town), skills shortages, and dry climatic conditions discourage people from practising agriculture (Greater Giyani Municipality, 2010). Due to water problems, Mavalani village residents hardly grow their own food. Although most households own pieces of land in the non-residential area, a shortage of rain (even in the rainy season) decreases production. As a result most of the products that people need are purchased from stores in town, for example food, clothes and building materials (Greater Giyani Municipality, 2010).

From my experience and knowledge as a resident of Mavalani village, dominant social activities in the village include going to school, going to church, drinking liquor, as well as playing soccer. There are eight churches in the village - all Christian. There are two primary schools and one high school, as well as two crèches. There are four taverns that sell bottled liquor, as well as an unknown number of households that sell traditional home-brewed beer. Furthermore, those who complete Grade 12 with good grades go to various institutions of higher learning across the country, whereas some go to colleges, including Letaba FET College in Giyani.

There is no education and training centre within the village - local schools and churches are used as adult learning centres. Young people have to go out if they want to further their studies, or receive some form of training. In Giyani there are colleges such as Letaba FET College (public), Mass Computer Training (private) and Avuxeni Computer Academy (private), to name but a few. They offer programmes to do with computer literacy, motor mechanics, electrical engineering, office administration, amongst other, but nothing that promotes rural development. A community needs assessment for Mavalani village conducted by Veronica Milliner, a Peace Corps Volunteer from the United States of America, highlights that the majority of youth of Mavalani village are unemployed, and are barely trained or educated (Milliner, 2011).

## **1.5. KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The aim of this research was to investigate appropriate rural VET that is beneficial to marginalised and disadvantaged youth in Mavalani village from the perceptions of the youth themselves, and to critically analyse government policies on VET for rural people.

### **1.5.1. Main Question**

What is appropriate rural VET in the light of the perceptions of youth in Mavalani village as compared and contrasted with government's perception of VET policies for rural youth?

### **1.5.2. Sub-Research Questions**

- How do youth of Mavalani village understand their social problems and potential solutions?
- What underlies government policies on VET for rural people / youth, with special reference to CLCs?
- What do youth of Mavalani village think of these government policies on VET and what they propose?

## **1.6. STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is made up of six chapters:

- Chapter 1 has introduced the reader to the study rationale, study background and questions to be addressed by the research. It finally outlined the chapter succession for the paper.

- Chapter 2 reviews appropriate international and local literature and offers a theoretical framework and a counter theory. Firstly, it critically discusses international literature on the impact of neoliberalism on development and education and training, and VET in particular. Secondly, it discusses the impact of neoliberalism on South African development, socio-economic and education and training policies. Thirdly, it discusses evidence that many people around the world and in South Africa are dissatisfied with neoliberalism. Finally, it considers a potential alternative to neoliberalism - Food Sovereignty - and demonstrates what VET within this framework looks like, particularly in CLCs.
- Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology applied in the research. It provides an outline of the critical paradigm and qualitative research approach; describes the research design, sampling process and analysis connected with this study; and substantiates the reasons for the choice of these methods. In addition, it discusses issues of trustworthiness, limitations, and the ethical issues relevant to this study.
- Chapter 4 presents the data derived from the focus group discussion (which drew on a community mapping activity, timeline, and PEST analysis).
- Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and discussion of the data, drawing on the literature and theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter 2.
- Chapter 6 presents a short summary of the research findings, and then makes a few recommendations and conclusions that come out in the study.

## **1.7. CONCLUSION**

This chapter was centred on the orientation of the study. The next chapter deals with the reviewed literature and theoretical framework that draws attention to the conception that informs the study. This includes a critical examination of the impact of neoliberalism (as a hegemonic discourse) on socio-economic, development and education and training policies both internationally and in South Africa. It also includes a discussion of an alternative to neoliberal development, the Food Sovereignty model. Most importantly, the next chapter discusses what kind of VET is desirable if development is meant for everyone, and what knowledge and skills must be imparted to build a better society for all - really useful knowledge to be precise.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented the rationale, background and research questions of the study, as well as the structure of the thesis. As previously stated, the study aims to determine appropriate VET for rural youth and rural development in South Africa within a critical frame, in the light of the perceptions of youth in Mavalani village. This chapter argues that current VET provision in South Africa, particularly for rural youth, is currently largely inappropriate because neoliberalism has had negative impacts on it. It thus considers the theory of neoliberalism, how it has come to dominate globally, and how it has impacted on VET and on youth and rural development. The chapter considers how within South Africa, education policy debates are divided into education as a human right or public good and education as an economic vehicle - the latter currently dominates (Allais, 2011), largely because of the influence of neoliberal hegemony. The chapter considers how this has happened in the case of VET. Furthermore, this chapter argues that there is growing dissatisfaction with neoliberalism around the world. The chapter finally offers the theory of Food Sovereignty as a possible alternative, and argues for a different VET paradigm.

#### **2.2. NEOLIBERALISM**

Neoliberalism proposes that human well-being can be achieved through the development of entrepreneurial skills in an environment that promotes private ownership of resources, free trade and markets (Harvey, 2005; Hicks, 2012). It thus primarily represents the interests of the economic elite/the dominant class. I believe that neoliberalism can best be understood from a class-analysis perspective, Marxism in particular. From a Marxist perspective the dominant class controls the means of material production and in the same way controls the means of mental production (Abercrombie et al, 1984) and creates social control based on bourgeois ideology (Morrow & Torres, 1995). Neoliberalism emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of the world economic recession. The election into power of the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the then President of the United States of America, Ronald Reagan, 1979 and 1980 respectively, helped spread neoliberal ideas (Harvey, 2005), since they adopted neoliberal policies in order to turn the economies of their countries around. The economic development path under neoliberalism differed from that during the Modernisation period which had preceded it.

During the Modernisation era national governments had control over interest rates and taxes, and were important players in development affairs. This era thus saw the rise of the 'welfare state' (Vivekanandan & Kurian, 2005). The welfare state took as its primary responsibility providing its citizens with services such as healthcare, education, employment insurance and other social security services. In addition to this, the welfare governments were involved in economic activities within their boundaries. For example agricultural subsidies were given to rural areas. This clearly indicates that it was realised that development strategies needed to be supported by states, because "no strategy for change can be effective if it is reduced solely to narrow economic aspects" (Kagarlitsky, 1995, p.11).

With the emergence of neoliberalism, a new understanding arose. Neoliberals believe that the market is the sole legitimate agent of development and that market forces alone can solve the world economic problems, so the state must not interfere with market processes (Harvey, 2005; Hicks, 2012; Martinez & Garcia, 2001; Willis, 2005; Youngman, 2000). Neoliberalism encompasses a mixture of free-market fundamentalism, puts out of place conventional models of welfare provision, encourages states to put in place privatisation and deregulation strategies, and presents as normal “individualistic self-interest, entrepreneurial values, and consumerism” (Barnett, 2010, p. 3).

From the late 1970s neoliberalism became the economic orthodoxy in the global North and has been exported to the global South via foreign pressure and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Willis, 2005). Due to recession and deteriorating commodity prices of the late 1970s and early 1980s, developing countries approached the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial support. The financial support that debtor countries received usually came with neoliberal conditions (SAPs) (Emeagwali, 2011). The common SAPs conditions are: the devaluation of domestic currency; privatisation of industries and other sectors; economic liberalisation; charging of user fees; export promotion; and downsizing public services – in other words, neoliberalism’s key tenets. Public services such as free education and healthcare are viewed as a waste of state money because they do not generate revenue (Emeagwali, 2011).

Whilst South Africa has never been subjected to a SAP, it has nevertheless been profoundly affected by neoliberal theory, as will be discussed in detail below.

### **2.3. NEOLIBERALISM AND VET**

The current education and training system has developed within the capitalist economic and social structures (Dore, 1974), and is thus shaped by the dominant ideology of the dominant class that incorporates the majority into the existing social system (Abercrombie et al, 1984). As a result, the education and training system worldwide is increasingly linked with the demands of the economy (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008).

Neoliberals believe in ‘human capital’, a term popularised by William Theodore Schultz who, along with others, argued that a well-trained and educated workforce is more productive than its ill-trained and ill-educated counterpart (Becker, 2011; Schultz, 1961; Smith, 2008). Now human capital forms a major educational and training policy of the IMF and World Bank, and borrowing countries are required to take certain educational these prescriptions (Alexander, 2001; Jones, 2004; Youngman, 2000). For example, certain skills and subjects, particularly those related to the economy, are emphasized (Alexander, 2001), and public educational services are expected to be oriented to business, with the private sector playing an increasing role in educational provision (Youngman, 2000). Countries thus not only receive loans to fund their educational projects, but receive curriculum recommendations as well (Jones, 2004). Over the years the notion of human capital has been adopted by other major international institutions as part of their education and training policies, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), as well as national governments around the world (Tikly, 2013).

Internationally technical skills are identified by policymakers as central to improving economic performance (Cochran & Malone, 2010; Tikly, 2013) and international competitiveness. International discourses such as “high skills, globalization and the



knowledge economy” (McGrath, 2005) have fast-tracked the imperative for skills development. Lack of or inadequate VET has been powerfully linked to increasing youth unemployment worldwide, and so VET is perceived as a necessary tool to promote the employability of individuals (Wallenborn, 2010).

This is evident in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) 2010-2015 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) strategy, which emphasises TVET as vital for economic development and reducing youth unemployment (Majumdar, 2013). A report titled *Skills for Productivity: Vocational Education and Training in Developing Countries*, which had a huge influence on many countries, was published for the World Bank in 1993 (Middleton et al, 1993). These ideas can now be seen in the educational and TVET policies of governments in both the global North and South, including Ireland (Heraty, 2007); Pakistan (Shah et al, 2011); and South Africa, as will be shown below. It is not only the direct link between skills and economic growth that shows the growing influence of neoliberal policies, privatisation (Alexander, 2001; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005) is also increasingly common, particularly since the World Bank’s policies on education and training have criticised public provision and funding of education and training.

As already indicated, within neoliberal capitalism the private sector is perceived to be the most effective and “efficient provider of goods and services to society” (Narsiah, 2008, p. 22). Internationally, many governments now favour privatisation of public services such as VET, with the privatisation of VET becoming one of the most important policy driving forces of governments around the world (Education International, n.d.). In 2002 the World Bank initiated a Private Sector Development (PSD) strategy with the aim to increase private provision of educational services worldwide (Alexander, 2001).

This PSD strategy undermines efforts to provide education for all and increases inequalities in society as poor people are not able to afford to pay for these commodified educational services (Alexander, 2001). In recent years, through privatisation, education and training has become a very important resource in the labour market; and a price has been attached to it. Furthermore, any cent spent on education is perceived as a waste if that education does not assist the country to compete in the global market (Hicks, 2012).

Increasingly, education and training programmes are based on modular structures that predetermine what learners need to learn, and this is usually aligned with particular occupations in the job market (Allais, 2003; Youngman, 2000). This has given rise to an emphasis of competence- and outcomes-based education (Allais, 2003):

International trends in curriculum reform have been driven by the notion of world-class standards which students must perform against, and which are linked to employment, economic improvement, and international competitiveness. Interest in skills-based, or competency-based approaches to education and training, have arisen in this context (Allais, 2003, p. 8).

This paradigm shift has also given rise to modular courses which enable people to keep on learning as a way to remain competitive in the job market. People are obligated to never stop learning in order to re-skill and up-skill so they can respond well to the rapid changes in technology and job requirements and secure employment (Korsgaard, 1997). From this I would argue that individuals will never be skilled adequately - they will always need to re-skill or upskill in order to meet the demands of the employers. In this way I believe that the blame for lacking relevant skills will be shifted to the individuals themselves as they will be the ones failing to supposedly catch up with the new economic and technological demands.

The focus on the market means that education is treated only as an economic vehicle and its other functions are pushed away (Allais, 2011; Gamble, 2003). Education and training thus do not address the issue of liberation and independence but continues to perpetuate inequality and subordination (Porter, 1999).

## **2.4. NEOLIBERALISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Neoliberal capitalism is criticised for focusing on developing urban centres and neglecting rural areas (Jones & Corbridge, 2008). This focus is part of urban bias put forward by Modernisation theorists as the prescribed development path (Dibua, 2006). As part of SAPs, services that rural areas used to receive are removed and most development, including rural development, is left in the hands of the market (Dibua, 2006). Thus in many developing countries, governments spend little money on rural services, for example health and education (Jones & Corbridge, 2008). As a result, rural people who suffer the consequences of inequalities caused by neoliberal capitalist development, find it a necessity to migrate to cities in search of employment, although there is no indisputable reason why manufacturing should not be done in rural areas (Jones & Corbridge, 2008).

In addition, SAPs dictate that agricultural subsidies be cut off, and require that agricultural products be for exportation, not mere subsistence, because it is believed that even small farmers will increase their incomes, and live a better life as a result (Dibua, 2006). This capitalist strategy actually undermined food security in most developing and poor countries, for example Zimbabwe in the early 1990s. Zimbabwe was forced to sell its surplus maize in the 1991-1992 period to pay back its debt to the World Bank because it did not receive enough rain the following year, and it had to spend a lot of money importing maize as a result (Simon, 2008).

The capitalist approach to agricultural development and production, which is aimed at securing food for urban workers, systematically removes worth away from rural areas and producers (Church Land Programme, 2012). Even when the state does provide public services that support peasant agriculture and food production in rural areas, poverty in rural areas is perpetuated, because of the impossibility of using state resources effectively within the clientelistic approach supported by SAPs. Due to SAPs, states were radically downsized and their political and civil society organisations turned out to be gradually more irrelevant for rural areas and people (Ibid.). Moreover, the notion of free trade and removal of protective trade regimes of local production undermined the capacity of peasants and poor rural people to produce their own food (Ibid.).

Moreover, neoliberal capitalist development remains too Western in terms of understanding human nature. Neoliberalism promotes individualism, competitiveness and individual responsibility to meet one's needs. As a result of this Western conception of human nature poor rural people in low income countries are expected and required to develop a spirit of entrepreneurship and to pay for services, for example education and health (Tikly, 2004). This neoliberal imposition of Western ideologies is detrimental to rural life with its historically embedded idea of collective social action (Ibid.).

## **2.5. NEOLIBERALISM AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

The global population of young people is huge and is continuing to grow (UNESCO, 2012). This growing number of youth is affected by many challenges, for example poverty and unemployment, as well as poor access to education and training (National Youth Commission, 1998). The International Labour Office (ILO) (2013) argues that before and after the 2008 economic crisis, young people were marginalised in the labour market, and continue to find it hard to join the labour force. Many have lost hope. In 2013 the global youth unemployment rate is estimated to be about 12.6%, which is about 73 million young people, and it is expected to grow to 12.8% by 2018 (ILO, 2013). As young people are affected by unemployment and poverty they have very little choice about which jobs to take; they end up in insecure, part-time employment (Ibid.), if they are able to find employment at all. In the Commonwealth countries “young women, school leavers and dropouts” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1998, p. 3) are the most vulnerable to this situation.

The majority of these young people who are trapped in the cycle of poverty are of school- or post-school-going-age, but they are currently not in education, training or employment (thus called NEETs) (Cloete & Butler-Adams, 2012). The response to this continues to be located within a neoliberal paradigm – for example, the Commonwealth Secretariat (1998) argues that to ensure youth development, skills, education and vocational training must be aligned with national economies. However, youth unemployment has nothing to do with the failure of the education and training system, or the need for skills, but is a necessary element of neoliberal capitalism (Treat et al, 2012; Vally & Motala, 2013).

## **2.6. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Since democracy, the South African government has been faced with the challenge to transform the country from one characterised by racism, sexism and inequality to a more equal, non-sexist and non-racial society (RSA, 1994). To heal the wounds of apartheid, the government put in place a new democratic constitution, various socio-economic policies and strategies, as well as new education and training policies (Pretorius, 2007; RSA, 1994; National Institute for Community Education Trust, 2001).

### **2.6.1. Socio-Economic Policies**

In 1994 the government introduced an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Initially the African National Congress’ (ANC) election manifesto, the RDP aimed to mobilise citizens and the country’s wealth toward the absolute suppression of the effects of apartheid and to meet people’s needs, such as jobs, land, housing, water and sanitation, energy and electricity, telecommunications, transport, environment, nutrition and healthcare, education and training, arts and culture, sport and recreation, and youth development (ANC, 1994; RSA, 1994).

The government embraced a new strategy in 1996, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR), to transform the country’s economy but continue social spending. According to the Department of Finance (1996), mass job creation would be possible if the economy grew at six per cent, which was thought to be possible through, inter alia, tariff reduction, raising exports and exchange control relaxation.

Having realised that the previous policies failed to address the problems of poverty and unemployment, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was put in place with the aim to eliminate the second economy and ensure that all citizens participate in the first economy; reduce poverty by 2010 and halve poverty by 2014. Like GEAR, ASGISA saw it as important to grow the economy through the encouragement of privatisation, exportation, foreign direct investment, and reduction of tariffs on imports (The Presidency, 2006; 2008).

Since then two additional strategies have been adopted, both emphasising economic growth in order to create jobs and tackle poverty and unemployment. The New Growth Path's (NGP) vision is to create five million jobs by 2020 and to reduce unemployment from 25 percent to 15 percent, primarily through providing incentives to private investment in targeted labour-absorbing sectors, namely infrastructure, agriculture, mining, green economy, manufacturing and tourism (Economic Development Department, 2011). The National Development Plan (NDP) sets longer timeframes, proposing to create 11 million jobs in the labour-absorbing sectors; raise exports of South African goods and ensure competitiveness of South African products in the global market (National Planning Commission, 2011).

None of these policies has gone without criticism because of their focus on neoliberal principles. For example, the critics of the RDP argue that initially it was presented as a socialist and democratic project, but that it later changed its focus and took on some neoliberal traits and adopted free market policies (Bond, 2000; Reitzes, 2009; Visser, 2004). The critics of GEAR argue that GEAR is fundamentally neoliberal, and has made false promises about tackling unemployment. In fact, GEAR restrained growth, employment and redistribution through relaxing exchange controls, privatising state projects, tightening monetary policies, and cutting down government spending on public services (Bond, 2000; Bhorat, 2010; Centre for Development and Enterprise, 1997; Freer, n.d.; Kingdon & Knight, 2005; Lam et al, 2008; Lehloesa, 2000; Masiza & Ngqungwana, 2001; Ngqulunga, 2009; Padayachee, n.d.; Reitzes, 2009; Visser, 2004). Within the GEAR framework, the government applied contradictory approaches to development. Since GEAR was meant to focus on growth while realising the objectives of the RDP, it tried to provide basic constitutional services such as free basic water, but also implemented cost-recovery and market-driven principles (Hart, 2002; Naidoo & Veriava, 2003 cited in Perret, 2004).

Furthermore, apart from the fact that the formulation of ASGISA did not include a lot of consultation with the public or civil society organisations, it was criticised for continuing the neoliberal agenda of GEAR (Van der Walt, 2008). Although some believe that the NGP is moving away from neoliberal principles (for example Stiglitz, 2010), critics argue that although the policy language might have changed a bit, the NGP still displays a clear neoliberal agenda. Hattingh (2011) argues that the NGP is built on previous ANC-led state policies that have had negative impacts on workers and poor people, while promoting the interests of the elite groups.

The NDP has also received heavy criticism, especially from COSATU for being unrealistic about its propositions and misleading in its conceptualisation of unemployment. According to COSATU (2013), first and foremost, the definition of unemployment that is used in the NDP hides the truth because it uses the official characterisation which leaves out all discouraged work seekers. It thus ignores over 3 million unemployed citizens. Furthermore, according to COSATU, it is highly likely that many of the jobs that the NDP talks about will not materialise, and those that do will mostly be of low quality. The National Planning Commission (which drafted the NDP) admits that the NDP is based on the creation of low

paying jobs, particularly in the first 10 years, as opposed to the decent work that it ultimately advocates for (Ibid.).

## 2.6.2. Vocational Education Training Policies and Legislation

After 1994 the country had an obligation to do away with apartheid education and put in place democratic education (Pretorius, 2007), and since 1994 a number of new education acts that affected VET have been passed, for example:

- South African Qualifications Authority Act (58 of 1995)
- National Education Policy Act (27 of 1996)
- Higher Education Act (101 of 1997)
- Further Education and Training Act (98 of 1998).

The first education legislation to be passed was the *South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act* (Act 58 of 1995). This Act is responsible for the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and the creation of National Standards Bodies (NSBs). The establishment of the NQF was a shared responsibility between the Ministers of Education and Labour, because the NQF saw education, training and employment as interrelated, as conceptualised in the first *White Paper on Education and Training* (Department of Education, 1995; Pretorius, 2007). Although there was a clear relationship between general and academic education and vocational education and skills training, formal education institutions contributed more to the former, whereas employers contributed more to the latter (Department of Education, 1995; Pretorius, 2007).

In 1998 the *Green Paper on Education and Training* (Department of Education, 1998) became the first step in the formulation of policy for Further Education and Training (FET), which led to the creation of the FET colleges, previously known as Technical Colleges (Gamble, 2006). According to the *Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges Act* (2006) ‘further education and training’ refers to all kinds of learning and training programmes that lead to qualifications at levels 2-4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), including the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) and NATED programmes. Previously, the vocational path in these colleges was not linked to academic education, apprenticeships or employment, although in some countries it became an alternative to the general education route (Young, 2006). However, in South Africa, problems persisted in linking the general education and vocational systems. Thus, although there has been massive investment in infrastructure and the development of new curricula in FET colleges, universities are sceptical about admitting students with the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) (Nzimande, 2012). Nzimande (2012) argues that some universities go to the extent of refusing to include the NCV as a component of their admission requirements. Nonetheless, the government has expanded the National Student Financial Aid Scheme for learners who come from poor backgrounds who are following the NCV or NATED programmes route; and the FET colleges form the cornerstone of post-schooling plans in the *Green Paper on PSET*.

Apart from FET and VET (through NCV in the FET colleges), the government has committed to developing human resources through other strategies, for example the Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) and the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). National Institute for Community Education Trust (2001) argues that the HRDS is necessary to redress the past and can assist the country to catch up with rapid changes in the economy. It is the responsibility of the Human Resource Development Council to ensure that

there is a working relationship between civil society, the state, the academic world and the private sector (Mkhize, 2012).

The NSDS comes out of two pivotal acts passed in the late 1990s - the *Skills Development Act* (1998) and the *Skills Development Levies Act* (1999). The acts are at the centre of the legislative framework on which the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established (Department of Labour, 2005). On the basis of these acts, the government develops five-year National Skills Development Strategies. The first strategy covered the years 2000-2005, the second 2005-2010, and the third spans the years 2010-2015. The strategies create a framework in which the SETAs operate. Guided by the strategies, SETAs arrange the targets of skills improvement within their division (Department of Labour, 2005). Each SETA is responsible for coordinating skills development in its particular sector. Initially there were 25 SETAs that served 25 sectors of the economy; now there are 21 SETAs in the country. SETAs are supposed to help to implement the NSDS and to increase the skills of people in their sectors. SETAs have replaced the 33 Industry Training Boards. However the SETAs have more control and tasks than the Industry Training Boards. A payroll levy was introduced in 2000 to inspire employers to devote to training and the advancement of their employees (Department of Labour, 2005).

### **2.6.2.1 Neoliberalism and VET in South Africa**

A number of writers have argued that neoliberalism has profoundly affected VET in South Africa, and is embedded in many of the founding structures of education in this country. The capitalist view of education and training in South Africa is embedded in the NQF whose initial intended purpose was to create a more egalitarian education and training system in the country in the post-apartheid period (Allais, 2003). The conceptualisation of the NQF in South Africa provides “evidence for the assertion that the NQF is more derivative of a neoliberal project than of a democratic one” (Allais, 2003, p. 3). The key thinkers in South Africa were under the impression that the economy needed to be more globally competitive, and that this competitiveness depends on a highly skilled labour force. Thus, the low level of skills and the poor education system were perceived as the chief barriers to economic growth (Allais, 2003). Through the NQF, formal education and training were charged with the responsibility to improve productivity and prevent workers from staying in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs (Ibid.). However, as already argued, this conceptualisation of education and training is misleading because employment depends on the availability of jobs, not the number of skilled individuals.

As argued above, within a neoliberal conception, VET is viewed as fundamental for economic growth (Akoojee & McGrath, 2003; McGrath, 2005) and this belief has had a huge impact on VET in South Africa (McGrath, 2005). Aitchison (2003) argues that in this country education and training have been globalised and economised. This may be interpreted to imply that the objective now is to meet the demands of the market, with a very limited social role of education, in keeping with global trends. Thus Hamilton and Baatjes (2012) argue that South African education and training and skills development policies are not for the benefit of individuals, but for business, and portray a narrow economic view of the role of education and training. This narrow economic view demonstrates well how education policy can be trapped in an employability and labour market paradigm, and works against the possibility of achieving improved levels of both education and skills (Allais, 2011).

But it is not only in its close link to the economy that South African VET echoes neoliberal assumptions. Privatisation of VET and FETCs is increasingly becoming very common in South Africa. In South Africa privatisation of VET is not uncommon (Akoojee & McGrath, 2003). Article 29.3 of the South African Constitution (Act No. 7 of 1996) states that individuals and institutions have a right to provide private education services and, according to Akoojee and McGrath, this means that South Africa has opened a space for the privatisation and selling of education and training. Put another way, democratic South Africa is equipped with legislation that ensures that education and training is a commodity that can be sold to citizens (Ibid.).

The consequence of promoting private provision of VET is that even public institutions have taken on a lot of private business traits (Akoojee & McGrath, 2007). This means that VET centres are mostly located in urban areas and often offer programmes that are business orientated. Public institutions also receive funding from private institutions as a way to promote public-private partnerships. The result of these partnerships is that public institutions tend to follow the trends of the private institutions (Ibid.), for example in management and employment approaches. The result is a number of problems in public VET institutions.

The Minister of Higher Education and Training has pointed out that there are many challenges facing the FET colleges, two being the loss of lecturers and inferior salaries (JOINT EDUCATION TRUST, n.d.). Due to financial difficulties in FET colleges, programmes suffer and lecturers are not paid well. A recent agreement by the FET College Bargaining Unit raises salaries of lecturers to be equal to those of public schools teachers. While this issue seems to have been addressed, another problem haunts the FET sector - lack of job security for FET college lecturers. In South African FET colleges there are many lecturers who survive by signing new contracts from time to time, never being employed permanently. This threatens the social security of these individuals. One example is the Tshwane South College that kept lecturers on three month contracts from 2008 until 2011 when these posts were finally advertised (Kunene & Mashaba, 2011). Instead of advising that these lecturers be hired right away, the Gauteng Department of Education advised that these lecturers apply for the posts like anyone else (Ibid.). While this trend is part of the neoliberal style of managing employment, it is no longer lawful as from 2013 according to the FETC Bargaining Unit (Education Labour Relations Council, 2013).

Those who are critical of the neoliberal influence on VET have argued for a different conception of VET, precisely because VET is so critical. National Institute for Community Education Trust (2001) argues that the FET band is at the core of the NQF and at the hub of educational and socio-economic development in South Africa. It is crucial because it links business, education bodies and various government departments. Furthermore, the new FET system is intended to be flexible, progressive and accessible, as opposed to the system under apartheid (Ibid.). McGrath (2005) also argues that VET is pivotal, since it plays a significant role in supporting social and economic development goals. McGrath views VET as an important policy because it is located between education and economic policies. Similarly, Wedekind (2010) asserts that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in South Africa has been significantly transformed since the beginning of democracy in 1994 to respond better to the human resources, economic and development needs of South Africa (Wedekind, 2010). However, in a country like South Africa where the society still has some disparities, VET cannot only be designed for the labour market, for example there are rural people who still use traditional methods for production (National Institute for Community

Education Trust, 2001). Both these groups need to be catered for within one system, and their diverse educational and training needs must be met.

Allais (2011) argues that skills training alone cannot solve the problems of poverty and unemployment in the country. Instead of hoping that skills training will lead to immediate poverty alleviation, VET has to strengthen knowledge production and creativity. VET should not be limited to skills training; it needs to enable people to grow in the workplace and society at large. It is dangerous to assume that once people are trained, they are going to get jobs or they will be effective in their jobs. Therefore, VET needs to be protected from the short-term needs of business and must deviate from a narrow market focus (Ibid.).

To ensure that not only the labour market is served, but educational objectives are met as well, many countries have realised that “technical and vocational education and training (TVET) plays a strategic and key role in making education fulfil its mandate in producing useful skills for the economy, societies, and individuals” (National Institute for Community Education Trust, 2001, p. 106). Such TVET caters for educational ideals, individual and human needs, as well as labour market ideals and work standards, thus a balance needs to be made.

To a limited extent this broader conception of VET has gained some traction within our government, or at least in parts of it. The government of South Africa acknowledges that communities and workplaces are forever transforming and people need to upgrade their skills in order to keep up with these changes to improve their lives. For the Department of Labour (2005), skills need to support productivity, the national economy, international competitiveness, self-employment, workers’ mobility in the market economy and community needs. In the preface of the *Green Paper on PSET*, the Minister of Higher Education and Training argues that although the country needs an education and training system that caters for all citizens, attention must be paid to the needs of the majority. In this context the majority refers to workers and poor people, and their need is employment. However, the Green Paper, as Hamilton and Baatjes (2012) argue, continues to put the focus on employment. This probably explains why rural provision of education and training remains limited, as discussed below.

### **2.6.3. Rural Development Policies**

Just like in many countries in the world, the majority of poor people in South Africa live in rural areas (Carter & May, 1999). Although the government of South Africa has contributed to rural development through economic development, social infrastructure, human resource development, and natural resource based programmes, rural areas remain the most marginalised and poor sector of our society (Department of Social Development, n.d.). The poorest households have low levels of education and literacy, and very few lucrative employment opportunities.

After the RDP was replaced by GEAR, the revised Rural Development Framework (RDF) was transferred to the then Department of Land Affairs and the impact of free market fundamentals were experienced by rural people through, for example, the charging of fees for services (Perret, 2004). The government started to withdraw agricultural support and subsidies, leaving rural farmers without financial support (Ibid.). This neoliberal approach has caused a lot of hardships for rural development and rural people. As argued above, the



neoliberal approach to development continued to the next economic growth initiative, ASGISA, but now with little mention of rural development.

Since then the government has initiated and implemented a number of rural development programmes to improve the lives of rural people. These include the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme, the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), and the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NRYSC) (discussed below). The table below shows some relevant rural development programmes.

Rural Development Programme	Purpose of the Programme
Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP)  2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attain socially cohesive and stable rural communities with viable institutions, sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities, able to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable people, who are equipped to contribute to growth and development;</li> <li>• Ensure that by the year 2010 the rural areas would attain the internal capacity for integrated and sustainable development.</li> </ul>
Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP)  2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To tackle social issues such as hunger, poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment;</li> <li>• To promote the creation of vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities and food security;</li> <li>• To enable rural people to take control of their destiny.</li> </ul>
National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC)  2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train youth through specifically developed programmes linked to community needs in rural areas;</li> <li>• Develop youth with multidisciplinary skills through civic education;</li> <li>• Capacitate youth in retaining knowledge and technical skills acquired during training;</li> <li>• Increase the number of rural communities receiving support in their self-development through the CRDP.</li> </ul>

What I notice from these programmes is that they are community-focused and not neoliberal in orientation. These programmes are aimed at equipping rural people with the necessary skills for survival. For example, in 2009 the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, gave the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRD & LR) a mandate to develop and implement the CRDP all over the country, starting with Riemvasmaak in the Northern Cape and Muyexe Village in Giyani in the Limpopo Province. The DRD & LR (2009) views rural development as a project that needs the involvement of rural people. It argues that rural people need to take control of the development process, with government support. The programme itself is aimed at promoting the management and utilisation of natural resources sustainably. The key strategy of CRDP is to facilitate and encourage participation of various stakeholders in society (Ibid.).

In 2010 the South African DRD&LR initiated the National Rural Youth Service Corps that offers a two-year VET programme for rural youth (NARYSEC) (DRD&LR, 2011). The main purpose of this initiative was to equip rural youth between the ages of 18 and 35 with at least a Grade 10 certificate, with vocational skills that they could use for community development and rural economic growth (DRD & LR, 2011), such as ‘construction.’ This would enable youth to build houses and roads in their respective rural communities (Gabara, 2010).

### **2.6.3.1 Rural provision of VET in South Africa**

Young people and others in rural areas have particular challenges, including the uneven distribution of post-school institutions which leaves large swathes of rural areas with little provision. In addition, the provision which exists is generally of a lower quality in terms of infrastructure and standards of education offered.

In the early 2000s the Department of Agriculture implemented the Agricultural Education Training Strategy (as part of the RDP) to train citizens, regardless of where they live (DoA, 2005). This strategy was primarily concerned with providing sound education and training as a way of supporting ecologically and economically viable agriculture. The evaluation found that this strategy, like many national strategies in the country, does not speak directly to rural vocational education and training needs, and disadvantaged people have limited access.

Furthermore, many curricula for both formal and non-formal AET do not involve any form of systematic training needs analysis and often adopt delivery modes and mechanisms that fail to suit the reality of the situation of people in their community context (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, n.d., p. 2).

The NSDS III also makes clear that education and training efforts were less directed to rural needs:

Given the urban bias of our economic development, our country has not paid adequate attention to rural economic development and provision of skills for rural development. Given the fact that government has now prioritised rural development, our skills development system must increase its focus and attention on the production of skills for rural development. However, we must make a distinction between training of rural people and skills for rural development. The former has tended to train rural people only in order to migrate to the urban areas, whilst the latter will aim to train rural people for development of the rural areas themselves (DHET, 2011, p. 7).

There is little knowledge about rural skills development as most research focuses on sectoral or occupational skills and provision is limited (Jacobs & Hart, 2012). The problem of many approaches to rural skills development is that rural development is usually associated with agriculture and other primary sector activities. As a result, research on skills for rural development usually links these skills with agriculture. This notion ignores the fact that rural development is flexible and complicated, and involves various pathways. For example, some rural areas have mining activities which require a variety of professional skills (Ibid.).

Both the ISDRC and CRDP have been critiqued for providing “welfarist” (Jacobs & Hart, 2012, p.3) service delivery, for example free houses, but not extending rural skills to participation in this kind of development. But the NARYSEC has made a huge difference in training and skills development for rural youth because it allows young people to further their skills, find jobs in the formal sector, as well as to create their own livelihoods (Ibid.).

I, therefore, notice that although strategies are being formulated to address the issue of development nationally, there is little focus on rural development despite the fact that rural development is repeatedly mentioned in development policies and strategies. In addition, while those rural development policies that do exist sometimes show a more community than market orientation, the focus of rural skills provision is not necessarily on skills that empower rural people within their own context.

#### **2.6.4. Youth Development**

Since 1994 the government has made very progressive statements about the nurturing of youth in national development, but youth remain the most marginalised sector in the country, and young people remain the most marginalised group in the labour market in South Africa and in the world (Bhorat, 2010; DPLG, n.d.; National Planning Commission, 2011; DHET, 2012; Lam et al, 2008). Youth unemployment remains a huge challenge for the country (Naude & Serumaga-Zake, 2001), and makes South Africa an important case study (Lam et al, 2008). The South African labour market is characterised by long-term unemployment and this chronic unemployment has created a hostile environment for youth to join the workforce (Ibid.). According to the National Treasury (2011) high youth unemployment is both the result of a lack of skills, and the reason why young people are continuously not obtaining the skills and experience desirable for economic development and growth, something supported by Lam et al (2008).

The 2005 Labour Force Survey revealed that about 42 percent of young black people between the ages of 15 and 24 stopped studying to seek employment in the labour market (Lam et al, 2008). 60 percent of these young people did not hold a Grade 12 certificate (Lam et al, 2008). By 2011 about two-thirds of all unemployed people in South Africa were below the age of 35 and were not being prepared for further training and employment – i.e. were NEETs. The number of NEETs in South Africa is now put at somewhere between 2.8 million (Cloete & Butler-Adams, 2012) and 3 million (DHET, 2012). Not surprisingly, the 2012 *Green Paper on PSET* takes serious notice of the youth who are neither involved in any form of education, employment, nor receiving any kind of training (DHET, 2012), as discussed above.

#### **2.6.5. Community Learning Centres**

The *Green Paper on PSET* has proposed a new institutional type which is diverse, flexible, coherent and highly integrated. This system includes in it some form of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) which will be merged with the already existing Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), because the PALCs are not responding to learning needs such as self-improvement, sustainable livelihoods skills and community development (DHET, 2012).

Before the release of the *Green Paper on PSET*, the DHET established a Task Team to abstract models of ideal CLCs in South Africa. The task team undertook research in three provinces, namely Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo (Baatjes & Chaka, 2012). The research participants were PALC managers; ABET learners; FET college managers; local CBOs and NGOs; urban and rural youth; and university students (School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus) (Baatjes & Chaka, 2012). As already discussed in Chapter 1, the Task Team set up specifically to consider and report back on CLCs is not part of the DHET, but it is a team of experts set up by the DHET to investigate suitable post-school education and training provision for youth and adults.

The Task Team proposed CLCs, as satellites of Community Colleges which address the needs of adults and young people for literacy and first and second basic and secondary education, vocational and occupational programmes. They will also provide access to and facilitate various non-formal education programmes (DHET, 2013, p.7).

The study by the Task Team revealed that participants see the need for education and training, as well as for the CLCs (Baatjes & Chaka, 2012). Participants view education and training as important to secure employment. The study showed that there is high unemployment in the country so it is not surprising that the participants find employment a major priority. However, the participants also pointed to other benefits of education and training, such as personal development and community development. Although participants did not have well-developed conceptions of CLCs, they managed to describe their notions of CLCs. The results of the study show that there are various learning and training needs that need to be embodied in the CLCs (Ibid.).

The literature review developed by the Task Team (2012) has outlined various types of Community Learning Centres which are currently in place in the country, although these are mostly owned and run by various organisations, not necessarily the government. The Task Team (2012) identified some form of CLCs in the country, including:

- Company based private adult learning centres;
- Community-based private adult learning centres;
- Community training and learning centres hosted by NGOs;
- Community service centres with education add-ons by NGOs;
- Trade union and worker education centres; and
- Community college-like institutions.

Although it may seem that the introduction of CLCs in South African policy is a way of breaking away from educating for the market, I believe that the narrow economic view remains dominant. For example community-based private adult learning centres imply that adult learners will need to pay for these educational services. As a result I realise that although the country acknowledges that it should expand rural provision, the idea of the market ‘follows’ policies around. The market is always given an opportunity to provide education and training services. In most cases, private companies usually offer education and training for labour market purposes, so it is highly likely that CLCs will focus less on local community needs.

From the above discussion it is apparent that South Africa is under pressure to be competitive in the global market and local key development thinkers and policy makers are convinced that improving human capital will result in improved economic growth. This is not only evident in education, training, human resource and skills development policies, but also in the socio-economic policies that frame them, as discussed above.

## **2.7. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

As a result of the injustices caused by neoliberal policies there is growing opposition to neoliberalism among people around the world (Hart-Landsberg, n.d.). Although neoliberalism is promoting uneven development and growth, the mainstream economists still argue that it is necessary for development in the ‘developing’ world. I argue that it is time to acknowledge that to a certain extent the capitalist system is an obstacle to development, and we need to direct development efforts towards a different kind of development. While I

acknowledge that political strategies that promote democratic and sustainable development come in different names and forms, for the purposes of this dissertation I argue that the Food Sovereignty Model is a viable alternative to free market policies (Windfur & Jonsen, 2005; Patel, 2009; Pimbert, 2009) because of its theoretical background, its relation to people on the ground, and the fact that it addresses the majority, particularly in rural areas.

Food Sovereignty emerged in the 1990s through the global peasant farmers' movement called La Via Campesina (LVC). LVC introduced this concept in 1993 at a conference in Mons, Belgium, and put more emphasis on the term in 1996 at the World Food Summit (Patel, 2009). This movement encourages farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous people, NGOs and other relevant groups to find alternatives to the current dominant production and distributing system in order to achieve food sovereignty (as opposed to food security) in the world (Windfur & Jonsen, 2005).

Although food is at the forefront of the Food Sovereignty Movement (FSM), Food Sovereignty is more about the nature of the political economy and the exclusion of people in the world. Thus Food Sovereignty offers an analysis of the kinds of neoliberal policies currently in place and their effects on the majority of people in the world, primarily those living in rural areas. One concern of the FSM is the changing nature of the role of the state in neoliberal development, which has caused significant challenges for rural development (Church Land Programme, 2012). As argued above, through SAPs, many governments in the global South were forced to liberalise trade, eliminate subsidies on food and oil, and promote privatisation as much as they could (Vasquez, 2011). These major financial institutions thus managed to weaken the state and to disable it from protecting its food system. As a consequence the state cannot guarantee the right to food of its citizens:

In Africa, the World Bank and IMF took control over the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, even making decisions over how fast subsidies would be phased out, how many civil servants would be fired or, as in the case of Malawi, how much of the country's grain reserve should be sold and to whom (Vasquez, 2011, p.3).

The removal of protective trade laws and the imposition of free trade have adversely affected peasant producers and rural people. Large agribusiness and food retailers have hijacked the global food system (Vasquez, 2011). As a consequence, food is generally sold as a commodity, the number of producers has been greatly reduced (Ibid.), and the autonomy and self-determination of local people is thus undermined (Pimbert, 2009). Internationally organisations such as the World Bank and the Gates Foundation make life very difficult for many people in the world because they take away local resources from local people and centralise them in the global market (Pimbert, 2009).

Pimbert (2009) argues that the capitalist system undermines people's freedom, independence and culture, and reduces the ability of people to survive on their own. For example, Vasquez (2011) notes that some developing countries that used to produce their own food in the past have become dependent on imports and food aid from European countries and the US, and earlier in this chapter I gave the example of Zimbabwe to demonstrate this. In this view hunger is not caused by a shortage of food in the world but by the structure of the global economic system (Vasquez, 2011).

Food Sovereignty is an attempt to break away from these neoliberal policies and provide an alternative policy framework based on equity, social justice and ecological sustainability (Pimbert, 2009). The Food Sovereignty Movement therefore fights against the reduction of people in the food production system in favour of private corporations, and against the taking

of important resources such as land and water from people, and encourages local people to produce and distribute their own food. It seeks to give power back to local, rural people. It is about protecting local people's spaces and resources, and about self-reliance. It is up to the people, not the corporations and financial institutions, to determine what kind of food is appropriate and what kind of development people want. In this model, work is directly related to meeting needs; it is meaningful work, not alienating work, as in capitalism (Ibid.).

Food Sovereignty has not gone without criticism from academics. According to Aerni (2011), the ideas of the FSM are not creative and progressive, but defensive, and prevent the possibility of exploiting new global knowledge to pursue sustainable development. Aerni (2011) also criticises the FSM for wanting to regain power over food production and distribution control because these projects rely on state subsidies and "generous private sponsor" (Aerni, 2011, p. 23). Furthermore, Aerni (2011) criticises the FSM for advocating for countries to produce their own food within their boundaries, because historically this has resulted in hunger and starvation, and prevents the inflow of new knowledge and technology.

I do not believe that Aerni's arguments are entirely valid. Based on the arguments raised by Patel (2009), Pimbert (2009), Vasquez (2009), and Windfur and Jonsen (2005), the FSM does not reject trade, but advocates for fair trade, and wants everyone to count. The FSM advocates for proper ways to produce food; ways that promote healthy, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. Aerni (2011) makes a point that most famines occurred under socialist and communist governments, but ignores the fact that food control under these systems was not under people's control but under governments' control, and that today there is too much food owned by very few people while too many people die of hunger and starvation. Aerni (2011) also ignores the fact that food-related sicknesses are caused by new global knowledge and technology, for example factory farming or industrialised agriculture.

Those who argue against food sovereignty appear to hold a belief that natural resources such as land are economic resources, and that markets create equal opportunities for everyone (Akram-Lodhi, 2007), a typical neoliberal capitalist position. I agree with Akram-Lodhi (2007) that this argument is flawed because if financial muscle determines who gets land and who does not, poor people will remain landless. The 'willing buyer, willing seller' approach is not fair because it does not take into consideration the issue of advantage and disadvantage.

## **2.8. A NEW PARADIGM FOR VET**

As argued above, neoliberalism has permeated all spheres of our society, including VET. Although there are education and training projects that are not only about serving the market, these are very rare to find. For example, in South Africa, even rural education and training provisions are usually associated with skills necessary in the labour market. Thus, as argued above, rural education and training in the country has, to a certain extent, been irrelevant to rural development.

Following Freire's (1970) ideas, I hold a perception that education and training should focus on the context in which learners live, and that learners should be involved in curriculum planning. Menike (1997) argues that many empowerment interventions are based on the assumption that poor people do not know how to improve their living conditions. Programme planners usually do not understand the reality of poor people, or their needs and constraints. Menike argues that poor people do know how to improve their living conditions. Although poor people do need support from the government and other stakeholders, poor people need

to decide what needs to be done. I am thus of the view that it is up to the rural people of South Africa to decide on the kind of VET that should be offered in CLCs, and the government should support them in various ways.

In South Africa, in my view, CLCs, which will replace PALCs, should not reproduce the capitalist system. The pedagogy should conscientise young people and adults about the nature of the world and how power plays out in society, including the ways in which hegemonic discourses affect how people think and act. Instead of teaching and training young people to be recognised by potential employers, young people need to learn to skilfully utilise local resources to sustain their lives and their families, in keeping with the concept of Food Sovereignty. I acknowledge that there has been a rise in protests against neoliberalism, and that there are probably many ways to solve the world problems. I advocate here that the CLCs in South Africa should provide VET that helps young people break the chain of oppression and exploitation that exists within the current capitalist system, and be able to sustain their lives without totally engaging the market.

## **2.9. CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an overview of the literature relating to how VET policies that are in place globally and locally are primarily designed to respond to the demands of the capitalist market, rather than the emancipation of people. I reviewed literature on how neoliberalism has negatively impacted on development policy, including rural and youth development, in the world and in South Africa. The review finally offered Food Sovereignty theory as a potential alternative. The chapter suggested that policy reforms must concentrate in providing “new paradigm” education that helps young people break the chain of oppression, unemployment and exploitation that exists within the current capitalist system.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter has given a detailed literature review relating to the subject of this research and the theoretical framework. Neoliberalism was employed as the theoretical framework whereas Food Sovereignty was employed as counter theory. This chapter outlines the research design, as well as techniques used to collect and analyse data. The reader is, however, reminded that the research aims to investigate what youth from Mavalani Village perceive as appropriate VET that is beneficial to their rural context, which could be offered through CLCs.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Holding a particular world view (a paradigm) influences individual behaviour and professional practice. Henning et al(2004) define a paradigm as a speculation or theory that informs research. Paradigm determines the position a researcher takes with regard to the subject matter of his or her research (Henning et al, 2004). It also determines what falls within or outside the limits of a genuine study (Babbie, 2005). In short, a paradigm is a structure within which theories are constructed that basically influences how the world is perceived and shapes people's understanding of how things in the world are interlinked.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach within a critical research paradigm. The critical research paradigm has its roots in the critical theory of the German philosophers, George Hegel and Karl Marx, and in the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (Vine, 2009). These historical figures believed that society is based on unequal relations. For example, for Marx, capitalist society comprises of the bourgeoisie (those who own the means of production), and the proletariat (the workers who do not own the means of production). Both Marx and Freire view the rich and powerful as oppressors and the poor and powerless as the oppressed. Thus, critical theory sees a conflict of interests between the powerful and powerless members of society. As a consequence, critical research is not just about finding out the dominant and oppressive structures and hegemonic discourses, but it is also for emancipation (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995) and liberation of the marginalised and disadvantaged (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

For Freire (1970) knowledge is created through dialectical means, for example dialogue, although power relations always exist. For instance, research participants might look to the researcher as an 'expert', and this kind of relationship is not empowering as it could prevent participants from opening up freely. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), social inquiry is not 'value free', that is, it is not neutral. Rather, social reality is shaped by many dynamics, for example social, political, cultural, economic, etc. From this perspective no knowledge about the world is objective, but all knowledge about the world is subjective, that is, it is influenced by people's social or political positions, beliefs, cultures and experiences. Thus, Guba and Lincoln argue that there is no objective researcher who collects objective data, but research is always influenced by the researcher's position in society.



### **3.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

The study adopts a qualitative approach, as opposed to a quantitative one. The quantitative approach uses figures or numbers as data, whereas the qualitative approach uses texts, and sometimes pictures (Babbie, 2005; Check & Schutt, 2012). Qualitative methods focus on what participants think and how they act, and the meanings they attach to their lives (Ibid.). There are various forms of qualitative research such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and focus groups (Check & Schutt, 2012). Qualitative research has been criticised for its subjectivity, however, as argued above, claims to neutrality in research are, from a critical perspective, impossible.

#### **3.3.1. Naturalistic Features of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is employed to gain insight into people's attitudes, value systems, lifestyles and belief systems. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007) qualitative research seeks to answer the 'why' questions and studies participants in their natural environment. It is concerned with the meanings made by participants and focuses on the depth and quality of information. Qualitative research is mainly concerned with the understanding of societal and cultural contexts and processes that lie beneath the behavioural patterns of the respondents. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach emphasises the importance of depth and quality of data, rather than the scope of data entertained by quantitative research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Robson (2002) thus states that data in qualitative studies is rich, full and real, when contrasted with thin abstractions of quantitative studies. This richness, fullness and realness of qualitative data is mainly and commonly comprised of words – the sphere of humans and their union.

#### **3.3.2. Subjectivity of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research gels well with the critical paradigm because both believe in the subjectivity of the researcher and the inevitability of social bias. Within qualitative research the researcher does not consider her- or himself external and neutral, but an important part of research and an informed member of society or “part of the situation being studied” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 188; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). It is important that researchers be aware of their role in research and how much influence they can have. Once the researcher identifies himself or herself within a situation being studied, it will be easy to keep “track of his or her own actions in, and reactions to, that situation” (Check & Schutt, 2012: 188).

### **3.4. SAMPLING**

In qualitative research a sampling decision is made to allow the researcher to “study intensively the people, places, or phenomena of interest” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 197). Qualitative research is not interested in the size of the population, but in the depth of the information to be gathered. As a result, qualitative researchers usually limit their focus to a few sites, or even one site. This allows qualitative researchers to have enough time to focus “all their attention on the social dynamics of those settings” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 197). However, the researcher needs to be certain that the one or few sites he or she chooses are accessible and the sample must be adequate and fit for the study, although it may not necessarily be representative of the target population (Ibid.).

A researcher cannot observe everything or capture everything while conducting a study, so she or he needs to make an informed decision about what to observe for a particular study – that is sampling (Babbie, 2005). Sampling means the process of selecting what to observe or look for. It is the selection of a portion of a group of interest or unit of analysis (Babbie, 2005). For this study purposive sampling was found suitable and was employed. This means that I had to make a choice about who the unit of analysis was going to be. This is because it is not important for researchers in qualitative research to collect data that is representative of the entire population (Bryman, 2008).

### **3.5. SELECTION OF SITES AND PARTICIPANTS**

#### **3.5.1. Selection of Sites**

The Mavalani Village was purposively selected in the province of Limpopo in South Africa. The reason for selecting the village was twofold: firstly, I chose the village for convenience and for easy access over the period of research. It is convenient for me because I come from the village and am familiar with the people and life in the village. Secondly, given that the study focuses on VET in rural and disadvantaged areas, the selected village provided an appropriate site for this study. Most of the youth in the village are unemployed. Most of them are talented but have no access to any formal training that can formally equip them to ‘fit’ into the system and become employable, or provide livelihoods outside of formal employment. This situation creates challenges for both the local government as well as neutralises the development and security of these youth.

#### **3.5.2. Nature of Participants**

The participants of this study were 10 youth between the ages of 18 and 30 who permanently live in Mavalani Village. All participants grew up in the village and attended local schools, both primary and secondary school. During the time of the study all participants were not working or studying. The highest level of education that the participants hold is Grade 12. Only two participants do not have a Grade 12 certificate. There were five men and five women who participated in the study. I intended to work with 10 young people in the village because I was particularly interested in the depth of the data or responses, and this number allowed close and active engagement.

### **3.6. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION**

The process of data collection was completed over a period of three days where various techniques were employed within a focus group. A Focus Group is a group of individuals formed by a researcher to discuss a topic brought forward by the researcher (Check & Schutt, 2012). As part of qualitative research, focus groups are not designed to be representative of the target population, but a few individuals who have time and some knowledge about the topic are recruited to participate. Most importantly the recruited individuals must share some key characteristics with the target population (Ibid.).

To complete the data collection process the participants and I executed the following data collection techniques: Community Mapping; Community Timeline and Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) Analysis. On the last day we engaged in a long discussion around the topic, drawing on the data and experience of the participatory process, which I

refer to here as the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Here I differentiate between a FGD and a Focus Group. By Focus Group I refer to the participants and myself. By Focus Group Discussion I refer to a long discussion that we had on the last day of data collection. Other techniques were executed within a Focus Group, although there was talking involved. In short, I can say that three techniques and a long discussion were used as data collection techniques, which makes four techniques.

While talking with the participants I learned that none were aware of the *Green Paper*, but all had some ideas/understanding about VET in the country, including FET colleges. Before we started with the whole process I found it important to present current and proposed government policy, particularly regarding VET and the CLCs, to make sure that everyone had a clear picture of what the study was about. I also explained the tools that we were going to use, and why we were using those tools.

### **3.6.1. Community Mapping**

On the first day of data collection the participants and I did ‘Community Mapping’ and the ‘Timeline’. The term ‘mapping’ as used in this study refers to a technique of data collection where a map of a community or village is drawn to show important information about that particular community or village (Harley & Butler, 2009). A community map also shows the structure of the community and the resources available, as well as their location and availability (Ibid.). In short, community mapping is a participatory tool where participants produce a visual representation of the village, community or place under investigation in order to create a common knowledge base among the participants (Melcher et al, 1998-1999).

Mapping was used because it enabled the participants and I to get a picture of the community in question and to ensure that our perceptions of the village corresponded. Having a clear picture of the community enabled us to locate a potential CLC - where participants believe all youth will have equal access. We used marking pens of different colours to draw the map of the village on newsprint. We then discussed the features on the map. Various features were represented with a certain ‘key’ (Harley & Butler, 2009) or a representative symbol. In short, we did community mapping to present a visual geographic depiction of the characteristics (Melcher et al, 1998-1999) of Mavalani Village.

### **3.6.2. Community Timeline**

After doing the mapping, we constructed a timeline that shows the history of the community. A ‘timeline’ is a participatory tool or technique used to show the history of remembered events with approximate dates and how things have changed within a particular community or village (Chambers, 1994). A timeline helps participants to notice connections between events, and in this way it can help people make future decisions. For example, in the case of Mavalani, when we looked at the history of education, a timeline helped us determine what form of VET is appropriate.

The purpose of using a timeline in this study was to identify historical events that have had an impact on the community, especially events that concern education and training. The timeline was used to locate the community in history; to identify education and training interventions that took place in the past; problems that required education and training, and interventions that succeeded and those that did not. This helped the participants choose the

type of VET that they think is appropriate and relevant to their rural context. We used different coloured marking pens to draw a timeline (on newsprint) that showed the events that have taken place within the village (going back at least 15 years). We then discussed these events, looking at how they have had an impact on the lives of villagers.

### **3.6.3 PEST Analysis**

On the second day we executed a Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) analysis. Although PEST analysis was developed specifically for business, companies, and various organisations, it is also applicable to social research because political, economic, social, technological and other factors affect individuals, groups and societies as well (Bensoussan & Fleisher, 2008). In the PEST analysis, different segments are broken down and considered at local, national and global level, so that their impact on other aspects of society is not overlooked (Bensoussan & Fleisher, 2008). Freire (1970) asserts that learners need to be able to read the world, not only the word. For this research, therefore, the PEST model was used to explore and explain how the world system operates. If participants manage to locate/identify themselves within the world system, and identify the forces acting upon them, they are more likely to know how to act to change their circumstances. We drew the PEST model on newsprint with coloured marking pens, showing the political, economic, social and technological aspects of the environment at local, national, and global level.

### **3.6.4. Focus Group Discussion**

On the last day of data collection the participants and I conducted a FGD. The FGD involves a discussion of issues with a pre-determined group (Hennink, 2007) of about seven to 10 members (Greenbaum, 2000). The crucial function of FGD is to look at diverse views (Hennink, 2007), positions and feelings about a particular issue (Greenbaum, 2000). I found FGD appropriate because it enabled participants to share their different views about the topic. A deeper discussion enabled in-depth information to be collected and reflection from participants to be possible. All participants speak Xitsonga as their mother tongue - this was an advantage for them as they managed to express themselves fully without a language barrier.

A focus group discussion is relevant for this study because its nature encourages participants to engage interact with each other and exchange ideas (Greenbaum, 2000). Also, focus group discussions are useful in gaining an insight and understanding of the issues around the topic from the members of the group themselves (Hennink, 2007). As the researcher I encouraged everyone to speak by asking for each participant's contribution from time to time. I also did my best to get participants to say something, instead of just agreeing with what other participants said. It should be noted that data from Community Mapping, Community Timeline and PEST analysis were recorded on charts and notebook, but the long discussion was recorded with an audio tape recorder.

## **3.7. DATA ANALYSIS**

### **3.7.1. Data Transcription**

It is important to transcribe recorded interviews or discussions in order to do detailed and thorough data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). For this study the whole data collection process was held in Xitsonga because all participants speak Xitsonga as their mother tongue. Since Xitsonga is my mother tongue as well, I found it wise to do the transcriptions myself. I first wrote the transcriptions in Xitsonga and then translated them into English because the medium of instruction at the University is English. I found it very important to record the long discussion, and to do the transcription as part of the evidence of having collected data.

Unfortunately I was not in possession of a video camera to record non-verbal expressions of the participants, which the audio recorder cannot record. But, as Stake (1995) would argue, as part of data analysis, I have to give an account of such non-verbal expressions because I was present during the discussions. Although I realised that the transcription process takes a long time and it requires carefulness and thoroughness, it is very crucial as an initial stage of data analysis.

### **3.7.2. Theme Identification and Coding**

In order to easily analyse data, I applied thematic coding. According to Henning et al (2004) coding is a process whereby data is thoroughly examined and divided into various categories. These categories are called themes (Newman, 2006). The themes can then be examined individually, and any similarities or differences can then be examined. The important issue for the researcher is how these themes are generated.

I first read through the data several times and identified important parts of the data. Some ideas were seen by participants as important whereas others were less important. There are certain ideas that all participants felt strongly about and were eager to say something about. On the other hand there were issues that were not seen as significant by participants. One participant would raise an issue but other participants would not entertain it. In this way I came to realise that not all issues raised had the same significance to all participants. So I looked at the number of people who commented on a particular issue and also how they talk about the issue. After identifying the important issues, I labeled them (coded them) according to the theme they appeared to be dealing with. For example, I categorized all of those sections that specifically related to VET, those that related to skills, those that related to problems with education. I then worked out any differences and similarities among these themes.

In short, according to Cohen et al (2007) coding is a process that allows data to be condensed to a small set of themes that come out to explain the phenomenon under investigation. I found this process very useful because it helped with interpretation of data and the themes gave a detailed description of the matter being investigated. Moreover, coding helped me to make a reflective observation of the entire research process. For Welman et al (2005) it is important to reflect back on the research process when doing data analysis. The themes that emerged during this process are clearly defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5 I ordered the themes according to their dominance or significance.

### **3.7.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Having coded the data and identified the themes, this gave way to interpretation and analysis of the data. As already mentioned in this study, I applied thematic analysis where data were grouped into various categories in order to identify dominant themes and non-dominant themes, which I refer to as sub-themes (Welman et al, 2005). I found the themes very critical for the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data because themes allowed me to quote the exact words of the participants (Cohen et al, 2007). They allowed me to indicate that it is the actual words and ideas of participants that are discussed, not my own ideas as a researcher. These processes required that I played the recorded focus group discussion from time to time and continuously made notes to ensure that the data was well interpreted and analysed. Most importantly, the thoroughness of this process ensured that the data is trustworthy.

### **3.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Many critics of qualitative inquiry are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research, although frameworks to ensure rigour in qualitative research have been in existence for many years (Shenton, 2004). Regardless of these frameworks, positivists continue to question the trustworthiness of qualitative research, most likely because the issues of validity and reliability are addressed differently in naturalistic inquiry (Ibid.). Guba (1981) outlines ways of ensuring trustworthiness of qualitative research, for example credibility and conformability. These strategies of ensuring trustworthiness of qualitative research are well discussed by Shenton (2004).

What Guba's (1981) constructs mean according to Shenton (2004) is that research must portray a true picture of the phenomenon under investigation and demonstrate that findings are not the researcher's own predispositions, but emerge from the data. Following this, I was charged with the responsibility to ensure that the data of this study was not distorted by my own personal bias. In order to do this I used data collection methods that are well established in qualitative research, for example mapping, timeline and focus group, which helped to portray a picture of the village from the point-of-view of the participants who live in the village. This process of using multiple methods of data collection is usually referred to as 'triangulation' (Lather, 1986; Shenton, 2004).

Triangulation is the use of various data collection methods in order to be certain that data collected is trustworthy (Lather, 1986; Shenton, 2004). Different techniques were used to collect data, for example Community Mapping, Community Timeline, PEST analysis, and lastly, a long discussion (what I call the FGD). Although different data was collected, they compensated and validated each other. For example, the data collected from the map and timeline activities validated what the participants know or think about the village, or the issue under investigation.

The involvement of many participants in the study helped a lot with the issue of ensuring trustworthiness of the study. Shenton (2004) argues that if a range of individuals are involved, "individual viewpoints and experiences can be verified against others and, ultimately, a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behaviour of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people" (Shenton, 2004, p. 66). Although participants of this study are all from the village, it was necessary for them to share their views to see if participants hold the same views about the village. In this way I

believe the data that was generated was trustworthy and revealed the views of the participants about the nature of their rural context and their VET needs. Lastly, my supervisor checked the data from time to time and ensured that I let the data speak for itself and not manipulate it to satisfy my ideological interests.

### **3.9. LIMITATIONS**

No matter how social inquiry is designed, there are potential limitations to it, so it is crucial to consider whether there are shortfalls or limitations related to the methods, subjectivity, as well as techniques used in research (Kindon et al, 2007). 'Limitations' here refers to aspects or factors that can lead to the research not achieving what it was meant to achieve satisfactorily.

It has been argued in this chapter that within a critical paradigm 'objectivity' is impossible, so there is no objective researcher or data. The subjectivity of a researcher and participants can be a limitation if it is not well guarded. Subjectivity involves emotions (how people feel) around the issue under investigation and cases can be overstated. As I said earlier, the aim of this study was not to generalise the data beyond the sample - it only reflects the views of the participants. The assumption is that the world consists of people with different experiences and views, and these views cannot be shut down, but should be treated as true (at least to them). I, as the researcher, come from the village under investigation and I know the participants well. This clearly indicates from the outset that there was nothing objective about this study - from the formulation of the topic, the selection of theory to apply, the selection of data collection methods and techniques, to the selection of participants. I have already discussed how I had to still ensure that the data was not manipulated (refer to 'trustworthiness').

For this study purposive sampling was used to find participants and, since it is a qualitative study, very few participants were required. Since I selected based on my knowledge of the village, there might be a possibility that potential participants who could have brought in more knowledge were left out. However, purposive sampling allowed me to select the participants that I was able to reach and those whom I know something around the topic. In this way I was confident in the participants I had selected. As such purposive sampling has strength that strengthens the trustworthiness of this study.

### **3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical concerns are a priority to ensure the safety of the participants. Although a researcher cannot always be aware of what is wrong or right in different contexts, Babbie (1992) warns that it is always wise to be aware of scientific researchers' general ethical agreements. The foremost areas of concern in social research ethics are voluntary participation, no harm to participants, and confidentiality (Babbie, 1992; Bryman, 2008).

Participants do not ask to participate in the study - they are asked to participate. Although participants voluntarily participate in the study, they need to be protected from any harm that may arise as a result of their participation. The participants can be harmed in different ways, for example if they are asked to reveal embarrassing information about themselves or if their answers are published. If the researcher fails to keep the information of the participants confidential, it can be an ethical problem (Babbie, 1992). I took a number of steps to minimise or prevent ethical problems while conducting my study.

The study required me to record the participants using an audio tape, and this has some ethical concerns as well. Hall and Hall (1996) argue that stealthy recording is unethical because it creates a more formal and permanent record which can be used against the recorded individuals. I thus first asked the participants for their permission, both orally and in writing. After reading the consent form, the participants signed to show that they understood that they would be recorded.

The participants' names were not presented to a third party, as promised in the consent form. Any information that directly links to the participants is disguised (for example using pseudonyms) and will be destroyed after the research process is complete. Participants were made aware that they can withdraw at any time without any consequences. Most importantly, it was made clear that there were no incentives for participating as incentives may influence the results (Babbie, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Terre Blanche et al, 2006).

As already stated, the study should benefit participants and bring no harm to them. The participants need to be certain that the research will not result in their exploitation for "selfish academic ends" (Hall & Hall, 1996), but will make a contribution to participants' lives. I am of the view that the study did contribute to the participants' consciousness about issues around VET, rural development, government policies and their knowledge about these. A study like this may create a wrong impression to participants, for example this kind of study can give an impression that a CLC is underway. I made it clear from the beginning that it is not even a policy, but a vision. Most importantly, although participants already knew, I emphasised that I am doing a university project and I am in no way connected to the government or DHET.

### **3.11. RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

Initially I expected all participants to be aware of the government policies in general and VET policies in particular, specifically the *Green Paper on PSET*. But throughout my consultations with the participants I was told by them that they were not aware of the *Green Paper*. At that time the *Green Paper* was five months old. I was also told by the participants that they have not engaged with actual policy documents, but had some idea of what is going on in the education and training system in South Africa. This is not surprising to me because I had never engaged with policy documents before I came to university. This has to do with access to such policies, and in Mavalani Village this is a problem. I thus used the knowledge that the participants already had about VET in the country to generate data for the study.

I was initially concerned that participants might not generate sufficient data for the study, but later realised that they generated data which is a true reflection of the reality of living in Mavalani Village. Although data is not generalised beyond the sample, they reflect the characteristics of youth in the village, and I believe it is a true reflection of the participants.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that this is a university project. I used the June-July vacation to collect data and that was the only time I had to collect data. I spent a number of days doing consultations with the participants and three days doing focus groups with the participants. Although this time was enough for data collection, it was very limited for analysis with the participants. Since I am following the university timetable, I was unable to go back to the village to re-check with the participants. I however believe that my thorough analysis, with assistance from my supervisor, has been enough to produce trustworthy data.



### **3.12. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the study methodology, for example paradigm, approach, sampling and data collection methods, as well as ways to ensure trustworthiness. It has also discussed the limitations and ethical dilemmas of the study. The next chapter presents this data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the methodology and design of the study. In this chapter I present the findings of the study. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, various techniques of data collection were executed, for example community mapping, timeline and PEST analysis, followed by a focus group discussion.

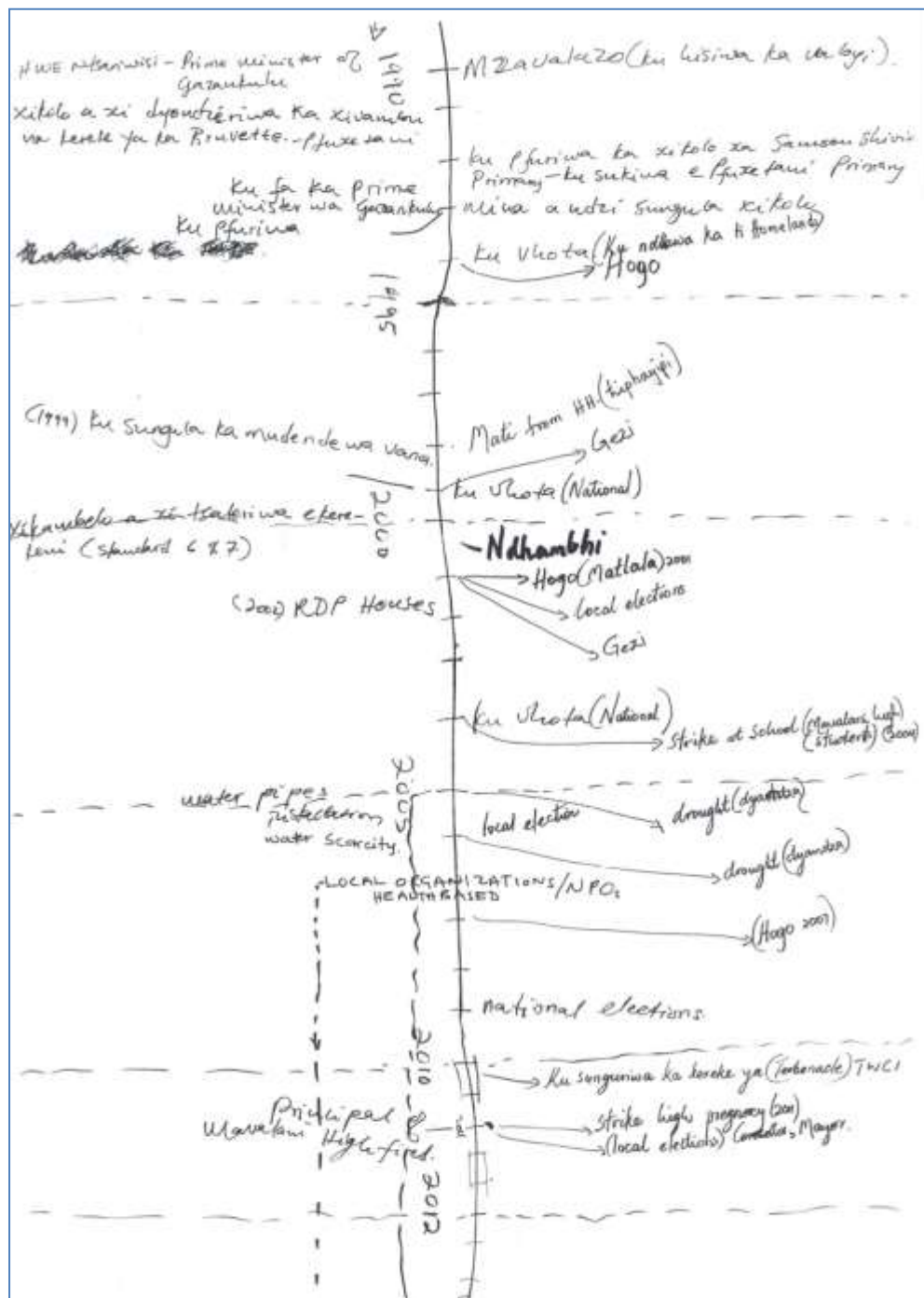
#### 4.2. VILLAGE MAP

Community mapping was used as the introduction to the study. The study is about Mavalani Village, so we did need a clear picture of our village. Although all the participants grew up in the village, it was helpful to step back and reflect on the diagram. It helped us to look at our village from a different perspective and to pick up some of the things that may be hidden or not always in sight. The village is not very big so it is not difficult to know it well.

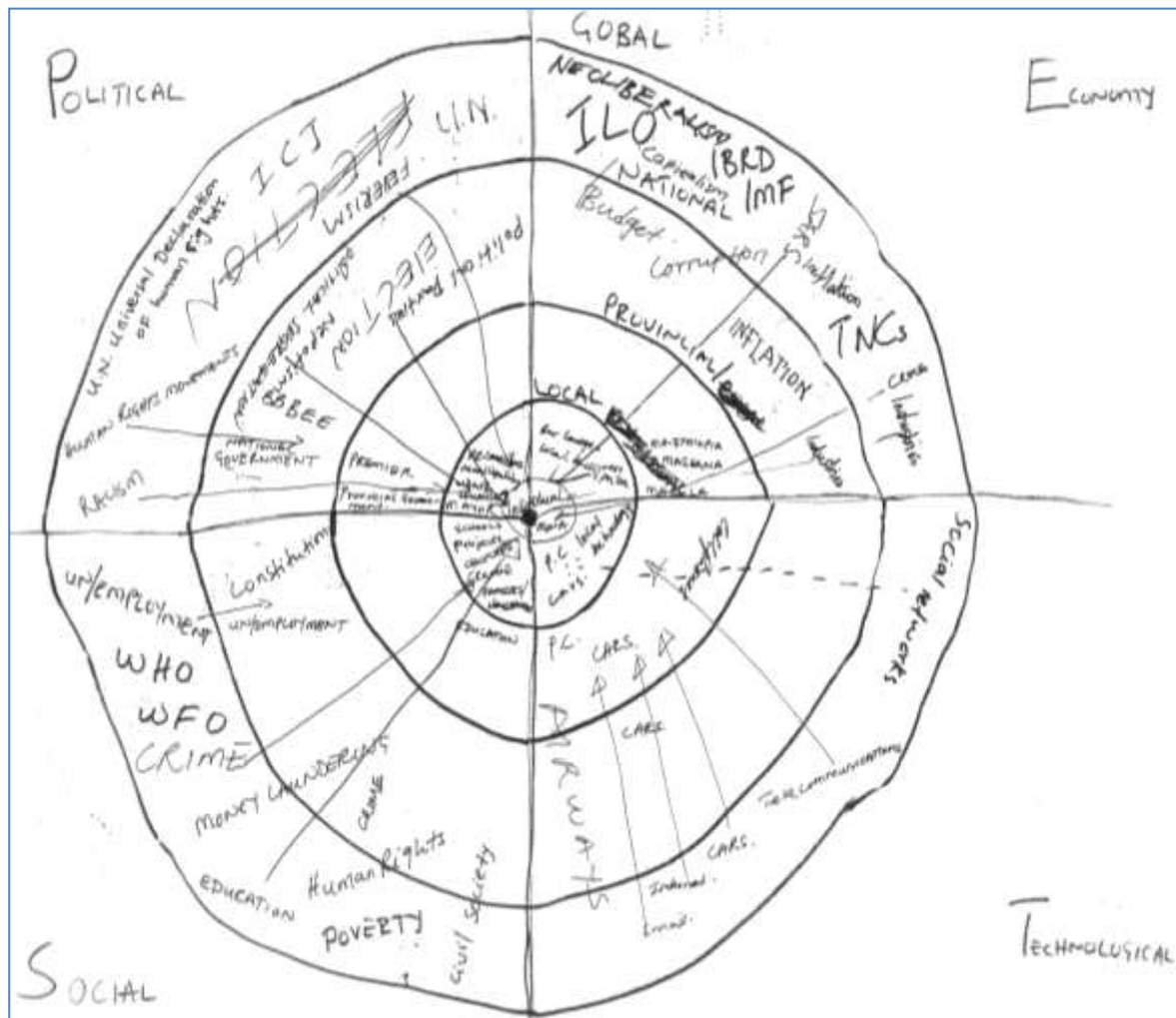


### 4.3. VILLAGE TIMELINE

We did a timeline as a way to trace the history of the village. We started from 1990 because all of the participants, except for one, were born in the 1980s and started school in the early 1990s. Participants could at least remember events that took place from 1990.



We used a PEST analysis to explore and explain how our village is affected by what is happening at a national and global level. Our PEST chart showed that some of the issues we face in the village are not unique to us but are part of broader issues.



The last technique that was employed was the focus group discussion. While the previous two days focused on doing diagrams, the last day was dedicated to talking about everything to ensure that the research questions were well answered. Below I present the transcript of the discussion, slightly edited for flow and clarity.

**Lucky:** First, what kind of problems do we, youth of Mavalani, feel we are facing?

**Yila:** To answer the question, the problems that I see here at Mavalani, I will speak from my own experiences. I believe that some problems are specific to certain people, but we can come to a certain point where we can generalise them. The first problem that I see is the lack of purpose to complete high school. Not that some people are incapable to complete high school, but some do not see the purpose to do so. But even those who seem to have a clear purpose, and manage to complete high school, they face a challenge of not knowing what to do, how to do it, and where they can get the resources to do whatever it is that they want to do, be it to go to school, whether is a college, an FET or university, or technikon. People end up not knowing what to do. You see if you grew up without resources, or someone to guide you, you end up not knowing what to do after completing high school. These are the problems that I see. Another problem is teenage pregnancy; it is one of the main problems facing youth of Mavalani Village. Teenage pregnancy makes people to have a lot of responsibilities while they are still young, without funds to support babies. That is one of the problems that we are facing. Eh, I will stop here.

**Rito:** Even dating is a problem, especially when you are still young. Poverty and drinking are problems too.

**Muyisa:** According to my views, lacking relevant knowledge is a problem as well. The time we were still at school we did not know a lot of things in terms of education and many other things, or knowledge that would help us make right decisions. You would find that when you wanted to follow a certain career in a certain university or technikon, or wherever, you would find that you knew very little about such a career. In class there is nothing you learn about careers, and at home it is worse; there is no one to guide you. You see, so according to my views, to be in a situation where there is no one to guide us is one of the main problems that we are facing. On top of that, as we said...poverty. Sometimes some people have a desire to do something good in life, but you find that their financial situation does not allow them to move forward. Some people do wish to go to school, sometimes they receive relevant information about financial assistance, but they cannot afford travelling costs, and you find that they have many other problems. So you find that poverty can be a major problem in our lives as youth. The last thing I can say is that our lives are destroyed by bad friendships; this is a very serious problem. You find that there are many groups in the village; some groups' purpose is to drink alcohol. When the members have gathered, they talk about alcohol, and where to find alcohol, nothing else. So you find that we move backward and make no progress. That is where I will stop for now.

**Munhu:** Another problem is where we, as youth, come from. Our parents do not give us the support that we need. They do not follow up on our lives, especially our schooling lives. It seems as if our parents do not even care about our education, and it is a problem for us because we end up not studying further. You also find that we do not do things accordingly because there is no guidance that we receive. And you find that we (youth) do not go out to other places to see how life is outside our territory. So we end up thinking that what we do here at Mavalani is very good, there is nothing better than it. We do not recognise that our life is not complete because we do not go out, and even our parents do not know what is happening in other places. I think that is our problem. We do not go around. We stay in one place. We do not desire anything which is done by youth from other communities.

**Mujaji:** When we look at rural schools, it seems as if the education there is very poor. You find that a matric student passes matric without the ability to use the English language,

whether is to read or write. They experience serious problems when they get to institutions of higher learning. But kids from urban areas are far better than those from rural areas. Another problem, as stated earlier, is the issue of teenage pregnancy. Young people are very interested in sexual relationships while they are still very young. As a result they become mothers and fathers, and not continue with school.

**Rito:** Our problem here at Mavalani is that when we are still at school...many young people...for example if there is a school in a nearby village, and we are studying here at our village, some feel bad because they walk to school whereas those who study somewhere else use transport. You find that some of us do not have money, there is nothing at home, and there is nothing to push us forward. Some people tell themselves that because they are poor, they have nothing, and leave school before matric. We, the girls, have a problem of falling pregnant while we are still studying and we cannot continue with school for various reasons. And the people we stay with at home, especially because they are not educated themselves, know nothing about school. They do not support us when we want to go to Saturday or winter school. This is our problem at Mavalani village.

**Khubani:** What I notice about our village, especially among youth, is that we deceive each other a lot. When we are still at school we forget that our backgrounds are not the same. When I realize that my family is poor, I see to it that the other person does not progress at school, and it is wrong. When you find that someone has not been to school, you do not go to school as well. When someone did not write their homework, you do not write it either. And what I have noticed is that some people do not wish good things for themselves. Another thing that I have observed about young people is that they like marriage too much. When marriage comes into the picture, you find that the 19 year olds and those born in the 1990s...the issue of education falls out.

**Lucky:** What makes people not take education seriously? Is it because they do not understand what is actually going on in the world or what?

**Khubani:** One of the reasons is that people do not wish themselves good things in life.

**Mujaji:** Another thing is that some people are weak. Their weakness is that when they see older youth who have been to institutions of higher learning staying at home without employment, they use it to explain why they do not need to go to school. They would say 'so and so went to university but he is not working, so what difference does it make? Why should I even bother going to school?'

**Rito:** Some of us when we are still at school we have the mentality of saying that Maths is difficult, Accounting is difficult, History is difficult, and this and that is difficult. Some of us have told ourselves that school is not for us. That makes youth to experience problems at school. Some of us choose subjects that we do not even know, for example we choose Accounting; what is Accounting? You just hear people saying they are doing Physical Science - you do not even know what it is about but you want to do it as well. Some of us do not even know why we go to school in the first place.

**Yila:** Problems, like I said earlier, we can generalise them. Sometimes people, when we talk about difference, they can be born in the same family, by same parents, and receive similar and equal support, but they will not do similar things in life. So what can we say the problem is? When I look at it sometimes, there are things that are personal. White people who wrote wherever they wrote - wrote that there is a thing called 'intrinsic motivation'. There are

people who are not motivated by anything outside themselves. There is nothing that happens in their surroundings that motivates them. Some people are motivated from their inner selves. That is the kind of a person who, even if they can come from a poor background, a household where traditional beer or dagga is sold, and there is swearing noise day-in-day-out<sup>1</sup>, but they still make it fine in the end, being a good kid who goes to school and become successful. You can ask yourself 'why'? And then you find a pastor's kid who the father preaches to everyday, left, right and centre, but becomes a drunkard instead. This is where the issue of intrinsic motivation comes in. There are people who intrinsic motivation does nothing to them. There are people who are lacking motivation naturally in them, even if the environment in which they live can support them, you find that they do not elevate themselves in any way. So we have those kinds of people, and we must accept it.

**Lucky:** What are the solutions to these problems? How can we address these problems?

**Yila:** Let me start. For us to solve these problems, we need to look at all the problems we have listed. There cannot be one solution to all these problems. Although there can be generic problems, there still are individual problems. We must look at these problems one-by-one, so we can identify individual problems as well. We must look at them carefully, because we cannot assume that when A has a certain problem, B also has the same problem, you see! So I think the best way to solve these problems is that we work together as a community, everyone must have a role to play in this. This means that teachers, churches, parents, chiefs, and all members of community must have a stake - a role to play. We all need to meet and look at the problems that we are facing in the village, and then we have one mind, and manage to approach each child to understand their individual problems, except for general problems.

**Muyisa:** I think that a person in general has a choice to make in their life. In everything presented to them, a person must have a choice to make. I think that one solution to our problems can be an information centre<sup>2</sup>. If we can have an information centre where young people can speak and be heard, it can be better. Sometimes we can assume that young people are the ones with a problem, but only to find that our education system is the one with a problem, like Mujaji has indicated that, for example, a person can pass Grade 12 without the ability to use English. If they can be asked what a 'vowel' is they will not know - they can even be surprised because they do not even know what kind of thing a vowel is. What I am trying to demonstrate is that we can find that it is not only youth who have a problem. So if we can have an information centre where we can be listened to from all sides - parents, teachers, youth, and community members in general - we engage in various conversations about our problems. This can ensure that we come up with solutions to our problems. For example, some tavern owners close their taverns at 21:00 but you find that people insist to stay until it is very late<sup>3</sup>. So you find that many young people stay in taverns until it is very late, even if they are still at school. From this you can see that to come up with solutions, there should be many stakeholders involved. The last thing, I think the government should

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<sup>1</sup>In the village in households where marijuana and traditional beer are sold, there is usually noise made by customers because they buy and drink within the household. Usually these substances are sold almost every day so those households are generally noisy and are looked down upon. It is the households defined as poor who sell such substances and these households are usually dirty.

<sup>2</sup>Mavalani Village has no information or resource centre or library.

<sup>3</sup>There was a meeting among the village leaders about taverns. Their agreement with tavern owners was that taverns must close at 21:00. Although taverns close at this time, there are young people who insist on staying, or stay outside and do not go home, and usually these are school-going youth.

*intervene, especially in the issues of fighting poverty if we want to improve the lives of young people. There needs to be systems and solutions to the problem of poverty because you will find that some people have passed matric successfully, but they do not know what to do afterward. So if the government could show some interest in youth development and that youth study further, it seems like a good solution. The government should not hide behind a finger<sup>4</sup>, it should be straightforward, and it should be transparent. The government should demonstrate that if a young person passes matric in a particular way, the government should take a certain responsibility to push such a person forward.*

**Lucky:** *What do we want to achieve with education? In simple terms, what is the importance of education in our lives?*

**Rito:** *The importance of education is to ensure that when we meet with other people, we are able to relate to them, for example through language and social understanding. Education helps us communicate well with other people. When we say you are educated, you have a particular knowledge. Although the person might share their knowledge or pass it to other people, the person still retains that knowledge, and such knowledge is important for employment. Through education we also face poverty, fight and defeat poverty, so it is good that we learn, especially youth because we are the ones mainly affected by poverty. Basically, education does help us to be able to read and write, and to communicate well, and to gain knowledge.*

**Munhu:** *According to me the importance of education... I understand that education is not only at school. We find education everywhere. Anything helpful that a person comes across is education, not necessarily going to school. Whatever a person comes across, it depends on whether it is helpful to that person or not! So what is important is that we learn to stand for ourselves, to separate between good and bad in a good way, and to manage situations with intellect.*

**Yila:** *According to me the importance of education is that a person understands the laws of human survival. You must understand how you live as a human being, and how the person next to you lives. I am referring to very basic things. For example you must know that when food is produced, how the systems that are set up in the world operate. It enables you to understand how things work, and how you as a person fit in, and understand how you need to survive as an individual and how your brother/sister next to you survives. That is what I know the importance of education to be. You gain... it gives you...education must give you the foundation to understand how the world systems work, or to create new systems of your own if necessary. But the main point of these systems is to ensure human survival, human comfort. That is what according to me the whole system is all about.*

**Mujaji:** *The importance of education varies from one person to the next. Some people need education just to secure employment, and it is ok to them...better job...better job. But the importance of education also includes learning the behaviour, how you conduct yourself. But some people want to get jobs, nothing more, and they do not care about self-conduct. But the*

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<sup>4</sup>This is a Tsonga phrase that says you think you are hiding but you are still seen. In this case it was used to define the nature of the South African government that hides behind policies, that is, it uses well-written policies to present itself as pro-poor, but in reality it is not doing anything and it is not transparent. The government thinks people are too blind to see that it is fooling them, but actually people are aware of government's incapacity.



importance of education is to teach you how to treat other people well, and to get a job perhaps.

**Muyisa:** According to me, sometimes education helps in intellectual development. Sometimes you can tell, according to how some people think that they have never received any form of education. So if you have received some education, it is clear that even your thinking mentality has a purpose, it shows that you have seen something in life. If you can find someone who is not educated, even their argument is not about reaching consensus, it is about taking what he says, whether it makes sense or not. So if you are educated you understand that when you say NO, and someone says YES, make sure that the next person understands why you say NO. If the person does not understand, it is not your fault.

**Khubani:** A lot has been said and it is true for education, and it is true that it differs from one person to another. Some people want education simply to secure employment. But education teaches you how to speak with other people in a good way. You do learn that you do not just say anything randomly; you learn a constructive way of communicating with other people.

**Lucky:** Is there evidence of anything that the government is doing to give youth some opportunities, especially in our village? When we look at education, I want us to look at it in terms of schooling, of theory, of books, of writing, and also look at it in terms of training. For example, we must look at it in terms of skills (hands skills), like building. Is it there? Do we see it happening, especially in our village?

**Muyisa:** We live in this village. I can say that we have not seen anything of that nature. The only involvement of government is that of delivering textbooks to schools, and then children get into class and learn. But that children will learn practical things like Carpentry, or...

**Lucky:** Like post-school...after people have finished compulsory schooling.

**Muyisa:** Even such programmes are non-existent in this village. It is like every small fish swims for itself, the government is not helping in that. It is like when you finish school you either stay at home, doing nothing, or take a bus to Johannesburg to look for security guard job<sup>5</sup>. If you plan to go to school it means you will be on your own. Even if the government funds you, it is like something you have never heard of before, it just surprises you that government funds people. It is not something you know before you leave home. What we know is that there are those who get employed to work in roads, and the government prefers older men and women to work there. That is what we know.

**Yila:** When I think about that question, I think of a number of things. I think I should go back a little. Since democracy... and we had a democratic government in South Africa, it is like I don't know...that in fact what went wrong? Where did things turn? It seems like somewhere university has been preached to us a lot, especially when it comes to post-school education. So now all young people have the mentality that for a person to be good, they must go to university, and the government did not fix that mentality. For this 18 years of democracy, the government did not fix such mentality, until last year when people stepped over a person at the University of Johannesburg...until last year... Blade Nzimande then stood up and say that

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<sup>5</sup>Due to lack of employment policies, many people in the village are employed in the Gauteng Province as Security Officers and actually earn very little. Locally we use the name *Johannesburg* to refer to the Gauteng Province, but in Xitsonga we say 'Joni', which is Johannesburg, but is used to refer to the Gauteng Province because even the people who live in various places in Gauteng say that they live in Johannesburg.

*we need to fix education at FET colleges. Yes, FETs have been built, there are FETs all over. But let us look at the education that people receive at FET colleges. How can you go to an FET college only to be taught how to fix an old car? You are taught how to fix a car that is no longer in the market. Whose car do you want to fix? That's the problem. They have built FET colleges, but they did not put in place programmes that will help people with necessary skills - the skills that are needed by the citizens who are living at this time we are living in. It can be skills to build houses that people want to build at this time, or to fix cars that are currently in the market, or to fix computers that are used currently. Although we have a small number of FET colleges...if people pass Grade 12...if indeed the government would put more value on vocational training, and improve the programmes that exist in the existing colleges, would they be big enough to accommodate all people who need access? Would all people be accommodated? Do we have enough colleges? In other words I can say the government has not made enough effort to make sure that people receive education and training, especially vocational training.*

**Munhu:** *The government is failing to reach out to the people who want to further their education and training. Even though people initiate their own projects, it takes a long time for the government to fund such initiatives. In fact the government is useless to young people, at least according to me. Well, it is difficult to see...those who have passed Grade 12...why are they staying at home instead of doing something? The government should recruit the youth, those who are staying at home, to do something. Nothing is being done. But the government only assists with delivery of textbooks to schools, but nothing more, and this makes young people to lose direction in life. Even when people initiate projects, the government does not come closer to look at what people are doing.*

**Mujaji:** *I think that our government does not intervene. It does not intervene in matters related to youth development. Some time ago the government introduced the Vukuzenzele<sup>6</sup> slogan, which meant that people should do things on their own. People did a lot for themselves and on their own, but they were not getting assistance from the government to support their projects. People start projects, they expect assistance from government, but the government officials are corrupt, they misuse the budgets, they use government money for their own benefit. They do not look at young people. They are no longer focusing on development as they promised when they were fighting for the positions. In fact the government is useless, it does not help anyone.*

**Lucky:** *If now, we were to build a Community Learning Centre, which would merge with Public Adult Learning Centres, to ensure that we accommodate young people as well, what would it be like? Because when we say ABET, young people think it is for old women. Young people do not want to go to Kha Ri Gude<sup>7</sup>. But if we were to create a new institution which will accommodate everyone, especially youth, what kind of vocational skills - which ones do you find more important? Or in general, what kind of education and training would you like to be offered? What do you think is important to be part of this dream institution?*

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<sup>6</sup>This is an IsiZulu concept for 'arise and act' or 'wake up and do it yourself'. In South Africa it was used to mobilise people to do voluntary work with a hope to secure a job in the future. In the context of this study though, it is understood to mean that people must be creative, and must start various projects, and the government will assist them financially.

<sup>7</sup>Kha Ri Gude is a Venda concept for 'let us learn'. It is a campaign in South Africa aimed at teaching illiterate people basic literacy and numeracy.

**Yila:** *I think plumbing, Carpentry, and motor mechanic, but with upgraded programmes. They can be taught old stuff, but with a plan to move to new stuff. When I talk about cars, I am also talking about the relevant technology which is computerised. And building... And drawing.*

**Muyisa:** *I think farming is good. Most people have land but they do not understand the farming system. A person can take matches and burn the whole field, but you know it is not permissible to just burn the whole area for clearing purposes.*

**Yila:** *And sewing.*

**Rito and Yila:** *Carpentry!*

**Yila:** *Then we want to generalise the issue of beauty, including braiding, make-up, etcetera. What do they call it in English?*

**Lucky:** *There is manicure and pedicure, and 'hair cure', or whatever beauty something, it has 'beauty' somewhere in the middle...*

**Munhu:** *Those things to do with salons...*

**Muyisa:** *The make-ups, we know what we are talking about - you will search later.*

**Yila:** *What do they call that thing of landscaping? What do they call the person who does it - a landscaper?*

**Lucky:** *You mean a surveyor?*

**Yila:** *No, there is a specific name for it.*

**Lucky:** *What is landscaping anyway?*

**Yila:** *Write landscaping there - you will search later. There is a name for it. That thing is science, it is a skill.*

**Lucky:** *So is that all we think should be taught and learned?*

**Rito:** *Did we write decoration?*

**Lucky:** *If we can set up an Education and Training Centre here at Mavalani, what are the things that we think are necessary to be taught and learned?*

**Yila:** *Another thing before I forget...because we want to maintain our culture as Africans, when we talk about something like sewing, we must talk about sewing things that are traditionally ours. Do you understand that?*

**Lucky:** *I understand it well. So let us finish it up, let us start with plumbing. Plumbing - we refer to this thing of water pipes in houses? If youth learn these things, how will they benefit?*

**Yila:** *The process of building is unending. There is no time when we will stop building, you understand? Even if we can build everywhere and leave no space for new buildings, some people will want to change something, or renovate. The water pipes that have been installed*

*do erupt sometimes, and they need to be fixed. We, in the rural areas do not even have a sanitary system. There is no sewage system here at Mavalani. Maybe we can build it, who knows? If we could have people with such skills, we can have a good sewage system. If now we wanted to create a sewage system, we would call someone from Japan to do it for us here at Mavalani. But if we can have young people who have learned the skills to sit together, and plan, they can create a sewage system for us. If you can combine plumbing and drawing, drawing is engineering... you can do a lot. With these two skills you can design a good sewage system for Mavalani. So there is always a job for such people that they can create for themselves.*

**Lucky:** *What is the importance of Carpentry to us? How can it help us?*

**Muyisa:** *As already indicated, it is rare to find something that is irrelevant when it comes to vocational skills. I think Carpentry can be very important in our village, in terms of developing people... and as a way to bring something good to our community. Like for example, back in the day I was lucky to see my grandfather doing Carpentry. In fact there are beautiful things to adorn the house and they come in different shapes. These days when you look at the headboards, you can see that the art that is used there is not of a machine, but of someone's hands who gave himself time to craft, to carve, using different kinds of tools. When we look here in the Limpopo Province, there are places where headboards, wardrobes, couches, and various other things are sold. So this can promote this kind of work, and as time goes on more people can be engaged in this kind of activity. People will be able to make things and distribute them, something like that.*

**Munhu:** *Carpentry is good. Something that is made by hands is more attractive than something made by a machine. If there can be people who would do Carpentry, they can be able to produce sellable goods. For example, when a radio is playing, no one pays attention, but if one plays the traditional drums/xigubu<sup>8</sup>, people pay attention and they dance to it. So when it comes to Carpentry, people prefer products made by hand, as opposed to those made by machine, because the ones made by hand are more beautiful. As a result of Carpentry we can manage to sell things that are made by us.*

**Mujaji:** *Carpentry is good. When youth of today want to feel that they are better people is when they have been to university, and the government - I am not sure if to say it is the government - encourages people to do Science and Mathematics. But you find that there are young people who cannot do those subjects. But with their hands, they can do a lot. So if there is something like Carpentry, there will be some form of equality because everyone will do what they like, and they will find themselves doing something in life. Those who fail to go to university, those who fail to do subjects that are promoted by society, they can resort to something like Carpentry if it is their thing, and they will earn a living. This will ensure that we, here at Mavalani, do not go out to buy some of the products. Products can be produced here, and we can buy them from here. If we buy from other places our money goes away. But if we buy locally, the money circulates in our community. For example, there is a place at Shayandima in Venda where people produce wardrobes. Some of these people are people with disabilities. So people from Shayandima do not go out to buy wardrobes, and the wardrobes that they buy locally are cheaper.*

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<sup>8</sup>Drums or Xigubu are musical instruments made of tin and leather, usually cow hides/skins. When we say Xigubu we literally refer to one instrument of this nature, so the plural is Swigubu.

**Rito:** *I would like to second that. Vocational skills like Carpentry are good in a community like this one. Sometimes we (young people) tell ourselves that for you to be a better person you need to go to university or college. We care much about being employed and getting higher positions. But if we could do things locally, we would develop our community. Some people are deaf and there is no provision for such people locally, so if there can be something for everyone, all would participate fully. A deaf person cannot learn with people who are not deaf, and since there is no provision for deaf people, there must be alternatives. To do Carpentry you do not need ears - just your hands and eyes - so deaf people can do it as well.*

**Khubani:** *To add on what has already been said, Carpentry is good because we are gifted in different ways. Some people do not make it at school, but they are good at something else, for example certain vocational skills. I can afford to make a living through vocational skills, not necessarily through school. There are many people who would like to buy products that I can make with my own hands.*

**Lucky:** *Is there anything the government can do to assist?*

**Muyisa:** *Like we said, in the past a person would just go and stand on the roadside with the products he had made so that those who are passing could buy. But today you need to identify the market where you will sell your products. You find that the things that you buy from a store are made by ordinary people. So the government can help us with funds, start-ups. It is not everything that you can extract from nature, for example nails and furniture paint. If we can do well, we can distribute our skills to various places and we need to identify the markets all over.*

**Yila:** *The basic thing that the government can do is to provide the necessary education in the existing FET colleges. When we talk about the market - not so long ago they were preaching about the Proudly South African Products. But when we go to the shops, do we find such products? If that is not the case, how is that? And if we find these products, are they up to the standard that South Africans want? Is it because the market itself, or business people have taken a certain direction? The government should start to persuade the business people to recognise the products that are produced locally. These products must be marketed, so it can stay in people's minds that a South African product has value, and has quality as any product, or even better. This will ensure that if I craft a watch that Muyisa talked about, I can afford to take it to JetMart, and JetMart sells it. If there is a sewing project, Edgars and Truworths should sell the products they have bought from Muyisa. The problem is that even though Muyisa can make something good, we will not buy because our minds tell us that something from Truworths is good. If you can make things and go and stand in the street and sell, people will not even recognise you, because television tells us every day that products from Truworths are good. So even marketing here in the village needs to change towards that direction and that where the government can intervene. The government can help to advertise Muyisa's products, and we consider his products the best.*

**Lucky:** *I heard that the Proudly South African emblem was expensive. So somehow it was working against local products.*

**Muyisa:** *In fact this government wants to eat from the side, but it looks like it wants to help but on the other hand it holds an axe. In fact the government takes a lot from you.*

**Rito:** Like Muyisa has said, if I am able to craft, I can teach other people here, and then we do more. We can start a craft or Carpentry project. It would be important for the government to help us advertise, even on the internet.

**Yila:** Because fashion does not change, now there are many beautiful dresses that are made by the Shangaan fabrics<sup>9</sup>. In fact we must understand the issue of fashion and the growth of people, and the change of things. It does not mean that the culture of us Shangaan people is xibelani<sup>10</sup>, we just need to put on xibelani all the time. We have to be creative, we mix our fabrics, so that even foreigners can be attracted. We must understand that we are not living as an island. There are people who will come and be attracted to our things, and buy them, and see that they are comfortable even to them. Culture evolves, so fashion needs to change with culture and time. People must sew the traditional clothes the most creative way possible.

**Muyisa:** To add on what Yila has said, fashion keeps on coming back, so we need to be creative. When we see our things on television we must like them. I saw a dress made of our traditional fabrics and it was beautiful. What came to my mind is that I do not believe that those clothes are available in stores; there is somewhere it was made. I do not know where yele<sup>11</sup> is sold; a person gets it from other people, and it looks good with jeans. But it is not enough if MhaniLuwisa<sup>12</sup> is the only one sewing such clothes. If there can be a centre where sewing is taught, and teach how to market these products, I believe that it can bring good future.

**Lucky:** So are you saying that our VET has to go with Marketing?

**Yila:** Exactly! And Marketing is where government needs to intervene. Like I said earlier, the government should not leave MhaniLuwisa suffering, walking around shouting that she is selling tiyele, doing measurements in streets. I must go to Truworhs to buy a yele, what is wrong with that?

**Mujaji:** The problem is that when we buy from MhaniLuwisa we do not pay, and her business collapses - it does not develop. People make things and sell, but we rob them. So if there was a market, people would understand that they have to buy. This would help us develop.

**Yila:** The government would help us with the Proudly South African emblem. It would reduce imitation. That emblem means that this is my creation and it must remain mine. I own that design, I own that style. So I can actually have a label saying MhaniLuwisa, you see, or it says Philip, and that is a label. So it puts value on our products. When someone sells tomatoes, everyone else sells tomatoes.

**Lucky:** So this issue of sewing and Carpentry, can we close it now?

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<sup>9</sup>There are certain fabrics and colours associated with Shangaan/Tsonga people. These are usually clothes with many colours and mainly for women.

<sup>10</sup>Xibelani is a traditional dress, usually worn under the clothes and presents women as if they have huge hips. Xibelani is used by women to perform the traditional dance. Although it is originally heavy, now people are making lighter ones.

<sup>11</sup>Yele is one of the old female shirts usually associated with Shangaan/Tsonga people. It does not have buttons, so it is more like a t-shirt but with a different fabric. It comes in different colours, but is easy to identify because it always has small spots.

<sup>12</sup>I used this pseudonym (MhaniLuwisa) to refer to the only woman in the village who sews tiyele. Mhani means mother, so I use it to indicate that the person in question is an older person.

**Muyisa:** *Let us close it.*

**Yila:** *We have discussed it a lot now.*

**Lucky:** *Let us talk about the issue of agriculture which some of us think is important.*

**Muyisa:** *I have never seen canned tomatoes, except for tomato sauce. Besides, if there is no agricultural production it means hunger will kill us. It can even be expensive for the country to import food from other countries. If we can use land for agriculture, and the government helps with water and fertilisers, and other things, for example pipes...sometimes you find that agricultural equipment is very expensive. Back in the day there was a farming scheme next to Black<sup>13</sup>, where the government fenced the place, and there were people who grew crops. The Department of Agriculture had to assist, there was a borehole. Is it still there? We used to get spinach locally. I remember tomatoes from Nghonyama got to Spar at a certain point; they were also sold here in the village, from Mavalani land. Most people consumed those tomatoes, but they do not know where those tomatoes came from. Farming is very crucial for a country to have food; we will not die of hunger. In the food system agriculture can help a lot.*

**Yila:** *You know when Muyisa talks about having not seen uncooked canned tomatoes, except for tomato sauce, I remember... he reminds me of the process from the farm to the part where canning takes place, and through to the shop. The issue of farming takes the front seat - not that other things are not important- but farming is basic. Before you go to sew, you must eat. No one can hold a machine without eating first. Even if you want to plant crops or plough, you must eat first. It is not bad for us to make tomato sauce. What is wrong if tomato sauce is sold here at Mavalani? What is wrong if we make tomato sauce that is sold in the whole country from our village farm? It is not wrong. Or there is a firm that manufactures baked beans and the beans are grown in a local farm. What is wrong with that? There is nothing wrong with that. These are the things we must understand, and the process of doing it. We must compile a list of all we need, and it is what must be taught and learned. And the issue of... in the secondary sector - we need skills to make things, we must manufacture things. Carpentry is a secondary sector activity, it is manufacturing. So we need more skills, except for Carpentry, so we can have food; that how do we make, or how do we preserve food. But, all in all, farming is very crucial in our village.*

**Rito:** *Farming is very important because maize meal companies cannot manufacture maize meal without maize that we have grown. The companies make maize meal, we grow maize, so we can grow our maize, buy machines that they use, and make our own maize meal. We make our own maize meal and sell locally, and sell to other people from other places. In this way we can defeat poverty in our village. There is no need for someone to buy maize meal from SPAR anymore.*

**Mujaji:** *Farming is very important because without it, there would be no life, we would not live. Most things that we use come from farming. If we continue with individual farming, we will never develop; it does not develop our economy. So apart from growing tomatoes and spinach, maize is a basic need. If the government can help us with water, we would grow*

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<sup>13</sup> 'Black' is a shortcut for 'Black Professionals'. It is one of the old football teams in the village, but it is no longer operational because the field is in bad shape because of soil erosion, particularly because it is close to Nsami River.

maize, and we are good at that. We would manage to grow maize that would even go to the market, and we are the ones who would benefit. We would develop in that way.

**Lucky:** Why are we no longer doing farming, using oxen, and we feel it is irritating?

**Yila:** It takes me back to the beginning; youth do not want to perform tasks that will make them to be burned by the sun. They want to work in offices. So if you tell someone about farming, crafting or sewing, it is like you are swearing at them. If you can look around carefully, farming is taken serious at Mavalani. If you can look around, you can see that the whole place is occupied by people's plots, but it is not young people who practise farming. So what will happen when the people who are farming die out? We were supposed to be the ones who were more advanced than them, because they only rely on rain for farming, and their crops get burned by the sun most of the time, you see?

**Muyisa:** What I think makes us lose interest in farming these days is that people just cultivate the land because they want to eat maize, nothing more. You find that we are not many at home, it is just three of us, and so if we can grow 75 maize crops, we can eat and be satisfied. But if there was somewhere where we could convert our maize to maize meal, and sell it, or do something else with our harvest, you would find that many people have interest in agriculture. We would use our oxen and donkeys to plough the fields. But now people plough only small portions of their fields so they can get 'guxe'<sup>14</sup>, and so on. In fact we are just farming for our stomachs, and as a result there is no interest. Even myself when my mother invites me to the field I tell her straight away that no, I cannot go there.

**Lucky:** Do we have a government policy which says that if you start something, the government will subsidise you? For example if you start an agricultural project and you do not even have water, does the government do anything to help? Anyway, should the government do something?

**Muyisa:** Well, according to the information that I know is that with issues related to agriculture, the government does have certain programmes. The Department of Agriculture has some programmes to help people. I remember, I think two months or one month and a half back, they came to Chief Magondweni<sup>15</sup>, to talk about the programmes that they have in place to help people regarding agriculture. But there are challenges involved, for example they will tell you that you need to meet certain requirements before they assist you, and you find that these requirements are too difficult to meet. For example, if they are to assist you with poultry farming, they require you to have a building first. Then you start asking yourself where you will get the money to buy cement, and all the materials needed to construct the required building. They also tell you that your building must be at least 12 km away from people, and then they will bring you chicks. To grow chickens is not a joke - chickens eat day and night - and how will they eat in the dark because there is no electricity there? This clearly indicates that our government is just testing us; it is not willing to do the things it says it wants to do. They know that you will never meet their requirements, so they are just playing

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<sup>14</sup>'Guxe' is a wild vegetable. It is easily identifiable by its slippery texture. It grows on its own, so all people need to do is to cultivate their fields, then it grows like other weeds. Although it grows everywhere, it is easy to harvest/collect when the field is ploughed because it is easy to see.

<sup>15</sup>Magondweni is a pseudonym used to refer to one of the most vocal chiefs. Magondweni comes from the word 'gondzo' which literally means a 'way' or 'road'. The word 'gondzo' is not an everyday word so whenever one uses it, it is associated with a journey. I refer to this Chief as Magondweni because he is vocal and proactive and willing to embark on any activity or life journey, and at the same time he stands in the way of other local chiefs because he wants to be recognised alone.



with our minds. Instead, they take the money that it was meant for development and spend it with their relatives.

**Yila:** In fact, it is not only agriculture - let me include the government in everything we have talked about, to see if there are certain programmes. It is like in theory the government has all the programmes. Muyisa gave a good example that they will tell you about complicated requirements which an ordinary person cannot meet. The problem that I see about the government is that they did not design those policies. Actually they bought policies and did not bother to tailor those policies to suit the local context. You cannot tell a poor person who cannot even afford to buy R5 bread to first have a building in order to start selling chickens. It does not make any sense. It is like these policies were made for some other places where people are more affluent. It is like these policies were not designed for us here. That is where you can see that even if the Department of Agriculture can come to Mavalani, they will tell us about requirements we will never meet, as Muyisa has already said. They make these things policies and laws, and from my knowledge all the laws and policies must be tailored to suit the context in which they will be applied, do you understand? This is a major problem about our government. According to what is written wherever it is written, we have all the programmes but these programmes are not helping us in any way because they are irrelevant to our situations. That is why when we speak we say it straight that the government is useless to us. There are even many programmes that we do not even know of because they are totally irrelevant to our lives, we have never seen them, and we just get surprised when government employees come to our village to talk about such programmes.

**Tivani:** What I can say is that the reason the government cannot help is with agriculture here in the village it that those who practise agriculture are older people. Older people do not want the government to be involved in their affairs. They believe that the government is there to take everything from them, rather than to help. Another thing is that it is difficult to teach an older person how to do new things because they believe that their strategies are always right, and they believe that the government wants something in return. I think that is how older people think. Therefore what I think can help is to make sure that those skilled older people teach younger people how to do farming. We could recruit young people who are not doing anything to learn from older people about farming. If we look at it carefully, what older people can do - their skills and knowledge are dying out as they pass on. If they can take me to the field I will not even know where to start, because I know that when I want maize I will just buy it, and when I want anything I will just buy it. But if we can find strong youth, who would understand how the government operates, and find skilled older people to teach the youth, and at the end we would request that the government subsidise us. Because if we keep on saying that the government should come to Mavalani, it is not going to help us in any way. But if we know what we want and start doing it, the government can assist through its policies.

**Lucky:** We are only left with two short questions. The first question is... it goes back to the issue of our CLC. I did not ask where we should locate it, but let me ask that question before we continue. But what is very important is: who deserves to attend in this CLC and receive the VET that we talked about earlier? If we can build a CLC here at Mavalani, what kind of people should learn?

**Yila:** First and foremost it must be in a place where most people can access it, and it must be designed to accommodate everyone. I think that anyone who wants to learn certain skills or skills that will be offered is welcome to attend.

**Munhu:** *It must be accessible to anyone who is interested in attaining some education and training.*

**Lucky:** *What about money? Should it be free? Should people pay? Is it okay for it to be free and everyone will be responsible enough to attend?*

**Rito:** *It must be free because some of us do not have money. They can charge R1000 only to find that someone does not have R1000, so that person may end up stealing money in order to pay because there is no money at home. So I think it must be free.*

**Yila:** *I know the value that a person naturally places on things s/he has worked for. It is easy for Muyisa to take his expensive phone and give it to Rito. For Rito it would not be a problem to sit on top of that phone and break it, because she did not work hard for it, so she does not see any value in it because she does not even know how much it costs. But Muyisa will never do that with his phone, because he worked hard for it, he understands its value. For people to place value in the CLC - not that we want to make things difficult - there must be a certain amount that a person pays. It can be in form of a study loan which people can pay when they start working or when they have started to make production. We do this so that people can place value in their education that they will obtain from the centre.*

**Tivani:** *I want to add on what was just said. I can say that to have certain required amount does not mean that we are chasing people away. What does it mean? It means that there are people who will attend for fun because they know it is free, even if they do not need the education and training that is offered. But here in the village we know who is poor and who is not, we know who can afford to pay and who cannot. So when people come we will tell them that there is an amount to be settled before attending. However in the management of the CLC there must be people who know villagers better, people who know that a particular person cannot afford, so we can make a plan to assist such a person, do you understand? Because if we say it is free, people will come and play and sometimes drop out in the middle, telling themselves that they just go there for leisure. So if we make sure that we identify people who cannot afford and assist them, we will not be wrong. We know that there are those who will be scared to even come closer, so we will visit them and recruit them, and assist them register and attend, especially if they are scared of paying. We can always find a way to assist those who are interested, but do not have money to pay.*

**Lucky:** *Is there anything else about whether we should pay or not?*

**Khubani:** *I think we should pay because there are people who believe that when something is for free, it is not important. So if they pay they will see that it is important and they will benefit from education and training that will be offered.*

**Lucky:** *When we are still talking about paying, I would like to add another question before the last question. What do you think about certification and accreditation of VET that will be offered in our CLC?*

**Muyisa:** *It is very important to give certificates, although we can say that when we are offering vocational skills it should not be just about certificates. The focus should not be on papers but on skills, but yes, we should give certificates to people. What should be important is to know where the person will go with the skills, and how they will use those skills. But when we talk about certificates, we talk about a paper that helps people outside our local area. For example if someone from Limpopo graduates from our CLC and decides to go and*

*practise anything in places like Gauteng, s/he must have papers. Anyone can just walk around with wooden spoons on the shoulder, saying: 'I was trained in Limpopo, they know me, I am very good in Carpentry', do you understand? When they ask her or him to show evidence that s/he was trained, s/he will just say: 'in Limpopo they do not give papers'. No one will disagree because s/he will be telling the truth because we will not be giving papers. However if there are certificates s/he will just show to anyone that s/he has permission to do certain things, and s/he has the expertise because s/he was trained to do what s/he is doing. Sometimes you will find that certificates will promote hygiene. Someone who has never received training can craft in town and leave the residues, and no one will know who it is because there is no identification. But if someone has a certificate, a recognised certificate, s/he is traceable, and such person will be trained to be hygienic as well, to remove the residues after crafting. Certificates are very important to show what the person has learned.*

**Munhu:** *It is good that people receive certificates after learning because some people cannot speak for themselves, so the certificates will speak for them. The certificates will indicate what the person has learned, and their abilities. Those who decide not to attend the CLC will see the certificates of those who attend, and they will see that they are progressing, so they will be motivated to attend too. But if there are no papers, people will just laugh and say: 'how do we see that you are learning? Where are the papers to prove that you are learning?' It is like when you drive a car without a driver's licence, when the traffic police find you, and you say: 'I can drive very well, I have been driving for ages' - they will not entertain you, but instead they will just arrest you. So it does not matter what you know or can do, you need to provide evidence, in black and white.*

**Yila:** *Hey, you know, when Muyisa says that a person can craft and leave residues anywhere in town... it is like, there are many issues, such as certification and accreditation. Certification and accreditation will help with professionalism, do you understand? Professionalism means that people will not take our CLC for granted, thinking that it is a game, do you understand? We can go to an extent that we create professional bodies, for example we call it a Professional Body of Carpentry of South Africa. We notify everyone that we, as carpenters of South Africa have a certain code of conduct that we follow, and this professional body has the power to take away the certificate if the certificate holder does not follow the code of conduct. Nurses have a professional body; teachers have a professional body; and the police have a professional body – that controls their professionalism, you see? It is just the taxi industry that seems to have a professional body which does not monitor the behaviour of taxi drivers and the way they treat their customers, and so on. It is important to get accreditation. It makes us to respect ourselves and to respect our customers.*

**Rito:** *It is important to have papers because if there are no papers anyone can just do anything, anyhow. For example, anyone can do Carpentry, and do it wrongly, whether they are trained or not. In other words, we will not know who graduated from our CLC and who did not, and anyone can claim that they graduated from our CLC. People can lie to people and say they are very good carpenters from Mavalani CLC, because they want money, and they craft ugly things for people, and ruin the name of our CLC. But if they come from the CLC, the certificates will speak. It is like when people pass Grade 12, they receive statements of results. If there were no statements of results, we would all move from Grade 12 straight to universities and start attending. The universities would be overcrowded to an extent that lecturers would fail to teach. Since there are papers, they are able to control the number of people who go in, and people will always know that to gain access they must work for it. People will always know that they have to work hard to get a certificate in order to gain*

*future access in various areas. So if there are no papers, it would be chaos everywhere - there will be no system of control.*

**Lucky:** *When I talk about the papers I am referring to papers for everything we have talked about, for example plumbing, Carpentry, and everything else.*

**Yila:** *All of them, yes, for example when you do Carpentry you must get a certificate from the professional body.*

**Mujaji:** *My view is that certificates must come from the local CLC itself. Training must have a certificate, and it needs to be registered, so that people can receive meaningful certificates. You can get a certificate from a CLC that is not registered, you know that people run the 'fly-by-nights'. It is important to get a certificate so it can be checked whether it is valid or not.*

**Lucky:** *Okay, since the one we are talking about is our own CLC that we have built on our own, how is this certification and accreditation going to help us if it is a local initiative?*

**Yila:** *Even if it is not built by the government, there must be a protocol to be followed, concerning the registration of the centre and the subjects that will be offered. When we do Carpentry or plumbing, we must ensure that the people who teach it are qualified to teach it, and they know how to do Carpentry or plumbing, you see. That will ensure that our CLC has some value, especially because the educators and trainers will be qualified. It is important to follow protocols and register so our VET can have some value, and people must receive certificates.*

**Lucky:** *We have heard about the issue of certificates; now let us talk about teaching. Who is supposed to teach in the CLC that we can build in this village? For example, I and brother Inani used to thatch, and brother Inani got a certificate from father Phat [pseudonym], well, maybe it was important although Inani did not see its importance. Well, what kind of person must teach? If we want someone to impart...skills, do we go around looking for someone who has been to university or college and graduated in thatching, or do we use a local person who knows how to do the job?*

**Tivani:** *I would say that since there are too many of us in the village, if we look for external people to teach, it will not benefit local people but outsiders. Since we know what specific individuals can do, for example we know who does some form of Carpentry, so we can appoint that person to teach. We know that grandfather Goda [pseudonym] is a good bricklayer, so we can appoint him to teach people how to build. What will actually happen is that people will be happy to be taught by grandfather Goda to build because he is good, they will want to build like him. When we have done the paperwork, and when the government wants to assist us, it will first look if the teachers are qualified. What we can do is that we can take our local experts to get certificates for what they do so they can be able to teach and be recognised.*

**Rito:** *People who are supposed to teach are those who already possess the necessary skills. For example, someone who does plumbing has a talent, is gifted, has a gift, and that gift comes from God. God gave her or him that gift to do things and such a person loves what s/he does. The person who should teach is someone like that because even if it takes time for others to grasp, s/he will not give up, because it is her or his talent, it is something s/he loves. If we can be taught by someone who does not know anything, we will not learn. But if the person is gifted, we will learn because s/he will know how to teach us. It is possible that we*

have our own talents but we do not follow them, instead we follow Mathematics and Accounting.

**Yila:** Since we spoke about accreditation and certification, and there are people in the village who possess certain skills, and remember that when we talked about accreditation and certification, we talked about placing value in the education that can be offered in the centre. What that means is that we also need to place value in the educators that will be appointed to teach in the centre. Let us give an example about Lucky and brother Inani. The certificate that brother Inani received was not accredited anywhere according to the national authority, SAQA. If you know that Mr. Xinyori is a Doctor of Music, but he has never studied at university. He is a Doctor because skills are evaluated, but that is why I say some policies exist, but in theory. There is Recognition of Prior Learning by SAQA, which I know very little about, but I think it was used in the case of Xinyori<sup>16</sup>. If we want to take the people from our village to be teachers, we might as well take them through that process, get them to be tested and evaluated, and if they pass the tests, they get certificates, and they will qualify to teach. For example, if we know that a particular person specialises in hairdressing, we can take that person through the test, and if we know that the person has gone through the test, the person will be credible. If people know that they are going to be taught how to thatch by brother Inani, they will know that brother Inani has passed the test, and he obtained a certificate from SAQA, which says he is qualified to teach how to thatch. Do you understand?

**Lucky:** I have asked people before and I would like all of us to tackle it - no one should keep quiet. The question is what is our vision about Mavalani Village as youth? What is it that you wish shall happen in the future, like 10, 20, or 30 years to come? What do we wish our village to achieve by then? What is development, particularly rural development, from our point of view?

**Munhu:** I wish to see our village possessing young people who can stand on their own and do things on their own. I do not wish to see a village where young people are too dependent. For example I do not want to see youth who cannot even manage to buy themselves a pair of trousers. Youth must be able to buy themselves clothes, but can only ask for assistance when they fail, but not ask all the time.

**Khubani:** I wish to see our village developed. I want to see all people in the village working for themselves. Those who are educated must do their work, and those who are not educated should be able to some practical work. Everyone in the village must be able to feed themselves and their families, instead of going around begging for food.

**Mujaji:** I want our village to have educated people who will come back to develop it. I want to see factories and firms in this village, owned by young people from this village. I want to see any kind of firm, whether it is a tomato sauce firm or what, the kind of firms we see when they say in Shayandima there are firms. I want the firms to be located in our village. Now many firms- if you can go to the side of Gauteng - firms are owned by foreigners, there is no firm owned by people from South Africa. The firms are run by foreigners. So what I would like to happen is that young people get educated in order to start businesses, not to get educated in order to get jobs specifically.

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<sup>16</sup>Xinyori is a shortcut for XinyorixaHumba. The meaning of 'Xinyori' is unknown, but it is used to praise people with the surname Chauke. 'Humba' means a snail and Chauke people associate themselves with snails. The real name of Xinyori is Thomas HasaniChauke and he is recognised as the best Tsonga artist, and he was awarded an Honourary Doctorate by the University of Venda.

**Yila:** According to me when we, youth of Mavalani, are developed, and the whole village is developed, that is when we get educated enough to be able to place ourselves in society. How? To place ourselves in society means every person must learn until s/he knows her or his contribution in society apart from being in Mavalani. Every person shall understand how the world systems work. S/he shall learn enough to understand that if s/he builds a firm as Mujaji has said, s/he knows how that firm will affect the whole world. We must be affluent and understand how things are done in the whole world. We must understand the world systems in order to take our place in the world and develop ourselves as youth and as people.

**Muyisa:** We live in a village with a lot of wealth, but due to lack of knowledge, education and various skills, foreigners come and take our wealth from this village. Let me give you an example. A person will not believe that in the past years there are people who came to extract gold here at Mavalani. They took a lot of gold but they even failed to construct a bridge, even a bridge for the people who were crossing the Nsami River to work in the mine. They took the gold and go away. Now they are back again for the same gold. In this village there is no one that we can say did Geology or anything which gives knowledge about mining, someone who can represent us, someone who will make sure that we benefit something from the gold that is in our village. So my vision, or what I think can be a better future, is that people in the village should attain various skills, for example teaching, and any other skills necessary for development. When we say someone's car is broken, we do not need to call someone from Khakhala at night to come and fix it, because the person will charge extra money for being called at night. We must have people who can do that job here in the village. We must have everything here at Mavalani. Who ever thought that in Xikukwani<sup>17</sup> there will be a suburb? We talked about plumbing. Some people think that thatching huts with grass is in high demand these days to an extent that if someone can offer to teach them plumbing, they do not show interest because they believe no one is going to plum a hut. But now in Xikukwani there is a suburb and plumbing will be required as time goes on. This means that soon enough people who know plumbing will be required. What I can say is that we need to have people who get educated and trained in various fields, and attain all types of skills. If we can have that, I believe that we can be a well-developed village. Thank you.

**Rito:** As Yila and Muyisa have already stated, I would like Mavalani Village to have people who can stand for themselves, people who do things purposefully. I would like this village to have successful people, such as scientists. When foreign scientists come to observe things, we must have a local person to observe with them, someone who is a scientist too. When we see foreigners walking around, we do not even know what they are looking for, so we must have people who will stand for us. I would like us to have a scientist from Mavalani who will do these observations as well, not just people, because we do not even know who and what they are.

**Lucky:** Actually this whole issue is complicated. Technology is here, and things are changing. As much as I still find the skill of making Mqombhoti<sup>18</sup> or catching locusts relevant today, I believe we need to advance these skills. Look at me and brother Inani, no one is hiring us, that is why we are no longer working. Nowadays people build big houses and use tiles, and we did not advance to that level. Things change, and that change is part of development. If we had learned to use the thick grass from Venda, maybe we would have been hired to thatch the B & B in Xikukwani. In our time we were too comfortable in our job because it was only the two of us who were thatching the huts in the village, and we never

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<sup>17</sup> Xikukwani is a nearby village across the Nsami River.

<sup>18</sup> 'Mqombhoti' is a Tsonga term for Tsonga traditional beer. This beer is very common and it is cheap.

*thought people would stop building huts, but eventually they did and we are out of work. If we had learned to use tiles and corrugated iron, now our skills would still be relevant. Now that there are computers we need to learn to use them. Even the gold that we talked about, we are the ones who were supposed to be extracting it because it is in our village. Let us move with times and ensure that we do not lag behind.*

***Tivani:*** *I believe that young people who hold the future of this village. I would say that young people need to get educated. Well, there are those who do not do well in school, so they can get some vocational training so that they participate in society as well. Some people are slow learners so we need to support them so they can contribute as well.*

***Lucky:*** *Who should receive vocational education and training? Someone last year told me that it should be for those who do not make it in school, such as slow learners, those who cannot make it to Grade 12. She said we must have categories of learners based on their capabilities.*

***All:*** *No, everyone...*

***Yila:*** *Whether you have passed or not, whether you have seven distinctions or not, you can still do vocational education and training. It does not mean that if you have seven distinctions you will be a doctor, maybe you are very good at Carpentry.*

***Lucky:*** *Thank you very much; we have come to the end. We can close.*

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 presented the data collected using the methodology. This chapter focuses on the analysis, interpretation and discussion of this data. In order to present a coherent and sound argument, I refer back to the literature review and theoretical framework chapter, actual data and self-reflection. The study sought to find out from a critical perspective what, according to the youth of Mavalani Village, is appropriate VET for rural development that can be offered through CLCs, as contrasted with government policy on VET. To answer this main question, the study set out to answer the following sub-questions:

- How do youth of Mavalani Village understand their social problems and potential solutions?
- What underlies government policies on VET for rural people/youth, with special reference to CLCs?
- What do youth of Mavalani Village think of these government policies on VET, and what do they propose?

This chapter will use these three sub-questions to frame the discussion.

As stated before, the Community Mapping, Timeline exercise, and PEST analysis were done to get a clear picture of the village and its history, and to understand how the structure of the world affects youth in the village, and how they can affect the world system. The Focus Group Discussion engaged with the research questions in more detail, using the guiding questions I had prepared and follow-up questions. Data from the map, timeline and PEST model will be drawn on in this chapter.

#### **5.2. HOW DO YOUTH FROM MAVALANI VILLAGE UNDERSTAND THEIR SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS?**

##### **5.2.1. Social Problems**

I learned from the discussion that there are many problems youth of Mavalani Village face. These generic problems are diverse and include problems related to education, poverty, unemployment and teenage pregnancy. Participants understand these problems to be interlinked rather than existing independently from each other. For example, poverty and teenage pregnancy affect learners' progress in school, and school performance affects future education, training and employment opportunities. So each problem is created by and creates another problem.



From this sub-question the following themes emerged:

- Problems Related to Education
- Poverty and Unemployment
- Collective Action
- Improvement of Vocational Education and Training.

#### **5.2.1.1. Theme One: Problems Related to Education**

When I asked the participants what kinds of problems are faced by young people in the village, the first response was related to education. Although some participants raised issues such as alcohol abuse, other participants entertained mostly problems to do with education. The key problems to do with education that were identified by participants are lack of purpose to complete high school; lack of incentives to go to school; lack of guidance, lack of support and resources; poor quality rural education; and teenage pregnancy. These problems, accompanied by lack of work opportunities, are the barriers to learning and in some cases result in school dropout, and contribute to the growing number of NEETs in the village and in the country.

##### **5.2.1.1.1. Lack of Purpose to Complete High School**

As much as some young people are eager to complete high school and continue with their studies, there are those who see no reason to bother completing high school or attend classes on a daily basis. Some young people do not see themselves going anywhere with education because everything is far from them and a bright future remains only a dream for various reasons.

This is corroborated by a local study conducted by Milliner (2011) who found that many high school learners in Mavalani Village are not motivated to attend classes and to further their studies after Grade 12. Milliner believes that motivation and the creation of a sense of responsibility among youth is of major importance to keep the learners from dropping out of school. However, Milliner did not explain how motivation and a sense of responsibility can be created, and did not explain what ‘a sense of responsibility’ means in this context.

I find the findings of this study and Milliner’s (2011) findings enough to claim that poor school attendance in the village is a problem for both the present and the future. Milliner’s (2011) study was a Community Needs Assessment and did not attempt to investigate the reasons why young people are not interested in schooling. As part of my data collection, I asked participants (in the focus group) what they think the root cause of this problem is. In answering this question, the participants indicted that there are many reasons why young people give up on education, such as a lack of guidance and support from home and school, and lack of resources, such as money.

##### **5.2.1.1.2. Lack of Guidance, Support and Resources**

One participant brought to attention that at home parents do not provide enough support for young people to make progress in life:

*Our parents do not give us the support that we need. They do not follow up on our lives, especially our schooling lives. It seems as if our parents do not even care about our*

*education, and it is a problem for us because we end up not studying further. You also find that we do not do things accordingly because there is no guidance that we receive (Munhu).*

Another participant suggested that this is because most parents are not educated so they find it hard to support the schooling lives of their children. A third participant argued that even at school learners do not receive good guidance from teachers, for example teachers do not impart knowledge about careers, and at home the situation is worse:

*According to my views, lacking relevant knowledge is a problem as well. The time we were still at school we did not know a lot of things in terms of education and many other things, or knowledge that would help us make right decisions. You would find that when you wanted to follow a certain career in a certain university or technikon, or wherever, you would find that you knew very little about such a career. In class there is nothing you learn about careers, and at home it is worse; there is no one to guide you. You see, so according to my views, to be in a situation where there is no one to guide us is one of the main problems that we are facing (Muyisa).*

This is corroborated by my own experience when I was at school. Not only did I not know why I was going to school, but I did not know which career I was interested in. I used to listen to what other people wanted to be in the future, and I copied them - I wanted to do anything that sounded interesting. It was never explained to me clearly why I needed to go to school in the first place. But everyone was going to school, so I could not stay at home. During my school years, I do not remember anyone saying that schooling or university education is *not* the only way to success. The school principal used to criticise all the young people who did not make it to university, and this made us think there was only one option. I cannot call this support, but rather channelling everyone towards one direction. If one realises that one is not good at school, he or she might as well leave school because one does not see a future for oneself there.

From this I learned that young people need to be exposed to various options that exist in life. Both parents and teachers need to acknowledge that not all learners will make it to university, and not all have the resources to do so. Young people need to be offered various options to choose from because not all are meant for school. However, those who do well at school need to be supported and be provided with resources to keep them going.

One participant also argued that some people lack motivation from 'within' whereas other people are self-motivated. Thus despite support, guidance and resources, they would probably not become successful. I personally find it crucial for young people to receive strong support from their communities, homes and/or schools, to ensure their growth. I also find it telling that participants raised the issue of lack of support, guidance and resources, because these might contribute to young people losing interest in schooling.

#### 5.2.1.1.3. Poor Quality Rural Education

According to two participants, education in rural schools is usually of poor quality:

*When we look at rural schools, it seems as if the education there is very poor. You find that a matric student passes matric without the ability to use the English language, whether is to read or write. They experience serious problems when they get to institutions of higher learning (Mujaji).*

Therefore it can be seen that even when young people do attend school, and sometimes complete Grade 12, this does not necessarily result in them coping or doing well because of the poor quality of education they received. This is also corroborated by the HSRC (2005) and Gardiner (2008) who indicate that schooling in rural areas is usually inferior, as will be seen later in this section.

If young people go to school but remain illiterate, that is, are unable to read and write, then primary and secondary education is failing to perform its function. Primary and secondary education is supposed to be the foundation of post-schooling, but it seems to be poor in the country, especially in rural areas. If primary and secondary education is poor, it creates problems for post-schooling. For example, those who do not do well in school may never have access to higher education and training because they will not meet the minimum requirements.

The poor quality of schooling in rural areas is a result of many factors, and Gardiner (2008) discusses these factors in detail. There are many difficulties that many rural areas and their schools in South Africa face, for example lack of computers, internet, laboratories, electricity and libraries (Gardiner, 2008). According to Gardiner, the problem is that it is difficult for the government to reach many rural villages and their schools. The physical conditions of many rural schools are very unpleasant and the performance of learners is very poor. As a result of these poor conditions in rural schools, I would argue that teachers find it hard to teach and learners find it hard to learn.

The two participants who raised the issue of poor quality schooling specifically raised the question of English. In a country where English is the language of commerce, it makes a lot of sense to me why learners should learn to read and write in English. The inability of Grade 12 learners to read and write well in English indicates the poor quality of education in the village. Since all other subjects (except for Xitsonga – the vernacular) are taught in English, learners struggle with all other subjects. This means that learners perform badly, and their access to further education and training and higher education is limited.

#### 5.2.1.1.4. Teenage Pregnancy

The problem of teenage pregnancy was raised by a number of participants. Pregnancy and taking care of babies and small children means that young people have a lot of responsibilities while still young, and their school progress suffers in the process.

Participants were divided about whether girls are more affected than boys. One participant said “*We, the girls, have a problem of falling pregnant while we are still studying and we cannot continue with school for various reasons*” (Rito). The girl is the one who carries the child and gives birth to it. Thus the girl is the one who goes to the clinic for check-ups and is

the one who is physically affected by pregnancy. If there is no shared responsibility between the teenage mother and teenage father (in cases where the father is a teenager as well), usually the girl takes care of the baby. However, other participants argued that teenage pregnancy is a problem for both boys and girls. Where boys feel the need to take responsibility for their babies, both parties are affected and face the same consequences. Whereas the teenage mother stays at home to take care of the baby, the teenage father might drop out of school to look for employment. Although I have not found this in existing literature, I have witnessed this in my neighbourhood. Two of my male neighbours who became fathers decided not to continue with school but to look for employment, and are both still working in part-time.

Regardless of the many views around teenage pregnancy, the general consensus among participants is that teenage pregnancy is a problem and it disturbs schooling. This view is borne out by other data sources. For example, this issue of teenage pregnancy in Mavalani was in the media in 2011: on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Alex Matlala reported in Sowetan Live that 57 pupils at Mavalani High School were pregnant in the second week of the school year (Matlala, 2011); on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011, Silas Nduvheni reported in SA News Agency that the MECs of Health and Education were planning to hold a meeting with parents, teachers and learners of Mavalani to address the issue of teenage pregnancy (Nduvheni, 2011); and on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Maphia Honwane reported (reflecting on the issue of high teenage pregnancy in Mavalani) in Sowetan Live that the MEC of Health was shifting the blame of teenage pregnancy to parents, while her department had failed to work with schools and communities (Honwane, 2011).

The participants' general view is that teenage pregnancy leads to school dropouts, but Macleod and Tracey (2010) argue otherwise, although they do not totally dispute that teenagers leave school due to pregnancy. They argue that the connection between teenage pregnancy and school disturbance is a complicated one. They use data from various studies to support this. For example Macleod (1999a) cited in Macleod and Tracey (2010) indicates that many teenage mothers leave school before they became pregnant; and the survey conducted by Manzini (2001) cited in Macleod and Tracey (2010) indicates that 20.6% of teenage mothers dropped out of school before pregnancy. Macleod and Tracey (2010) argue that those who do leave school because they are pregnant may be doing so because of the Department of Education's 'Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy' which permits teachers to request that learners take leave from school for a year or two to raise their babies.

In South Africa, since 1996, it is illegal to exclude teenage girls from school. The reasoning behind this is that pregnancy usually terminates schooling, and it limits future employment opportunities as a result (Bhana et al, 2008). However this law is not evenly implemented by schools for at least two reasons: schools either misunderstand or disagree with this law. Based on the argument brought forward by Bhana et al (2008), I would also argue that the right to schooling for pregnant girls does not necessarily translate to better access. There are schools that make it hard for pregnant girls or learner-parents to attend school.

I agree with Macleod and Tracey (2010) that teenage pregnancy does not guarantee school dropouts because there are those who do not dropout at all. I, therefore, believe that there are other factors that lead to dropping out during or before pregnancy. According to the HSRC (2007) cited in Macleod and Tracey (2010), some major reasons for leaving school include poverty, absence of parents, and the need to care for siblings or sick family members. Based on the above, I came to realise that teenage pregnancy is a huge threat to school attendance

and youth development. Although not all pregnant teenagers leave school, pregnancy has an impact on all - it comes with new responsibilities for both boys and girls. Those who drop out of school find it hard to go back. Even if they manage to go back to school, their schooling is already delayed. School dropout results in more people becoming part of the NEETs, and since youth development is part of the national development agenda, something needs to be done. The DHET proposed a new institutional type, the CLCs, to cater for both youth and adults. Although it would follow that those who drop out of school could attend a CLC, it may be no easier to attend a CLC than school because learners will still need to take care of their babies. I would therefore suggest that to ensure that school dropout is reduced, there needs to be childcare intervention, which will remove the responsibility of childcare from teenage mothers and fathers.

#### **5.2.1.1.5. Bad Friendships**

Bad friendships were identified by two participants as problematic in the village:

*The last thing I can say is that our lives are destroyed by bad friendships; this is a very serious problem. You find that there are many groups in the village; some groups' purpose is to drink alcohol. When the members have gathered, they talk about alcohol, and where to find alcohol, nothing else. So you find that we move backward and make no progress (Muyisa).*

I agree with this idea having both observed and experienced it. Growing up in Mavalani Village had its ups and downs. I had friends- and I still have friends –who drink alcohol. Although I am not a heavy drinker, I am aware that our circle did include some heavy drinkers. I do not know why we engaged in such activities, but it seemed like a good idea at the time, and there was pressure from friends to drink. Although I no longer drink in taverns, I do spend some time there, and I always observe other circles. Most of these circles consist of young children, for example 15, 16 and 17 year olds, who drink almost every day. All they do is stay at the tavern and wait for anyone to come so they can ask for money to buy beer and cigarettes. The questions that one might ask are: when do these children do their school work? And do they have any purpose in life?

One participant argued that this phenomenon might be because “*some people do not wish good things for themselves*” (Khubani). Locally we use this to refer to young people who do not want to go to school, or who do not care whether they fail or pass. From this point of view there are people who do not wish to live a better life, but from the earlier arguments it is clear that there are many challenges that young people are facing that may be affecting their desire to go to school. As will be seen when I discuss the issue of unemployment, sometimes young people do not see any future in education, so as a result they are not motivated to study further.

### **5.2.1.2. Theme Two: Poverty and Unemployment**

#### **5.2.1.2.1. The Effects of Poverty**

Participants identified poverty as a major issue in the village. This was also identified by Milliner (2011) who argues that youth in Mavalani Village are faced with the challenges of poverty and unemployment.

From my own experience as a young person from the village, I can also corroborate that poverty is a big problem. For many years my family survived on less than R300 a month. My father, who has two wives and 11 children, receives an older persons grant. He divides his pension money between himself and his wives, and he usually gets the biggest share. In 2002 my mother found a job at ZZ2, one of the largest tomato farms in the country - she earned less than R200 per fortnight. This was not enough to support her five children, and as a result my sister and I were unable to receive any money for application fees.

Both of us spent two years at home, not in education, employment, or any form of training – in short we were NEETs, who could not find employment in the labour market. As a consequence I found myself thatching huts with my older brother. I got a wage of between R20 and R50. Since we were not hired every day, I barely made R200 a month and the job was only for the winter season because this is the only time there is thatching grass. I therefore struggled to get enough money to apply to university as there were other basic needs I had to meet, such as food, clothes and toiletries.

There is evidence that poverty is not only a problem for Mavalani residents, but is common in rural areas (Department of Social Development, n.d.; HSRC, 2005; Milliner, 2011; Pretorius, 2007). In rural areas and other poor contexts, one often endures the pain of being ‘marked’ by poverty and it has adverse effects on schooling (HSRC, 2005). The Department of Social Development (Department of Social Development, n.d.) notes that in South Africa many people in rural areas live in poverty, and the poorest households have low levels of education and literacy, and few employment opportunities. In her report, Milliner (2011) argues that youth in Mavalani Village are stuck in poverty and youth development is undermined by this.

Although I agree that poverty is experienced by people in the village, I hold a view that poverty as described above is a social construct, that is, it was created by development theorists, development practitioners and development institutions, as argued by Escobar (1995) and Esteva (1992). Esteva (1992) argues that poverty was actually created during the Modernisation era (with a strong relation to the former U.S. President Harry Truman’s speech on 20 January 1949) when the term ‘underdevelopment’ was popularised. Escobar (1995) also argues that the early post-World War II period saw what he calls the ‘discovery’ of mass poverty in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

For Escobar (1995) and Esteva (1992) this creation or *problematisation* of poverty ushered in a new perspective on poverty. Now we refer to people as ‘poor’ when their salaries are below the so-called poverty line, not considering how many resources they have to satisfy their needs. I am therefore not surprised that I called myself poor for many years as a result of my financial situation. As a result I have always believed that money is the only solution to my ‘poverty’. I was never taught or made aware that money is just one form of livelihood, but not the only one.

Based on the above description of poverty, regardless of whether it is a social construct or reality, it has effects on people who are perceived by society as ‘poor’. For example, according to one of the participants, poverty affects the ability of young people to attend school and to study further:

*You find that some of us do not have money, there is nothing at home, and there is nothing to push us forward. Some people tell themselves that because they are poor, they have nothing, and leave school before matric (Rito).*

What the participants argued is that poverty affects the ability and desire of young people to attend school or even study further. Although some young people seem to have a clear purpose for going to school and for working hard, they get disappointed along the way.

This experience of poverty is also corroborated by my own experience when I was still a school-going youth. When I went to school, every learner had to pay school fees and buy school uniforms. Now all learners in the village are exempted from paying school fees by legislation, so that burden is removed, although the burden of buying school uniforms continues. School uniforms are compulsory and it is the responsibility of parents to purchase school uniforms for their children. Poor households who struggle to meet basic needs find it difficult to buy school uniforms for their children. This experience is also corroborated by the HSRC (2005) who argue that there are parents who cannot afford to buy school uniforms, and this prevents children from poor households “from going to school and creates tensions between poor families and schools” (HSRC, 2005, p.50).

Living in poverty has psychological effects as well, as argued by the HSRC (2005). Since the effects of poverty are immediate, poor people focus more on their immediate circumstances. For example it is difficult to go to school hungry every day and feel good about it. As indicated by the HSRC, when you are poor you feel isolated and neglected, and poverty comes with stigmatisation. Therefore poor children are more likely to drop out of school in search of other means to survive.

Although the government of South Africa provides loans for poor people who want to further their studies, participants argued that poverty still prevents some poor people from accessing such loans:

*Sometimes some people have a desire to do something good in life, but you find that their financial situation does not allow them to move forward. Some people do wish to go to school, sometimes they receive relevant information about financial assistance, but they cannot afford travelling costs, and you find that they have many other problems. So you find that poverty can be a major problem in our lives as youth (Muyisa).*

The government does provide financial assistance through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and there are also bursaries from various companies, organisations and government departments. But a learner is expected to apply to and be accepted by a recognised institution, and travel to such institution. In addition, to qualify for funding, a learner needs to be both academically deserving and financially needy. As will be discussed in the next section, when I talk about poor quality education in rural areas, poor learners are by definition financially needy, but being academically deserving is something else.

#### **5.2.1.2.2. Unemployment**

According to the participants, lack of employment opportunities for older youth, especially educated youth, discourages younger youth from going to school:

*When they see older youth who have been to institutions of higher learning staying at home without employment, they use it to explain why they do not need to go to school. They would say ‘so and so went to university but he is not working, so what difference does it make? Why should I even bother going to school?’ (Mujaji).*

Thus, according to the participants, high youth unemployment is one reason why youth are not in education or training (and not the other way round). According to participants and the HSRC (2005), lack of employment opportunities for older youth preys on the minds of younger youth. Although Milliner (2011) also confirms that unemployment is a major issue in the village, the problem of unemployment is obviously not unique to Mavalani Village. In South Africa, youth unemployment is a serious challenge (National Treasury, 2011). As has been discussed in Chapter 2, Lam et al (2008) argue that this country is an important case study of youth unemployment.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a major concern for government policy. The National Treasury (2011) argues that high youth unemployment persists because young people are continuously not obtaining the skills desirable for economic development and growth. However, the South African labour market is characterised by long-term unemployment which has created a hostile environment for youth to join the existing workforce (Lam et al, 2008), whatever skills they possess. Since 1994 the government has developed and implemented various social policies and strategies which took youth unemployment into serious consideration, as discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, government's concern about youth unemployment has also been extensively discussed in the NGP, NDP, and Green Paper on PSET, as already discussed in Chapter 2.

I have argued in Chapter 2 that unemployment should not be blamed on unemployed people, education, training and/or skills, but should be blamed on the capitalist economic system. I argued this point with reference to Treat et al (n.d.), who assert that unemployment is structural, and is a necessary element of capitalism. People remain unemployed because the labour market does not provide jobs, not because they are not skilled enough. This is evident in a recent study by the ILO (2013) where it is argued that some young people are over-educated. In a world of high technology, over-education should not be an issue because high skills are needed. This clearly indicates to me that the system is just shifting the blame to people who cannot find employment.

The ILO (2013) indicates that if young people are not educated or trained, they are under-skilled. If they go to learning and training institutions and do not find work afterwards, they either continue studying or stay at home without work. If they stay at home, their skills become outdated. If they continue studying, they become over-educated. This clearly indicates that the fact that youth stay at home without employment has nothing to do with their skills, but has everything to do with the economic system.

As already argued in Chapter 2, the neoliberal capitalist view has made people believe that education and training is primarily for employment, and this is supported by one of the participants. But as already argued, unemployment is not dependent on people's knowledge and skills, but on what the economy can provide. Therefore, if education and training is meant for employment purposes, the existence of high unemployment leads to a belief that the education and training system is failing to do its job.

Participants argued that there is more to education and training than employment. Indeed, this is something they insisted on:

*Some people need education just to secure employment, and it is ok to them...better job...better job. But the importance of education also includes learning the behaviour, how you conduct yourself (Mujaji).*



*Through education we also face poverty, fight and defeat poverty, so it is good that we learn, especially youth because we are the ones mainly affected by poverty (Rito).*

*[E]ducation teaches you how to speak with other people in a good way. You do learn that you do not just say anything randomly; you learn a constructive way of communicating with other people (Khubani).*

*Basically, education ... helps us to be able to read and write, and to communicate well, and to gain knowledge (Rito).*

*According to me, sometimes education helps in intellectual development. Sometimes you can tell, according to how some people think that they have never received any form of education (Muyisa).*

*According to me the importance of education is that a person understands the laws of human survival. You must understand how you live as a human being, and how the person next to you lives. I am referring to very basic things. For example you must know that when food is produced, how the systems that are set up in the world operate. It enables you to understand how things work, and how you as a person fit in, and understand how you need to survive as an individual and how your brother/sister next to you survives. That is what I know the importance of education to be. You gain... it gives you...education must give you the foundation to understand how the world systems work, or to create new systems of your own if necessary (Yila).*

According to the participants, education is about communication, social interaction and intellectual development. We need to learn in order to understand our position in society as a whole, and how we fit in, as well as how we can make contributions and changes in the already existing structures, and most importantly, how we can create our own systems. These ideas echo many of those espoused by the critical adult educationist, Paulo Freire.

For Freire (1970), education is not separable from society and everyday activities, problems and experiences. For Freire, oppression is the main problem in society and it is the role of education to empower/emancipate learners to take constructive action against oppression. Oppression can refer to structural oppression that is hard to pin down. In this case education needs to be liberating to allow learners to identify such structures so as to challenge them. Freire emphasises conscientisation as fundamental to education or learning. According to Freire, the opposite of education for conscientisation is the 'banking model' or education for domestication. It is called education for domestication because humans are being educated to remain in, or serve in the existing economic and social system. It is also called the banking model because it assumes that the learner does not know anything. It suggests that the teacher is in possession of knowledge to deliver to the learner. This model undermines the ability of the learner to contribute actively to the creation of knowledge during the learning process. This model, according to Freire, reinforces domineering attitudes and practices in society (Ibid.).

### 5.3. WHAT ARE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS?

#### 5.3.1. Theme Three: Collective Action

A common understanding among the participants is that the problems that young people in the village face are diverse and cannot be solved overnight and without co-operation. Solving these problems is a long process which will need collective action:

*I think the best way to solve these problems is that we work together as a community, everyone must have a role to play in this. This means that teachers, churches, parents, chiefs, and all members of community must have a stake - a role to play (Yila).*

What I notice about this response is that it does not include the government as part of the collective action. I would, therefore, argue that the participants believe in the power of community participation, and do not see themselves as people who should just receive everything from the government, although at some point participants believe that government intervention is important. Collective action means that all, or at least as many villagers as possible, need to be aware of the problems that exist and be willing to partake in solving these problems, and be interested in local development. Every member of the village must have a particular role to play: *From this you can see that to come up with solutions, there should be many stakeholders involved (Muyisa).* This idea of collective action is also corroborated by Hoppers (2009) who argues that through collective action community members are able to build a just and desirable society for themselves.

The above is closely related to the idea of Food Sovereignty in that collaboration is emphasised. As already argued in Chapter 2, neo-liberal capitalism promotes individuality and competition, whereas Food Sovereignty promotes collective action and communal ownership. Neo-liberalism promotes external market intervention, whereas Food Sovereignty promotes people working together to achieve a common goal. The point raised by the participants indicates that the solution to local problems is to be achieved by the people themselves.

As part of this collective action, another participant suggested that a community resource centre or information centre is necessary. What is interesting about this is not the emphasis on information being available, but on information being shared. This community centre would be used as a place where suggestions are brought forward and youth problems are taken into consideration and addressed locally:

*I think that one solution to our problems can be an information centre. If we can have an information centre where young people can speak and be heard, it can be better. Sometimes we can assume that young people are the ones with a problem, but only to find that our education system is the one with a problem, like Mujaji has indicated that, for example, a person can pass Grade 12 without the ability to use English... What I am trying to demonstrate is that we can find that it is not only youth who have a problem. So if we can have an information centre where we can be listened to from all sides, parents, teachers, youth, and community members in general, we engage in various conversations about our problems. This can ensure that we come up with solutions to our problems (Muyisa).*

The participant is thus pointing to the importance of two-way communication, that is, Freire's 'dialogue'. From this I realise that if youth had an opportunity to speak about how they feel about the system that we are living in, it would be easier to learn of the problems that exist.

Most importantly, if young people were to be given an opportunity to speak and be heard, as the participant suggested, we would find that youth become part of looking for solutions. Now without an information centre it is hard to speak out because there is no organised way of dealing with issues facing young people. A locally recognised and organised environment is needed for this. I also believe that youth would feel important in society, and would contribute positively. For Freire, everyone has knowledge to contribute - no one is an empty vessel. If youth experience problems of unemployment and education, it is a vital to understand this from their point-of-view.

### **5.3.2. Theme Four: Improvement of VET**

One participant argued that some VET in South Africa is obsolete:

*Yes, FETs have been built, there are FETs all over. But let us look at the education that people receive at FET colleges. How can you go to an FET college only to be taught how to fix an old car? You are taught how to fix a car that is no longer in the market. Whose car do you want to fix? That's the problem. They have built FET colleges, but they did not put in place programmes that will help people with necessary skills, the skills that are needed by the citizens who are living at this time we are living in (Yila).*

VET in South Africa needs to be improved. This is corroborated by many scholars, for example, Gamble (2013) who argues that, although there has been an increase in provision of vocational qualifications, the well-being of young people remains poor. Young people are not getting the jobs that the system promises them, so one can argue that VET needs to be improved to serve young people well. According to Gamble (2013), it is therefore not surprising that the number of NEETs is growing at an alarming rate because employers favour older jobseekers with more experience. This clearly indicates that many new vocational qualifications are not keeping up with the demands of the employers, and on the other hand, do not furnish young people with useful skills. It would be advisable to improve VET to both help young people get jobs where possible and help them create their own livelihoods (Ibid.).

### **5.4. WHAT UNDERLIES GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON VET FOR RURAL PEOPLE/YOUTH, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CLCs?**

As already argued in Chapter 2, I believe that South African policy on VET is mainly influenced by neo-liberal capitalism. I acknowledge that rural development has been talked about in the socio-economic policies of the country. Skills for rural people and rural development have also been talked about in socio-economic policy documents such as AsgiSA, NSDS III, NDP, and other related documents. Nonetheless, according to the DHET (2012), rural areas have very little or no provision of post-school education and training. As a result the DHET (2012) argues that provision of post-school education and training needs to be expanded to rural areas. However, the NSDS III warns that a distinction needs to be made between training of rural people and training for rural development. In fact, the NSDS argues

that the South African education and training system has been focusing on training for urban development, and rural people were trained for urban development (DHET, 2011).

In South Africa there are various education and training institutions that cater for youth and adults, for example public and private FET colleges and institutions, public and private learning centres, non-governmental organisations, community- and faith-based organisations (Raphotle, 2012). Although these institutions have a community orientation, they also have a business orientation where development of human resources is critical. This is in line with the findings of Baatjes and Chaka (2012) that participants in their study indicated that community education and training should be community- oriented, but to a greater extent should prepare recipients for jobs. This is also evident in the 2013 Government Notice 355: Call for Comments on the Report of the Task Team on CETCs (DHET, 2013).

CLCs are defined by the Task Team as extensions of proposed Community Colleges which are charged with the responsibility to address the needs of adults and youth “for literacy and first and second basic and secondary education, vocational and occupational programmes” (DHET, 2013, p. 7-8). These CLCs will be designed to provide access to a variety of non-formal educational programmes with strong links to NGOs and CBOs, to local government and the economy and job markets, and contribute to “local needs and local development, building social agency and social cohesion” (DHET, 2013, p. 8).

Although South African VET is influenced by neo-liberal capitalism, I have argued in Chapter 2 that rural VET or skills training policy does have an element of community orientation. For example, the NPC has stated that by 2030 rural communities should be in a position to participate in the socio-economic and political matters of the country, but to achieve this, the country needs to meet quality education and training (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NPC therefore proposed that agricultural jobs must be created and the government must assist rural people to develop capacities to take advantage of economic opportunities available to them through skills acquisition. Although the notion of associating rural development with agriculture is criticised by Perret (2004), the NPC still believes that rural people need to be trained in agricultural skills. Regardless of the validity or not of the NPC’s position, I notice that the NPC takes into consideration that local people should be trained in locally-relevant skills, like agriculture.

## **5.5. WHAT DO YOUTH THINK OF THESE GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND WHAT DO THEY PROPOSE?**

### **5.5.1. What do youth think of government in general?**

Understanding how the participants perceive government helps understand their views on its role in VET. According to the participants the government does not support local initiatives:

*The government is failing to reach out to the people who want to further their education and training. Even though people initiate their own projects, it takes a long time for the government to fund such initiatives. In fact the government is useless to young people (Mujaji).*

This view of government is supported by other participants:

*[O]ur government does not intervene in matters related to youth development... People start projects, they expect assistance from government, but the government officials are corrupt, they misuse the budgets, they use government money for their own benefit. They do not look at young people...they are no longer focusing on development as they promised when they were fighting for the positions. In fact the government is useless; it does not help anyone (Munhu).*

### **5.5.2. What do youth think of VET in South Africa in general?**

As explored above, the participants feel that VET in South Africa is of very poor quality and the government has done very little to improve it: *The government has not made enough effort to make sure that people receive education and training, especially vocational training (Yila).* Since FET colleges remain the most important providers of VET, the participants argued that VET in these colleges needs to be improved.

The participants also felt that the education and training that we receive is not liberating us, for example it channels us to think that the best way to live is to work for someone else. Thus a number of participants said that many people want education “*simply to secure employment*” (Khubani). The poor quality of VET in South Africa is something which the government itself has recognised, as discussed in Chapter 2. The *Green Paper on PSET* reports that provision of VET and/or skills training remains poor in the country. The *Green Paper* suggests that the number of students in FET colleges needs to be increased, and the quality of provision needs to be improved as well. This clearly indicates that the Minister of Higher Education and Training is aware that VET provision in the country is of low quality. Most importantly, policies such as the NSDS III indicate that VET needs to change its direction, for example instead of providing rural people with ordinary VET; they must receive VET which speaks to the rural needs.

As already argued in Chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter, the VET system in the country remains poorly developed, and many of those who go through this system remain unemployed, as do those who pass through the institutions of higher learning. One of the reasons, as already argued, is that the VET system is designed to ‘feed’ the labour market with employees, and the results have been very disappointing as the capitalist system (deliberately) does not provide enough jobs for everyone to keep wages low, and human labour is replaced with technology to maximise profit.

### **5.5.3. What do youth propose as relevant rural VET?**

Although participants believe that there is nothing wrong with going to university or any other education and training institution with the aim of getting a job afterwards, they also believe that local VET needs to respond to the needs of the local community. For example, participants think that local VET should cover construction, bricklaying, plumbing, motor mechanics and carpentry, using up-to-date technology. Participants also believe that sewing, skills required in beauty salons, and farming need to be part of local VET. In addition, participants highlighted skills for building social relations, as will be seen below.

With regards to the issue of construction, the participants argued that construction is a continuous process that will never come to an end:

*The process of building is unending. There is no time when we will stop building, you understand? Even if we can build everywhere and leave no space for new buildings, some people will want to change something, or renovate. The water pipes that have been installed do erupt some times, and they need to be fixed. We, in the rural areas do not even have a sanitary system. There is no sewage system here at Mavalani. Maybe we can build it, who knows? If we could have people with such skills, we can reduce...we can have a good sewage system (Yila).*

Although I do not think a sewage system is necessary in the village, the participant has a point in terms of self-reliance. If we need to construct something in the village we do not always have to use an outside person to do the work for us. Thus the village needs to have people who possess various skills to make sure that local people are used whenever they are needed:

*If now we wanted to create a sewage system, we call someone from Japan to do it for us here at Mavalani. But if we can have young people who have learned the skills to sit together, and plan, they can create a sewage system for us. If you can combine plumbing and drawing, drawing is engineering... you can do a lot. With these two skills you can design a good sewage system for Mavalani (Yila).*

So instead of people going out to look for employment, there will always be employment for them in the village. As I have already argued, if people can be employed locally or have something to do locally, the 'congestion' in the job market will be greatly reduced. But the issue is with access; CLCs can help local people gain these skills locally at a very little or no cost. FET colleges do offer some of the skills the participants mentioned, but FET colleges are not based in all local communities, so access is a problem for some individuals.

Something like carpentry is desirable in the community because it can create jobs locally, and furniture made by hands is more attractive, and more money can be made. This point was made by a number of participants. This reflects a belief that products made by hand hold more intrinsic value because of the effort that people put into making them. There are carpentry projects and firms in the Limpopo Province, but nowhere near Giyani. If we were to have a carpentry project, we would manage to buy and sell locally and have designs of our own choosing. We would also manage to have a living local economy where money revolves around our communities.

Participants acknowledged that we are not gifted in a similar way. There are those who do well in school and there are those who do not do well:

*But...with their hands, they can do a lot. So if there is something like carpentry, there will be some form of equality because everyone will do what they like, and they will find themselves doing something in life. Those who fail to go to university, those who fail to do subjects that are promoted by society, they can resort to something like carpentry if it is their thing, and they will earn a living (Khubani).*

*[C]arpentry is good because we are gifted in different ways. Some people do not make it at school, but they are good at something else, for example certain vocational skills. I can afford to make a living through vocational skills, not necessarily through school. There are many people who would like to buy products that I can make with my own hands (Rito).*

Thus participants see ways in which people who are disabled by the current system can be useful members of society. In the community there are people with physical disabilities, such as impaired hearing and we do not have a school for such people. Participants argued that a CLC could accommodate such people as well:

*Vocational skills like carpentry are good in a community like this one... Some people are deaf and there is no provision for such people locally, so if there can be something for everyone, all would participate fully. A deaf person cannot learn with people who are not deaf, and since there is no provision for deaf people, there must be alternatives. To do carpentry you do not need ears, just your hands and eyes, so deaf people can do it as well (Rito).*

Things like plumbing, building and carpentry can help create a local economy:

*Products can be produced here, and we can buy them from here. If we buy from other places our money goes away. But if we buy locally, the money circulates in our community. For example, there is a place at Shayandima in Venda where people produce wardrobes. Some of these people are people with disabilities. So people from Shayandima do not go out to buy wardrobes and the wardrobes that they buy locally are cheaper (Mujaji).*

In such a local system, people living with disabilities can be active members of the economy, rather than being perceived as people who need to be taken care of all the time.

Sewing clothing was also highlighted by participants as a useful skill. It is important for us in the village to manufacture our own clothes, not simply to save money, but also as part of acknowledging and building local culture:

*[T]here are many beautiful dresses that are made by the Shangaan fabrics. In fact we must understand the issue of fashion and the growth of people, and the change of things. It does not mean that the culture of us shangaan people is xibelani, we just need to put on xibelani all the time. We have to be creative, we mix our fabrics, so that even foreigners can be attracted. We must understand that we are not living as an island. There are people who will come and be attracted to our things, and buy them, and see that they are comfortable even to them. Culture evolves, so fashion needs to change with culture and time. People must sew the traditional clothes the most creative way possible (Yila).*

We also need to take into serious consideration the issue of food because food is crucial in our lives. According to the participants, farming is an important part of local food production, because “before you go to sew, you must eat. No one can hold a machine without eating first. Even if you want to plant crops or plough, you must eat first” (Yila). Whilst subsistence farming is essential, farming for selling in the market is also necessary: “We would manage to grow maize that would even go to the market, and we are the ones who would benefit. We would develop in that way” (Mujaji).

Participants are not talking about food security, but their ideas can be related to food sovereignty. Although they are not aware of the concept itself, it is clear that they aspire to have something closer to food sovereignty. They talk about producing their own food locally, not about buying from shops. But since water and rain are a very serious problem in the area, the participants believe that the government should lend a helping hand: “If the government

*can help us with water, we would grow maize, and we are good at that” (Mujaji).* In short I would say that participants may not be familiar with the concepts of ‘food security’ and ‘food sovereignty’, but their understanding of food production and distribution shows some element of food sovereignty. I say this because they argue for growing their own food, rather than getting employment so they can afford to buy food from shops.

Another important element of farming is that we can take it as far as manufacturing. Instead of only growing crops for food, we can also preserve it through a manufacturing process:

*The issue of farming takes the front seat, not that other things are not important, but farming is basic. It is not bad for us to make tomato sauce. What is wrong if tomato sauce is sold here at Mavalani? What is wrong if we make tomato sauce that is sold in the whole country from our village farm? It is not wrong. Or there is a firm that manufactures baked beans, and the beans are grown in a local farm. What is wrong with that? There is nothing wrong with that. These are the things we must understand, and the process of doing it. We must compile a list of all we need, and it is what must be taught and learned. And the issue of... in the secondary sector, we need skills to make things, we must manufacture things. Carpentry is a secondary sector activity, it is manufacturing. So we need more skills, except for carpentry, so we can have food; that how do we make, or how do we preserve food. But, all in all, farming is very crucial in our village (Yila).*

This clearly indicates that there is a lot that CLCs can offer, from primary sector skills to secondary sector skills, such as manufacturing. As I have already argued, the job market does not have enough jobs, so we can create many jobs locally, and help contribute to economic development with appropriate VET. However, according to the participants, VET should not simply be about these kinds of skills.

A CLC should provide education that is necessary for holistic community building, as well as improved communication: *“The importance of education is to ensure that when we meet with other people, we are able to relate to them, for example through language and social understanding. Education helps us communicate well with other people” (Rito).* I realise that without good relations and effective communication, it would not be easy to run a CLC, and it would be impossible to work together.

I came to realise that the perception of youth about the CLCs and VET for rural development is in line with the theory of food sovereignty. Just like the Food Sovereignty Model, the participants believe that it is very important for local people to be in control of their production system, be it food or other products. Participants also believe that working together is key, as opposed to monopolisation of the means of production. Instead of adopting foreign strategies and fashions, participants argued that it is better to develop local fashions and to find creative ways to design traditional clothes.

Although participants believe that local people need to do things on their own, they also believe that it is necessary to deal with mainstream businesses:

*These products must be marketed, so it can stay in people’s minds that a South African product has value, and has quality as any product, or even better. This will ensure that if I craft a watch that Muyisa talked about, I can afford to take it to JetMart, and JetMart sells it. If there is a sewing project, Edgars and Truworths should sell the products they have bought from Muyisa (Yila).*



This shows me that we are all influenced by the dominant ideologies, whether we like it or not, and whether we fight it or not. If you produce something, you advertise it to the popular shops so they can recognise your talent. As a result this will not end our dependency on the mainstream economy, even if we have a chance to do so.

I realise, however, that the participants are aware that it has been planted in our minds that foreign products are good and we need to do away with such mentality:

*The problem is that even though Muiyisacan make something good, we will not buy because our minds tell us that something from Truworths is good. If you can make things and go and stand in the street and sell, people will not even recognise you. Because television tells us every day that products from Truworths are good (Yila).*

Therefore we also need good marketing strategies:

*So even marketing here in the village needs to change towards that direction and that's where the government can intervene. The government can help to advertise Muiyisa's products, and we consider his products the best (Yila).*

In short, we need to develop our own distributive system, instead of following the capitalist route and maintaining the status quo. However, as the above quote indicates, capital is a problem, and the government can help here. For example, the government can help local people to market their products. Although government intervention may be needed in this, the distributing system must be developed by local people, as the FSM would suggest.

#### **5.5.4. Should learners pay?**

There was only one participant who believed that learners should not pay in order to enrol at the local CLC:

*It must be free because some of us do not have money. They can charge R1000 only to find that someone does not have R1000 so that person may end up stealing money in order to pay because there is no money at home. So I think it must be free (Rito).*

The other participants believe that all learners need to contribute a certain amount of money. They argued that when people pay, they place value in their education and training that they receive, and take it seriously.

*For people to place value in the CLC, not that we want to make things difficult, there must be a certain amount that a person pays. It can be in form of a study loan which people can pay when they start working or when they have started to make production. We do this so that people can place value in their education that they will obtain from the centre (Yila).*

As a critical researcher I have my own view about this, although the participants did not agree with me. I personally believe that a CLC needs to be owned by local people, but should be fully-funded by the government. I believe it should not be treated as a private learning centre where money takes precedence. I believe that money serves as a barrier for access for some people who do not possess it, and as a result it is used to discriminate against some people. Although participants suggested that arrangements could be made to cater for those who cannot afford to pay, the system they suggest is not different to the NSFAS which has

caused people (like me) to owe the government a lot of money. What I argue is that we could try to help by organising small loans for local people, but, by doing so, we are promoting the neo-liberal capitalist style of keeping people in debt.

In Chapter 2 I discussed that the government has expanded NSFAS for those who do the NCV. What participants argued with regard to the potential local CLC is more or less the same thing. However, as I have argued in the previous paragraph, we cannot adopt a system that keeps people in debt, especially at a community level. We want to create a CLC as part of poverty alleviation, so if we start loaning poor youth money, we drag them back. We may think we are helping, but we may actually harm the people we want to help. Although participants, except for one, did not agree with me, I still hold the belief that the government should fund the CLCs fully so they do not take the market route. I believe CLCs should provide education and training as a public good, not as market commodities.

### 5.5.5. Accreditation and Certification

I wanted to find out from the participants if they feel the CLCs should be formally established and governed by the same laws that govern other learning institutions. The participants strongly believe that the qualifications in the CLCs need to be accredited and learners must receive certificates at the end. One participant felt that *“It is good that people receive certificates after learning because some people cannot speak for themselves, so the certificates will speak for them. The certificates will indicate what the person has learned, and their abilities”* (Munhu). Participants felt that people’s skills would not be trusted without something to ‘prove’ that they had acquired them, so certification was essential. Also, certificates will serve as motivation for more people to join:

*Those who decide not to attend the CLC will see the certificates of those who attend, and they will see that they are progressing, so they will be motivated to attend too. But if there are no papers, people will just laugh and say: ‘how do we see that you are learning? Where are the papers to prove that you are learning?’ (Muyisa).*

Two participants argued that accreditation and certification promote professionalism and ‘seriousness’. If the CLC is registered everyone will take it seriously:

*Certification and accreditation will help with professionalism, do you understand? Professionalism means that people will not take our CLC for granted, thinking that it is a game, do you understand? We can go to an extent that we create professional bodies, for example we call it a Professional Body of Carpentry of South Africa. We notify everyone that we, as carpenters of South Africa have a certain code of conduct that we follow, and this professional body has the power to take away the certificate if the certificate holder does not follow the code of conduct (Yila).*

For another participant certification can help with regulation. He argued that

*Someone who has never received training can craft in town and leave the residues, and no one will know who it is because there is no identification. But if someone has a certificate, a recognised certificate, s/he is traceable, and such person will be trained to be hygienic as well, to remove the residues after crafting (Muyisa).*

Another point raised regarding certification is that those who have studied at the local CLC should be known by their work. If there are no certificates, any person can claim that they

graduated from the local CLC even if they cannot perform a task, and that will bring the local CLC into disrepute. Moreover, certificates are used as a controlling strategy. This does not only apply to CLCs, but to the education and training system as a whole:

*It is like when people pass Grade 12, they receive statements of results. If there were no statements of results, we would all move from Grade 12 straight to universities and start attending. The universities would be overcrowded to an extent that lecturers would fail to teach. Since there are papers, they are able to control the number of people who go in, and people will always know that to gain access they must work for it. People will always know that they have to work hard to get a certificate in order to gain future access in various areas. So if there are no papers it would be chaos everywhere; there will be no system of control (Rito).*

I argued with the participants that it is our own CLC that we are building for ourselves - to learn what we want to learn - so we do not necessarily need certificates. My argument was based on the ideas of Ivan Illich (1971) of 'deschooling' society. I find it unwise to judge someone's ability to perform a task by a paper. I know people who can do outstanding work (e.g bricklaying) but they do not have certificates. I am aware that South Africa has Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) where people are assessed and given certificates for the knowledge and skills they already possess, but I find this to be another system of control. Society is about documented proof when it comes to a person being capable of performing a particular task. It is hard to get a formal job without a particular document that proves the person can do such work.

From this I realize that certificates have the potential to substitute useful knowledge and skills. If certificates become the only criterion for employment, skilled and knowledgeable people can be lost. People can get jobs even if they are not able to perform tasks well, simply because they have graduated somewhere and they possess a certificate. It becomes clear from this that certificates are used to screen people out of the labour market, and more in line with capitalist thinking of reducing the number of workers. Although, I feel that society substitutes knowledge and skills with qualifications and certificates, the participant disagreed with me. While I respect their ideas and am not claiming that I am right and they are wrong, I would like to indicate that ideas that we hold are shaped by the society that we live in. I feel that participants believe in certification because they have been socialized into a society that promotes certification.

#### **5.5.6. Teachers**

I also found it necessary to ask participants who they think should teach in any future CLC. I wanted to find out whether they value local people or outsiders. I learned that participants value the skills that local people possess:

*I would say that since there are too many of us in the village, if we look for external people to teach, it will not benefit local people but outsiders. Since we know what specific individuals can do, for example we know who does some form of carpentry, so we can appoint that person to teach. We know that grandfather Goda [pseudonym] is a good bricklayer, so we can appoint him to teach people how to build. What will actually happen is that people will be happy to be taught by grandfather Goda to build because he is good, they will want to build like him (Tivani).*

It is apparent from the above that local skills are recognised as important by participants. The country has RPL, which recognises that people acquire knowledge and skills in various ways, but these need to be evaluated. If the CLC is to depend on government for money, it has to follow some government terms and conditions, such as registration. To be authorised, the teachers need to be qualified, so they will have to be evaluated. Although this is a form of bureaucratic control, it is necessary, if support from the government is required. I do believe government should give people some freedom to ensure that people do what suits them, not what suits the government. We know that the government is concerned about education and training that forms part of the national development agenda, but what people want should be prioritised as well. So I find it very important that participants believe that local people need to be the teachers, and not outsiders, to ensure that local needs are met.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This qualitative study was conducted with youth from Mavalani Village in Giyani in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. It was framed within a critical paradigm, as defined in Chapter 3. The main aim of the study was to critically analyse government policy on appropriate rural VET in the light of the perceptions of youth in Mavalani Village, Limpopo. The study involved 10 participants who contributed greatly to the topic. The intention was to look at what is appropriate rural VET according to youth in the village. It should be noted that currently there is no organised VET in Mavalani Village, and there never has been, as captured in the community timeline and map. Thus, the ideas of the participants regarding the CLC are about something new, possible, and imaginary. I approached the study from an 'involved participant' point-of-view and I acknowledge my bias. I have done much to ensure that I reported the data accurately and did not distort it to suit my personal views. I have indicated how I did this in Chapter 3.

Participants argued that there are many problems that young people face in the village, for example poverty, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, amongst other. The HSRC (2005) argues that many young people in South Africa are failed by the social system as a result of various social ills. The HSRC goes on to argue that many young people who live in rural villages do not make it to institutions of higher learning and other education and training institutions. And, if they remain in the villages, they are not exposed to employment opportunities (Ibid.). We also find that there are many young people in the village who cannot further their studies or find employment because they do not possess the so-called 'necessary skills'. This, therefore, calls for VET that is appropriate and relevant for people and their contexts.

Having engaged with participants I have come to acknowledge that there are FET colleges around the country that offer skills that rural people need. For example, rural people do need VET around cars and electricity because these things do exist in rural areas. However, access is an issue. Both distance and money to pay prevent young people from accessing such VET. Having to pay for access to FET colleges is closely related to capitalism where every service provided must be paid for. As a result VET will be more of a financial investment which can be redeemed through jobs. It will be mainly about developing skills needed in the labour market. This approach to VET and education and training in general actually contributes a lot to the marginalisation of rural areas and rural people - some 'evidence' of this is the lack of organised VET in areas like Mavalani Village.

However, this is not easy to change because it is a major part of society and it is perpetuated by powerful members of society, such as politicians and business people. It is also entrenched in the system and is presented as if there is no alternative but to follow the global capitalist way of life. The government is doing little to change this, as seen in the PEST analysis. Learning from the PEST model, we need to acknowledge that there are structures that control the mobility of people in society, and these structures are difficult to deconstruct. Economic structures do not allow everyone to be successful or wealthy. The system has its standards, and if individuals do not meet such standards, or if individuals act outside/beyond the set standards, they may not succeed. There are economic, legal, socio-cultural, and many other constraints that either enable or disable individuals to make their dreams come true.

Even though rural development is recognised and forms part of government policy, rural areas need to be treated differently because of their uniqueness and status. For this reason, rural VET needs to be in line with rural development and needs. For example, instead of simply focusing on educating and training rural people to be employable in the labour market where fewer and fewer jobs exist, it is important to educate and train rural people to take control of their own development and destiny, and to take advantage of the local resources. Instead of focusing on human resource development, focus should be on the emancipation of individuals within rural contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 2, initially vocational education was the theory of what apprenticeships offered, so it can be regarded as a body of knowledge which is informed by and informs practice. So, when the aspect of 'training' is added to this, the knowledge part should remain equally important. Appropriate VET cannot be designed to solely provide skills for jobs, while ignoring other aspects of life. According to the participants, VET needs to be more than just physical capabilities. It needs to be understood in a broader sense, and in particular as education for liberation, not for domestication, as Freire would describe it.

Freire (1970) heavily emphasises that critical thinking is fundamental to contemporary learning. For Freire, education is not separable from society and everyday activities, problems and experiences. Oppression is the main problem in society and it is the role of education to empower/emancipate learners to take constructive action against oppression. Oppression can refer to structural oppression that is hard to pin down. In this case education needs to be liberating enough to allow learners to identify such structures so as to challenge them (Ibid.).

It should be borne in mind that Freire believed that oppression is a major problem in society and education should set people free, thus the idea of liberation was important to him. In addition, Sayed (2008) states that education should not be a means to oppression but should be a means to human freedom. It should give humans an opportunity to improve their lives. It is clear from this that the notion of development as economic growth is not complete, because 'development' should mean that all people live long, healthy, and creative lives. Most importantly, their lives should be free from oppression and fear.

With regards to oppression, Freire (1970) argues that the banking approach to education creates a culture of silence because it assumes a hierarchy and that learners are not knowledgeable. What is actually taught in a top-down approach is not empowering, but perpetuates an authoritarian mindset. So in the bottom-up approach, where learners are co-producers of knowledge, and teachers learn from learners, these domineering attitudes and the culture of silence can be deconstructed. For Giroux (1997), the traditional form of teaching, that is, the top-down approach, limits learners' potential to live their desired lives. This kind of instruction does not enable learners to reason constructively and to engage intellectually with challenging situations.

In addition to the above, the participants also argued that education is important for social connectivity. While it is important for individuals to learn how to survive in society, it is also important for them to know how their neighbours survive. This means that people must not be selfish with their skills, knowledge and possessions, but should rather use these to further empower the people around them. Also, education is important for communication, and communication is central to social connectivity. Where members of a community have effective ways of communication, they are more likely to work collectively to achieve a

common goal. In short, according to the participants, the potential CLC needs to take into account that skills are diverse.

Therefore, we recommend VET for ourselves that will teach every young person that they do not necessarily need a university degree to survive in this world. Young people should be cautious about the ideologies that have dominated the world. Young people need to understand that most of our needs are not natural, but are created. And once they are created, they become real and we find it hard to live without them. In short the capitalist (education) system teaches us to be 'competent' and to be 'on top', so we can accumulate more assets and money. It does not teach us to be satisfied with basic needs. It is therefore necessary to have VET that teaches young people that all we need are our basic needs, such as food, shelter, water, clothes, social interaction, love, esteem, to list but a few. It is therefore important to have a system that teaches young people how to produce things like food, rather than to be totally dependent on the market. If we do not stop total dependence on the market, the market mechanisms will continue to oppress us. Thus, the FSM advocates for alternative ways to development that do not conform to the capitalist approach.

VET for rural youth should not only enable young people to look for employment in the labour market, exactly what is happening with the South African VET system. According to the Italian political theorist, Antonio Gramsci (1971), education is one of the ideological structures that serves to maintain the status quo of the ruling class. The education system offers subjects that train learners for specific occupations within the labour market or economic system. Although working is necessary for humans to survive, it should not be the only priority of VET. VET should do more than train young people to become artisans. It should furnish young people with the knowledge and skills they need in life and to contribute to local development, for example knowledge about the economy.

So our VET should educate as much as it trains. It should enable young people to exercise their knowledge and to live freely; thus Freire argues that education is a practice of freedom. I have argued earlier that the ideas of the participants show an awareness of the hegemonic ideologies that promote the Western style of life and undermine the local style of life, for example African cultures. As participants seem to be aware of this, they argue for development that is more local, although they believe that there is nothing wrong with dealing with mainstream businesses.

It becomes apparent from the above that VET cannot be uniform in all parts of the country, but must be relevant to the local area and local people. Although participants acknowledge that VET should offer skills and knowledge that are broad in scope, and not only limited to local circumstances, they also acknowledge that skills necessary for local development are central. Although learners acknowledge that some people are content with getting jobs in the labour market, they also emphasise that VET should be more than that. Participants suggested that skills and knowledge such as farming, sewing, crafting, to name but a few, must be part of the curriculum in their imaginary CLC.

This is likely to happen if rural people, including youth, are fully involved in the process. If people at whom VET efforts are directed are not involved or consulted during planning, such interventions may fail. Menike (1997) argues that many empowerment interventions are based on the assumption that poor people do not know how to improve their living conditions. For the author (Ibid.), the empowerment programme planners do not understand the reality of the poor people, or poor people's needs and constraints.

People who have been living in a particular environment know what their problems are and what potential solutions are, so they cannot be left out of policy-making. Although poor people do need support from the government and other stakeholders, poor people need to decide what needs to be done. Following this argument I am of the view that it is up to the rural people of South Africa to decide on the kind of VET that should be offered in rural CLCs, and the government should support them in various ways. Since local people know their area very well, they know where the best place to locate a CLC is, so they need to participate in this as well.

To a larger extent I can see a link between participants' arguments and the theory of Food Sovereignty. I have indicated in Chapter 2 that Food Sovereignty is about giving power to ordinary people to organise, produce and distribute food, as they argue that food should not be a commodity that belongs in the market. Food Sovereignty advocates argue that food is a basic human right, not a commodity. Therefore people need to be in control of the food system, not the market; or at least people need to create markets where dealing is fair. Since this research is not about food, I would like to indicate once again that the Food Sovereignty model is only relevant to local development proposed by participants. In Chapter 2 I use this model as a point of reference.

Participants argued that education and training should not just be for employment, but for the whole person. If CLCs can provide VET that focuses on various forms of production, local people would initiate meaningful projects where they produce meaningful products. If CLCs can teach farming, those who do farming will enhance their farming skills, and can practise meaningful agriculture as a result, and food can be distributed locally. If manufacturing can be taught, local people will also be able to process their own food. Local people will not always need to go to shops to buy food.

In this way people can have their own distribution system of food. The same should be done for clothes, furniture, and any other things that we need. Employment would be created locally. Most importantly, people would have a choice of what food they eat, what clothes they wear, and what other products they use. As food sovereignty points out, industrial farming produces food that is not healthy. If people are in control of their food system, they would ensure that they produce food that is healthy and culturally acceptable. The same would be done for furniture, technology, clothes, and any other materials. Local people would use locally appropriate technologies to produce their own products.

I therefore argue that VET needs to be improved, but not to better serve the market, but rather to equip individuals with knowledge and skills they need to survive in their everyday lives. VET needs to be context-dependent. For residents of Mavalani Village, VET needs to speak to their rural context; it must support their everyday lives. It must support their way of life, for example local food production. It must not alienate them from their everyday reality. And most importantly, the necessity of local people's participation in the planning, curriculum design and teaching in the potential CLC needs to be re-emphasised. Furthermore, participants believe that the potential CLC should be accredited and certificates must be issued. This makes sense in situations where learners want to look for jobs. Furthermore, the government is highly likely to fund a well-organised CLC which operates according to government standards. For example, there should be registered modules based on certain standards, outcomes must be clear, and teachers qualified.



Having said all that, I came to realise that the whole issue of education and training is complicated and needs to be handled with utmost care. I came to realise that it is easy to criticise one form of education and training without acknowledging its significance in society. For example, I have argued in this thesis that FET colleges are not contributing to rural development, but to urban development. On the other hand I have argued that rural youth need skills around plumbing, bricklaying, carpentry, farming, manufacturing and many others. One would argue that for manufacturing to take place, skills such as office administration are necessary. In this way one would argue that FET colleges that offer office administration skills are actually contributing to rural development. While this holds some element of truth, it should be checked if current development is encouraging activities such as manufacturing in rural areas. Most importantly, it must be asked if rural development is in any way similar to urban development.

In Chapter 2 I argued that it is not appropriate for rural areas to be viewed as a haven for agricultural activities. But in Chapter 4 and 5 I talked about agriculture being a significant part of rural development. While this looks like a contradiction, I would like to indicate that not only rural people live on agricultural products, but all people do. My line of argument is that there are many things that can be done in rural areas, and agriculture should not always be in the forefront because we cannot guarantee that all rural areas are fertile. For example, although the participants believe that agriculture is important, poor rains are a problem in the village. In addition to poor rains, distance to the market is another obstacle.

The notion of Food Sovereignty is very important for this study. It is important to understand who VET serves in society. Does it serve the people or the system? Following the idea of Food Sovereignty, people's efforts must serve their interests, not those of the market. People need to be in control of the kind of food they produce and eat. Not only food, but everything people need. There are programmes like NARYSEC that directly speak to rural development. So although FET colleges provide courses that do have some relevance to rural development, the whole idea of FET colleges is not rural development. Most importantly, young people not only need VET, but social structures need to be adjusted to allow them to put their skills into practice. However, it needs to be taken into consideration that young people nowadays are convinced that jobs that get them dirty are not good for them. For this reason, education for liberation is very relevant. Education for liberation will liberate the minds of young people. It will teach them what is important in life, for example self-reliance, dirt or no dirt.

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