

**THE GEOGRAPHIES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN THE BUSINESS  
STUDIES CURRICULUM: NARRATIVES OF SIX STUDENTS AT A VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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**DURBAN**

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## **SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT**

This research has been submitted with/without my approval.

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Professor Pholoho Morojele

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Date

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Navin Maharaj, declare that this dissertation entitled:

**The geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the Business Studies curriculum:**

**Narratives of six students at a Vocational Education and Training college in**

**KwaZulu-Natal** is my own work and that all sources used or quoted have been

indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and citations. This

dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other

university.

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Professor Pholoho Morojele (Supervisor)

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study examined the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum through the narratives of six students at a Vocational Education and Training (VET) college in KwaZulu-Natal. The study examined students' experiences related to the choice of the Business Studies Vocational Education and Training programme and curriculum; the accessibility of resources for the practical training; support and career guidance; forms of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics within the Vocational Education and Training college; and the navigation of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in a VET college in the South of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

The study was conducted in a college situated in close proximity to a historically disadvantaged African township. The participants did not meet the university entry requirements and they chose the VET college which they felt was an affordable option catering for their current needs.

VET in many parts of the world including South Africa has a negative image in society because there is a perception that VET caters for students who drop out of school or are academically challenged. However, this study maintains that VET is essential to prepare students for the much needed skills the economy requires and to relieve the pressure at universities to increase enrolments. The VET college provides Vocational Education and Training opportunities for many students so that they can enter

employment mainly in the neighbouring industrial regions in Isipingo. The narratives of the participants were used for data generation. The research process utilised a semi-structured interview schedule and individual interviews and a focus group discussion was organised to elicit responses from the six participants.

The findings revealed that the Business Studies programme had prepared the participants with the knowledge and skills for the world of work. The resources available at the VET college were adequate and appropriate for the practical instruction. The study revealed that the social, economic and educational factors conjoined in very complex ways as exclusionary and inclusionary factors in this context. The participants had to navigate through these inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in order to progress in their studies. The findings revealed that the participants were confident about their choice of programme and the VET college despite the negativity around VET in their society. Most of them believed that completing level 4 would provide them with a grade 12 equivalent certificate. The participants aimed at articulation into higher education which would be a hurdle for them and remains a grey area which needs to be addressed speedily by the educational authorities. The findings indicated that current policy considerations around articulation remain unresolved, which made some of the VET participants to believe that their present qualifications might merely result in a dead-end for them.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ABET   | Adult Basic Education and Training               |
| APS    | Academic Performance Score                       |
| CEM    | Council of Education Ministers                   |
| DHET   | Department of Higher Education and Training      |
| DoE    | Department of Education                          |
| DoL    | Department of Labour                             |
| FET    | Further Education and Training                   |
| HEDCOM | Heads of Education Departments Committee         |
| HET    | Higher Education and Training                    |
| HRE    | Human Rights Education                           |
| ISAT   | Integrated Summative Assessment Task             |
| NATED  | National Technical Education                     |
| NC(V)  | National Certificate (Vocational)                |
| NEET   | Neither in employment nor education and training |
| NEPA   | National Education Policy Act                    |
| NQF    | National Qualifications Framework                |
| NSC    | National Senior Certificate                      |
| NSFAS  | National Student Financial Aid Scheme            |
| OBE    | Outcomes Based Education                         |
| SASA   | South African Schools Act                        |

SAQA South African Qualifications Authority  
VET Vocational Education and Training

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## **CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This thesis reports on a study that examined the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum through narratives of six students at a Vocational Education and Training (VET) college in KwaZulu-Natal. The study was conducted in a college situated in close proximity to a historically disadvantaged African township. The college provides Vocational Education and Training opportunities for these students so that they can acquire skills through the combination of theoretical and practical training and improve their prospects of securing employment mainly in the industrial regions in Isipingo.

In South Africa, unemployment is considered 'pervasive'. Preparation for employability necessitates a stronger mixture of theory and practice. The skills demanded by employers experienced a shift in the 1970s which had resulted in a decline in the mining and agriculture segments in South Africa and an increase in service-oriented industries such as finance, wholesale, retail, and computing which have offered more job opportunities benefiting skilled workers (Moll, Steinberg & Broekman, 2005). The Office Administration programme in Business Studies prepares students for employment mainly in the service-oriented industries. The students enrolled at the VET college are the clients and recipients of Vocational Education and Training and this particular study examines students' attitudes on issues related to VET.

This chapter provides the background of the study as well as a brief outline of policies on VET in South Africa. The chapter presents the purpose, rationale and objectives of the study and the key research questions that guided it. The structure of the dissertation is also outlined.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

According to Masri (1999), in many countries, particularly industrialized ones, the focus of VET systems is usually to address societal and labour market needs, at the sacrifice of educational values and individual needs. In many other countries, especially developing ones, the focus is located closer to educational norms and standards, at the sacrifice of labour market needs and employment requirements (Masri, 1999).

South Africa is a developing country and there are many challenges education and training is required to address. In South Africa, there is a large exodus of Grade 12 students each year who have completed their schooling. Only a small number of these students are successful in finding jobs. The universities receive many applications from prospective applicants who anticipate that they will be successful in securing a space to continue with their studies in these institutions of higher learning. The spaces that are available in these institutions are limited and there are only a handful of applicants who are eventually accepted via a stringent selection process. For the tens of thousands exiting the schooling system and are unsuccessful at securing a space at university,

VET can be an alternative form of education and training. Access to VET institutions is also limited and enrolments are on a first come first served basis. VET colleges assist in absorbing high school drop-outs and successful out of school students. Many of these hopeful students are rejected from the universities and universities of technology because preference is given to those students who have performed well academically in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. The minimum entry requirement for Business Studies at a VET college is a Grade 9 school completion certificate. Students are required to pass an entry test called a 'pace' test and may require an acceptable level of competence in mathematics and English to gain entry into most VET programmes. The cost of studying in a VET college is much lower than the cost of studying in a university. Many students from impoverished backgrounds studying at the VET college have received financial aid from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in the form of a bursary which they do not have to pay back thus enabling them to achieve a qualification and improve their future prospects at no cost.

### **1.3 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.3.1 The Cultural and Social Context of the Study**

The research study was conducted in a VET college in the South of Durban. The majority of students enrolled at the college live in a large neighbouring African township. Their home language is IsiZulu and they are accustomed to the Zulu culture which is practised in their homes. The language of teaching and learning at the VET college is

English, and the subject English First Additional Language is a compulsory fundamental subject taught at the college. Students usually experience challenges in their studies due to language barriers and they do not receive much support from their families who may lack literacy skills and predominantly communicate in IsiZulu. A large percentage of the population from the township are illiterate, unemployable, do not have marketable skills and experience abject poverty.

The Business Studies students at the VET college experience educational pressures and social confines that make it difficult for them in these circumstances to receive quality education. Most of these students are from impoverished backgrounds. The students experience many challenges in the township which make the youth more vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, HIV infection, and different kinds of violence.

The lower socio-economic status of most of the families in the township restricts the choice of educational institutions. The cost of higher education is exorbitant and poor schooling and quality of education prevents the majority of students from embarking on higher education. The VET college is located in close proximity to this township and accommodates students with a Grade 9 completion certificate.

VET is important because it provides people with an opportunity to improve their prospects in life and develops the competences which are necessary in a democratic society. Societal and economic development depends on the strength of VET as it

provides access to skills and entry routes into the labour market. For underprivileged and marginalized groups in particular, it can be an important route towards a better life (Educational International, 2009).

VET colleges are considered to be community colleges because they exist in all parts of the country including urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The role of the colleges are to provide education and training opportunities particularly for members of the society who have been deprived of socio-economic benefits so that they can gain access to meaningful employment opportunities and free themselves from the cycle of poverty and inequality.

The current VET system has to establish a balance between the purely economic/employment objectives and the social/citizenship priorities of education and training. In order to create this balance, VET colleges are required to accommodate different categories of students, namely, the post-school youth target market, while at the same time responding to the needs of older students (the employed and unemployed) and those needing to be re-skilled as a result of the changed political/economic circumstances (Makole, 2010). VET colleges also accommodates different categories of students requiring recognition of their experience and knowledge they have gained in informal settings, and adults requiring additional and continual training due to changing technologies (Makole, 2010).

Practical training and experience is essential for employment and self-employment and theoretical education leads to empowerment to think beyond conventional and established daily situations demanded by modern technology (Gamble, 2003). Globally, providers of VET are challenged with how to improve job opportunities for the young people who do not compete for a post-secondary education (Hudelson, 1994). A major challenge facing VET recently includes the need for advanced technological skills, collaboration and teamwork, dramatic technological advancement in the workplace and changing family structure (Boateng, 2012).

South Africa is a developing country experiencing a rapid increase in the population. The youth constitute a large percentage of the population. In South Africa, one third of the population is under the age of fifteen years (World Bank, 2011). The increase in the young population has placed an enormous demand for admission at the universities which is an expensive and unaffordable route for many. VET would be the alternative education and training route to follow in view of this situation.

### **1.3.2 The Policy Context of the Study**

The year 1994 marked the end of apartheid and heralded the beginning of democracy and human rights in South Africa. The VET sector has been exposed to several policy reforms since 1994. Legislative processes were concluded by the Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Labour (DoL) which resulted in the Further Education and Training Act (1998), the Skills Development Act (1998), and the Skills

Levy Act (1999). These kinds of legislation have transformed the previous technical colleges which were affected by the racialised politics during apartheid.

Education was propagated as the solution to advance the country socially and economically. Transformation in education was effected by legal and regulatory policy frameworks in order to expedite change. Educational reform since the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 was a crucial part of the country's reconstruction and development agenda. Educational reform was necessary to overcome the devastation of apartheid and lay the foundation for democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice. The need for educational reform was essential for establishing a system of lifelong learning to address the vast economic and social challenges of the 21st century.

The Ministry of Education had established a sound legislative policy framework for educational transformation which included the following.

The South African Constitution (1996) has made it mandatory for education to be transformed and democratised in line with the values of dignity, equality, human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. The constitution makes provision for the right of everyone to basic education, including adult basic education. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (1996) led to the establishment of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM), two intergovernmental mediums which joined powers in structuring the new system and making provisions for the determination of national policies in general and Further

Education and Training (FET) with respect to curriculum, assessment, language policy and quality assurance.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996) has promoted access, quality and democratic governance in the schooling system. It ensures that all students have the right of access to quality education without discrimination, and has made schooling compulsory for children aged seven to fourteen years. White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system (2001), saw the end of a process that originated in 1995 and provides for students with diverse needs.

The Further Education and Training (FET) Act (1998), Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training (1998) and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training (1999-2001), provided the basis for developing a nationally co-ordinated FET system, comprising of the senior secondary component of schooling and technical colleges. It required that FET institutions, established in terms of the new legislation, develop institutional plans, and provide for programme-based funding, and a national curriculum for teaching and learning. The issue of equity and redress presented government with vast challenges because of the massive inequalities and disparities that were prevalent in the public education and training system and there have been significant strides in addressing these issues.

The National Certificate (Vocational) NC(V) programmes have been introduced to address the skills shortage and develop the skills that South Africa is in desperate need

of. The NC(V) programmes were introduced in 2007 by the DoE. NC(V) programmes were designed to respond directly to the skills demands of the South African economy. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was established in May 2009 with the purpose of integrating all post-school education and training institutions.

#### **1.4 THE STUDY PROBLEM**

VET around the world and in South Africa has not been well received. Societies in most parts of the world including South Africa view VET as a less desirable and inferior form of education and training in comparison to university education. The belief is that university education leads to the preparation of professionals. This perception has probably created an enormous demand for more spaces at the universities. Universities are unable to accommodate the huge exodus of successful matriculants and alternative forms of education and training such as VET are required to absorb the youth and prepare them for employment.

The tension between the vocational strand and the general or academic strand of education has been extensive. Parents and students frequently choose the academic strand. The reason for this choice is mainly due to the poor image of VET in many parts of the world. It is generally those students who fail in the academic strand that end up in VET. The challenge which exists is to make society view VET as a valuable learning path by improving the attractiveness and social acceptance of VET. In South Africa there are a large number of students who drop out of school each year because they

are unable to cope with the academic education that they experience at school. Drop-outs and unsuccessful students pose a threat to society without opportunities to further education. These students require access to VET and practicum-based education so that they are able to become productive citizens in society.

An important issue regarding VET in South Africa is the quality of VET. VET has been neglected by policymakers and only more recently has become an important focus due to the demands of lifelong learning and the global financial and economic crisis. Vocational pedagogy is hardly addressed at all, according to Wedekind (2008). A major challenge facing VET in South Africa is the perception that it is a route for those who are not able to function within an academic location. This perception is compounded by the absence of progression paths from VET into higher education which raises the question of how articulation from VET into higher education will be conceived.

## **1.5 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The study is important for several reasons which are outlined in the following paragraphs. VET is likely to be the key for individuals with low-ability and low-motivated individuals for whom the costs of investing in general human capital are too high, or for youths who heavily discount the future (Eichhorst, Rodriguez-Planas, Schmidt & Zimmermann, 2012).

VET is essential to build the country's stock of human capital and develop employable skills for the large number of youth in the country. VET programmes could provide a more stimulating environment for South African youth and involve them in learning activities compared to those who do not participate in VET or other forms of education. The possible positive effects would be the prevention of unhealthy behaviour such as smoking and drug addiction. VET programmes could also lead to a reduction in criminal activities. Wider non-material benefits could be social peace, democracy, tolerance, social capital, and social integration and VET programmes in some countries contribute to increased social stability, even if the effects are not very significant (CEDEFOP, 2011).

VET is a means of keeping thousands of students off the streets. VET can be an alternative means of education which can assist in absorbing tens of thousands of students rejected by the universities which generally only satisfy the educational needs of academically achieving students and students able to afford the high cost of university education. VET is a more affordable form of education in comparison to the more academic and more costly education offered at universities.

## **1.6 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum through the narratives of six students at a VET college in KwaZulu-Natal. The qualitative approach, encompassing the use of

semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were used to examine the experiences of students at the VET college and also to examine the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics related to the Business Studies curriculum. The study also aimed to examine contextually how the students navigated the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics that they experienced at the VET college.

The aim of the study was to raise awareness about the complexities and challenges associated with the Business Studies curriculum within the VET college context. The study also aimed to provide contextually relevant guidelines on how to address inadequacies of the curriculum and programme in general within the VET context. It is envisaged that this study would sensitize policy-makers, VET college lecturers, parents and other stakeholders, to conceive strategies that support students amid the challenges experienced by VET students.

As a lecturer at a VET college for the past nine years, the researcher has observed that many students in Business Studies have been rejected at other institutions because of their poor achievement at school. These students breathed a sigh of relief when they were accepted at the VET college. The researcher has observed the difficulties experienced by these students with respect to their studies and despite the numerous challenges; many students have been successful in completing their qualifications.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What stories do students tell about their experiences of the Business Studies curriculum at the VET college in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What are the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in the educational lives of these students related to the Business Studies curriculum at this college?
3. How do the students actively navigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they experience at this VET college?

In order to address the above questions, the study adopted a qualitative approach to research, in which, narratives of six students at a VET college in KwaZulu-Natal were elicited. Semi-structured Individual and focus group interviews were conducted in order to examine the inclusionary and exclusionary undercurrents that are prevalent in a VET college context.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is structured as follows:

**Chapter two** provides a review of related literature on VET which focuses on local and global research. The literature review tackles societal challenges as well as political, social and economic reasons for the establishment of VET. Chapter two presents a theoretical framework for the study.

**Chapter three** enunciates the research designs and methods engaged in this study.

This study has employed individual interviews and focus group discussions.

**Chapter four** presents the findings of the study. The findings are discussed under different themes which emerged from the collected data.

**Chapter five** provides a summary by drawing on the findings and presenting the implications of the study. The study concluded that students are pleased with the VET curriculum and they believe it prepares them for employability and access into higher education. The data is reviewed and recommendations are made.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study, as was discussed in Chapter one, was to examine the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum. VET refers to the educational processes that involve the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge aimed at discovering and developing the individual for employment in various sectors of economic and social life (Boateng, 2012, p.108). In modern times, the economic, technological, societal and educational situation has experienced major transformation which presents an enormous challenge to the delivery of VET. VET must respond aptly to these changes in order to remain relevant in preparing persons so that they are able to take advantage of the opportunities for the kind of workforce needed in the modern workplace (Boateng, 2012).

This chapter discusses the literature on VET and the phenomenon of students' experiences of the Business Studies curriculum in a VET college context. The chapter is arranged in the following manner. Firstly, the chapter discusses the origin and history of VET. Secondly, it discusses the establishment of VET in South Africa. It then discusses the VET curriculum in South Africa. The chapter ends with a discussion on the

theoretical frameworks that inform how this study conceptualised the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum.

## **2.2 UNDERSTANDING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Vocational education is also known as VET which specifically trains students for specific trades and careers in engineering, business, tourism and other fields, through theoretical and practical instruction. VET, in comparison to academic education, focuses on the teaching of procedural knowledge whereas academic education focuses on declarative knowledge which centres on intellectual theoretical knowledge.

VET has historically been offered at various levels such as the secondary school level, post-secondary school level and Further Education and Training (FET) level in many parts of the world and has traditionally linked up with the apprenticeship system. VET can be acknowledged in terms of recognition of prior learning and perhaps lead to partial academic credit, for example, towards tertiary education such as at a university.

The more focused labour market of modern times has endured tremendous changes resulting in the demand for higher levels of skills. South Africa has a shortage of skilled labour and in response to the demand for higher levels of skills, the government and businesses have realised the importance of investing in the future of VET through publicly funded training organisations and subsidized apprenticeship initiatives for

businesses. VET is usually provided by an institute of technology, university, or by a local community college at the post-secondary level.

### **2.3 ORIGINS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

Guilds originated in Europe and were established around the 12th century. Vocational education can be traced to the guilds system. Guilds were associations which grouped people who worked in the same trade or craft together in a town or village. The guild system throughout Europe was hierarchically structured comprising apprentice, journeyman and master. A person who earned the title of master was awarded with written evidence of his competence.

The apprentice underwent a specialised examination at the end of the apprenticeship and was deemed to be competent after successfully completing the examination. After having been honoured for their competency, apprentices were accepted into the community of journeymen. Each trade or craft had its own requirements for an apprentice to be considered competent and honoured. The vocational qualifications of journeymen were recognised in other countries and journeymen sacrificed family ties and travelled extensively to expand and enhance their skills by learning from masters in other countries which resulted in the creation of an early form of occupational mobility in Europe. Journeymen then became eligible to apply to a guild for admission as masters after acquiring sufficient experience. Grinders, painters, sculptors, organ makers,

clockmakers, and scribes were skills developed by journeymen. The apprenticeship system of modern times evolved from the guilds system.

## **2.4 HISTORY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

The history of vocational training can be traced to countries such as Russia, England and Germany. In Russia, Tsar Peter I was responsible for transferring envoys throughout Europe in 1687, to detect people with scientific, technical and craft skills which were lacking in rural Russia. The Tsar's role was significant in mining, metallurgy and naval shipbuilding. An entire education and training system appeared in navigation, ballistics and medicine. The education and training system extended opportunities to develop a variety of skills and was met with resistance from much of the population who demonstrated reluctance to send their children to these academies. Tsar Peter I passed strict laws in order to administer Vocational Education and Training. It is evident that this kind of action demonstrates 'top-down' regulation and exposes the influence of political objectives which has remained and would continue to remain a feature of VET for some time into the future (CEDEFOP, 2004).

The 'Sequential Method' developed in 1868 resulted in apprentices learning to achieve and master simple tasks in a precisely predetermined sequence. The tasks gradually became more challenging for the apprentice. The 'Sequential Method' gained force and spread in many other European centres of education and training by 1873 (CEDEFOP, 2004).

VET is considered to be diverse and has endured rapid changes which are visible in recent times. The early developments in VET systems in various countries have had a profound influence on VET today. Britain had experienced industrialization in the 18th century. The steam engine and the first mechanical spinning machines and looms were among the first major inventions during the Industrial Revolution. Textile factories mushroomed throughout Britain and droves of people abandoned the rural areas and relocated in the cities to find work. The Industrial Revolution marked an era in which profound changes took place in society. A negative consequence of the Industrial Revolution was the exploitation of child labour and the creation of slum areas.

The guild system in England declined and ended in 1835, the year which marked its abolishment. The labour needs of industries were addressed with the supply of untrained, low-paid labourers who operated the machinery in the factories. This situation prevailed for many years due to the rapidly growing industries having little need for skilled workers and affected young people because they received no training.

According to the National Apprenticeship Service (2009), apprenticeships had spread from artisan trades such as building and printing to the newer industries of engineering and shipbuilding by the late 19th century, and later to plumbing and electrical work. Although there were approximately 240 000 apprentices by the middle 1960s, there were growing concerns about the effectiveness of apprenticeship training. It was criticized for its exclusivity, for being male-dominated, for focusing on serving time

rather than on outcomes, and for a failure to embrace new and expanding occupations (National Apprenticeship Service, 2009).

Mechanisation of textile manufacture in Germany did not begin until the middle 19th century which later progressed to rapid development in the textile, iron, steel and mining industries. Automobile, electrical and chemical industries were established by the end of the 19th century. These industries were becoming increasingly more important to Germany (CEDEFOP, 2004).

During the 19th century, apprentices often attended 'continuation schools' in the evenings or on Sundays where the curriculum taught at primary schools was repeated. 'Continuation schools' imparted the theoretical knowledge needed for particular trades. These schools had developed into 'vocational schools' towards the end of the 19th century. Students were also taught citizenship skills. The development in Austria mirrored that of Germany in terms of the VET system. At the present time these two elements are still part of apprenticeship: learning on the job and in a vocational school, and it is referred to as the 'dual system' of training (CEDEFOP, 2004).

Economic and social developments in Europe over the last decade have highlighted the need for a European dimension to education and training. The transition towards a knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion presents at the same time new challenges to the development of human resources (CEDEFOP, 2004).

## **2.5 SOCIETAL CHALLENGES BEING ADDRESSED BY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

Society does not award the same status as academic education to VET. According to Garcia and Fares (2008), VET receives limited acceptance by young people and their families in several Sub-Saharan countries because they view the benefits of VET to be limited in comparison to relative general education. The researchers have found that the general view is that VET does not lead to better pay or job promotion. The existing VET programmes are often perceived as an unattractive option leading to dead-end jobs and as an inferior alternative to general secondary schooling (Perold, 2012).

Drop-outs and unsuccessful students enrolled at the VET institutions over the years have led to a perception in society, that VET institutions are inferior institutions catering for the needs of academically challenged students (Perold, 2012). VET colleges are in many instances still plagued with this stigma of catering for academically challenged students and have developed the identity of being 'second choice' institutions. They have acquired a poor image and they often encounter students who lack motivation and self-esteem.

## **2.6 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa is a country which has experienced a legacy of inequality and can be described as one of the most unequal societies in the world. The inequality which exists

in South Africa has resulted in the country lagging behind with respect to its human resource development initiatives. The country is said to have been unsuccessful in producing satisfactory human resource development in comparison to other countries experiencing similar stages of development (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The contributors to the problem are low literacy rates, high drop-out rates, insufficient opportunity to re-enter the formal education system, and lack of recognition of prior learning and experience (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

According to Samuel (2002), curriculum designers need to make decisions within the context of training and educating school leavers. During apartheid times, school leavers were intentionally under-prepared with respect to the breadth and depth of the subject-based knowledge required as a baseline into their respective careers (Samuel, 2002). It is essential for students enrolled at VET colleges to develop strong competences so that they are adequately prepared for the modern labour market.

Economic growth and human resources development are key priorities of government. VET colleges are essential for the human resources development programme and focus on developing lower and middle level skills. Higher level skills are usually developed at the universities. The DHET plans to expand the VET sector in South Africa so that more young people who are not in education, employment or training can be absorbed by training which could probably improve their future prospects.

VET from a social justice perspective is considered to be the key form of education and training in providing economic and social benefits particularly for marginalised groups. The beneficiaries of VET are individuals, enterprises and society as a whole. The students enrolled in VET could benefit in several ways. They could improve their earnings with the skills that they develop; they could join the labour market by acquiring relevant skills and knowledge; or, they could engage in further career development opportunities and improve their professional status. VET colleges in South Africa are mainly organised around nationally administered examinations and certified qualifications.

A key challenge which the South African VET colleges are required to address is the provision of equitable, accessible and affordable education and training to all sections of the population, including the poor. The colleges have an important role to play towards addressing the needs of young people living in poverty by permitting them access to education and training opportunities so that they can free themselves from continuing unemployment and poverty (DHET, 2012). One of the challenges for curriculum designers is to develop curriculum to address the needs of intellectually challenged students so that they can develop skills that will make them useful and productive in the labour market and keep them off the streets.

The VET colleges have been mandated by government to redress the past and present injustices, including overcoming barriers to progress based on social class, race, gender, geographical location, age, disability and HIV/AIDS, which infers that the sector

has a clearly transformative and social justice role to play. The VET Business Studies curriculum is required to respond to impediments to learning, diversity, and participation at the college level which is aimed at addressing social justice issues.

### **2.6.1 Establishment of Vocational Education and Training in South Africa**

The British education system influenced the evolution of technical and general education in South Africa. The application of scientific methods in production required a form of technical education which led to a demand for technical education for white youth in South Africa due to industrial development in the 1800s (Gamble, 2003).

The evolution of technical education in South Africa commenced under colonialism and apartheid and was characterized by the racial politics which existed during this time. Jeevananthan (1999) states that the curriculum which was in force during apartheid in the vast majority of the schooling and post-schooling population created inequalities in the country. Moll et al. (2005) and Jeevananthan (1999), agree that given the country's past, the VET college system in South Africa was historically set up to support apartheid policy.

Moll et al. (2005) maintains that there is sufficient evidence which indicates that the technical education system in South Africa was historically set up to support apartheid policy. The evidence include separate technical colleges prior to 1998, the so-called technical colleges with different levels of resources that were established for white and

black students; the apprenticeship system that privileged white youth; and the policy of a labour market regulation education and training system, which served as a mechanism for preventing black people from learning skills required to compete for jobs in the labour market.

The Manpower Training Act of 1981 contributed to minor transformation in the field of technical education because it paved the way for blacks to become apprentices and to access the key programmes of the technical college sector at that time. However, the public college sector has seen a radical transformation of its racial composition of students since the early 1990s. In 2002, 73% of learners were African, 17% white, 8% coloured, and 2% Indian (Powell & Hall, 2004, p.77). In addition, it was found that 60% of the students in the public colleges in 2002 were male students. Male students dominated the engineering field and two-thirds of the students in the Business Studies field were female students.

According to Molebatsi (2009), education of women and girls is regarded as fundamental to the empowerment of women and gender equality. Education has contributed significantly to the empowerment of women, equity, and gender equality and is a pivotal means of unlocking and protecting other human rights (Molebatsi, 2009). Education in many parts of the world, including South Africa, is marked by a past that entrenched race, class and gender divisions.

The Further Education and Training Act no. 98 of 1998 recognised the basis for developing a nationally-coordinated FET system, aimed at safeguarding representation and equal access to VET education by persons who were side-lined in the past, including women, people with disabilities and the disadvantaged (Molebatsi, 2009). Similarly, McGrath (2004), comments positively on the Further Education and Training Act no. 98 of 1998, however, as opposed to Molebatsi (2009), Akoojee (2005), states that in spite of the clear policy commitment to equity and redress, delivery shows major weaknesses on these grounds. The strong stated commitment of government departments and agencies towards the recognition of prior learning is reflected only in very limited and patchy delivery (McGrath, 2004).

In South Africa, 152 technical colleges were reduced to 50 VET colleges through a process of merger with the arrival of the new institutional landscape for public FET colleges in August 2001. The colleges which were previously disadvantaged were integrated with previously advantaged colleges. South African VET policy has undergone tension between a neo-liberal discourse and broader educational values. College transformation has been directed towards autonomous, efficient and market-led institutions which are attuned to the needs of industry and committed on learning, personal development and citizenship (Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005).

The transformational challenge for the colleges is to address the pressures of globalisation through greater national competitiveness which requires better skills development. Policy should propose ways of making providers more efficient and more

responsive to the needs of industry (Akoojee et al., 2005). The purpose of the Further Education and Training Colleges Act of 2006 (Act no. 16 of 2006), was to, firstly, enable students to acquire the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied vocational and occupational competence, and secondly, to provide students with the necessary attributes required for employment, entry to a particular vocation, occupation or trade, or entry into a higher education institution.

### **2.6.2 Political Reasons for the Establishment of Vocational Education**

In April 1994, the struggle against apartheid resulted in a peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa. The end of apartheid brought about hope, democratic freedom, and possibilities of inclusiveness and unity. The ANC government decided to improve its understanding of the emergence of globalization and position the country as a competitive economy within this context. Educational reform was introduced to overcome the devastation of apartheid and to respond to the economic and social challenges of the 21st century.

Essential shifts in policy occurred and institutions were geared for transformation towards a democratic order along with non-racialism and non-sexism. Transformation of teaching and learning was achieved through the NQF, curriculum transformation and principles of lifelong learning. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (1996) was important and set in motion general education and FET with respect to curriculum, assessment, language policy and quality assurance. The SASA (1996), focused on the

right of access to quality education without discrimination, and made schooling compulsory for children aged seven to 14. White Paper 6: Special needs education: Building an inclusive education and training system (2001), focused on the provision for students with diverse needs.

The Further Education and Training Act (1998), Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training (1998) and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training (1999-2001), provides the basis for developing a nationally co-ordinated FET system. According to Educational International (2009, p.3), governments use many excuses for not taking responsibility for public VET systems, usually, because it is a complex sector; because international agencies are telling them not to; because of a misunderstanding of the labour market; or, because it is simply considered to be too expensive to make the needed changes.

There are several justifications for governments worldwide to invest in vocational technical education which include, among other things, relevantly imparting individuals with skills and knowledge necessary for making the individual a productive member of society; reducing unemployment through the provision of employable skills, especially for the youth and those who cannot succeed academically; increasing economic development by improving the quality and skill level of the working population; and, reducing poverty by giving the individuals who participate access to higher income occupations (Boateng, 2012).

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS, 2006), mentions that it is difficult to draw conclusions on whether VET contributes to gender inequalities. It notes that the issue is complex and likely to vary greatly across regions and countries. It is further made clear that there is both over-representation and under-representation of girls in different countries (UIS, 2006, p.63).

The theoretical and empirical climate for reform of the post-apartheid curriculum resulted from democratic debates and discussion by radical intellectuals. According to Chisholm (2003), national politics and power relationships in awarding internationally borrowed ideas has influenced the South African curriculum. The specific dynamics shaping the South African curriculum can be traced to three dominant influences on South African curriculum-making between the period 2000 and 2002, which were the African National Congress, teacher unions and university-based intellectuals. Chisholm (2003) concedes that the ANC has been identified as the agent responsible for introducing a reforming, pragmatic approach to curriculum reform.

Chisholm (2003) mentions that the outcomes-based education approach which is presently adopted in the VET colleges, had received tremendous support from the teacher unions because it carved a path towards a workable and implementable post-apartheid curriculum united around a secular, humanist, rights-based curriculum.

### **2.6.3 Economic Reasons for the Establishment of Vocational Education**

Gewer (2010), maintains that the National Certificate (Vocational) NC(V) is intended to prepare students for employability and access to economic opportunities, which has also been affirmed by Akoojee (2005). The NC(V) is National Qualifications Framework (NQF), aligned and is offered on three NQF levels currently (NQF level 2, 3 and 4) at VET colleges. Education authorities have consistently demonstrated a commitment to Human Rights Education (HRE) despite the curricular challenge of overload and pressures around the responsiveness of the curriculum to the notion of "economic competitiveness" (Keet & Karrim, 2006).

According to EUNEC (2011), VET is at the centre of the international and national education policy. Economic growth is vital for the survival of any country. Worldwide, governments have realised the importance of sustainable economic development for the countries they govern. In South Africa, VET colleges can play a pivotal role in productive human resources development which is vital for the economic wellbeing of the country, and towards which VET forms an important core business. VET colleges are pivotal for the human resources development agenda. Higher level skills are developed in the higher education institutions whereas the VET colleges focus on developing lower and middle level skills.

VET is an essential form of education for the economic development of the country as well as in freeing people experiencing abject poverty. The development of better

technical skills is a key ingredient in improving economic performance. Poverty is affected by a lack of skills therefore skills are required to enable people to make a viable living. Public VET providers can be utilized to train people for self-employment in the informal sector. The high drop-out rate of school-going students and unemployed persons has impacted South Africa's socio-economic well-being therefore it is important to train unsuccessful school leavers and the unemployed with skills and qualifications which will make them employable and self-reliant (Akoojee et al., 2005).

#### **2.6.4 Social Reasons for the Establishment of Vocational Education**

VET has been viewed as an effective means in addressing the problem of youth joblessness which has increased due to the recent global financial crisis and the impact it has had on young people. Eichhorst, Rodriguez-Planas, Schmidt and Zimmermann (2012), mention that the spiralling unemployment rates among youth since the Great Recession of 2008 has doubled in comparison to the adult population in many developed and developing countries. The authors agree that many young people have reacted to the sluggish labour market prospects by continuing tertiary education and capitalizing on their human capital whereas others have all together retreated from education, training, and employment.

The share of youths (aged 18 to 24) neither in employment nor education and training (NEET) in 2011 ranges from 4% (the Netherlands) to up to 20% (Italy and Greece) in Europe, 12% in Australia and New Zealand, and 15% in the US (OECD, 2012).

Existing evidence from developing countries suggests that rates are even higher, with an average 25% of youths in NEET in African countries (OECD, 2012). VET is essential for improving the opportunities of youths who lack the financial and other resources, competences and motivation to continue with higher education. VET can provide useful skills to prepare the youth for entry into the labour market and improve their chances of a viable career.

The provision of 'second chance' opportunities to unsuccessful school leavers in education would enable them to acquire knowledge, skills and values and develop a significant educational foundation that could provide these young people with hope of further education, development and improved prospects (Klinck & Combrinck, 2012).

A lack of educational opportunities for unsuccessful school leavers would result in large numbers of indolent young people in our society which could lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour. VET colleges have an important role to play in addressing South Africa's skills crisis particularly at the lower and middle levels.

The design of appropriate curriculum could encourage further research and further development of alternate education for unsuccessful school leavers (Klinck & Combrinck, 2012). Drop-outs or weak and unsuccessful students have found that the VET system is an alternative form of education which enables them to acquire skills which would improve their chances of employability. The DHET plans to increase

student enrolment at the VET colleges and intends to reverse the image of VET colleges as being 'second chance' institutions. The DHET intends to transform VET colleges into institutions of 'choice' (DHET, 2012). The VET colleges have to deal with the challenges of accommodating the diversity of students entering the system as well as improving the sector's image. Drop-outs, weak and unsuccessful students have been provided with an opportunity to access the VET system to acquire skills which could improve their chances of employability.

VET colleges could play a pivotal role in partially addressing the problem of the high numbers of non-working and non-studying young people by ensuring that any further study is approached in more applied and work-oriented study programmes and would to an extent address the shortage of skills South Africa is desperately in need of (Papier, Needham & Nel, 2009).

The VET colleges would have to develop partnerships with universities. Students should be able to articulate easily into university programmes and the universities should filter down new knowledge to the colleges in a way that can be assimilated by teaching staff, and through the curriculum. Strategic partnerships with colleges would protect the qualifications of students at colleges through continued probity to ensure that students are not locked into dead-end qualifications, and that the college sub-sector is appropriately linked into the post-school sector as a whole, and thereby to the knowledge economy (Perold, Cloete & Papier, 2012).

## **2.7 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The college curriculum has undergone changes because of major political, economic and social changes experienced by our society. The change to a new democracy in 1994 created a new vision of a South Africa free of racial discrimination where people have the opportunity to make a better life for themselves. Education has been accepted as the solution to empower people to make a good life and a large percentage of the populace expected that educational change would follow from political change and that the official curriculum would comprise principles of non-discrimination, social justice, equity and redress.

The curriculum has also been impacted by economic change. South Africa experienced a shift from being mainly an agricultural society to a society that was more dependent on an industrial/commercial economy. The curriculum was aligned to the kinds of work opportunities available in the cities and in industry, therefore commercial subjects were introduced. South Africa is now moving towards the information age which means that different skills and attitudes will be required in most jobs which can be addressed by making changes to the curriculum. Economic and technological change shares a close relationship and in modern times the curriculum may be reviewed and revised to address technological changes. Office data processing, for example, is offered in the Office Administration programme in order to prepare students for using technology in the workplace. The economic demands of globalization have led to the introduction of

technology training to respond to a shrinking labour market and preparation of people for self-employment (Moll et al., 2005).

The curriculum has also been changed to respond to enormous challenges resulting from different problems such as the spread of HIV and AIDS which has led colleges to include HIV and AIDS education in the curriculum. The Office Administration programme also addresses multiculturalism.

### **2.7.1 Debates on Vocational Education and Training Curriculum in South Africa**

Fiske and Ladd (2004) argue that South Africa is still lagging behind with progress toward educational adequacy (equity). They have found that South African students' performance is extremely poor when compared internationally. Coupled with this is the high rate of repetition and high drop-out rate among black students with low matriculation pass rates. These factors reflect on the state of the education system in the country and if not addressed appropriately, could affect the country's socio-economic situation.

Shay (2012), has found that there is growing urgency in national policy in debates around the issue of differentiated pathways for post-secondary education. These debates have resulted against the backdrop of global concerns about poor completion rates and poor articulation between the secondary and tertiary education sectors, under-employed graduates and rising youth unemployment. Research findings reveal

that there are three million youth between the ages of 18 and 24 referred to as 'NEETs' (neither in education, employment or training) which has recently prompted the education ministry to focus more aggressively on the FET sector (Perold et al., 2012).

According to McGrath (2004) there has been a largely participatory attempt to gear the whole education and training system towards balancing economic and social objectives and on combining the academic and the vocational, the theoretical and the practical. In addition, there is also a clear drive to build both the quality and quantity of provision.

Quality has implications with respect to curriculum and would require the infrastructure, resources and expertise to achieve a reasonable standard. FET college curriculum focuses on linking theory to practice and in South Africa improved cooperation between vocational institutions and workplaces is required. According to Gamble (2003), technical and vocational systems in other parts of the world have in several ways also focused on closely linking theory with practice. Gamble (2003) has examined the Scandinavian perspective in which the relationship between academic education which is not affected by the world of reality and vocational education which is embedded in practical work, constitute a classical theme in educational policy and the sociology of knowledge. The issue of further combining the vocational and general studies has surfaced as a political issue which is an acknowledgement of the fact that technological developments are drastically changing occupation division and the contents and organisation of labour, which results in a more urgent need to combine the different constituents of the educational process. National qualifications frameworks in countries

such as New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, draw their conceptual knowledge from this need for integration (Gamble, 2003, p.43).

Curriculum designers are confronted with challenges in developing curriculum that will raise outcomes for the marginalised at the same time addressing the quality of training required by modern industries operating in a globally competitive environment. Perold et al. (2012), mention that VET colleges are arguably the most important providers of intermediate-level technical and vocational skills, however, they are in the first instance reported to be under-resourced and often not situated where they are most needed. Furthermore, they have traditionally offered little career guidance to students, and students sometimes leave with the same level of qualification they arrived with. VET colleges have a poor image with employers and therefore only a minority of their graduates, accumulated across all fields, finds employment.

During the period 1990-2004, trade unions, businesses, government and intellectuals partnered to introduce education policies that addressed the new vision and plans to transform South African education. The main issues debated were the weaknesses of the apartheid curriculum; the nature of the economic and technological changes in the country; and, important social needs. The deliberations were also based on what knowledge and skills were needed by young people to develop democratic attitudes and to become useful citizens of the new democracy and to be able to work efficiently and to work in new areas of the economy, for example, the information technology sector (Moll et al., 2005).

According to Hoppers (2000), in order to address the identified VET curriculum inefficiencies and to depart from the curricula and the curricular approaches of the previous education system, the DoE had developed a new curriculum framework for the VET curriculum. The aims of the new VET curriculum, *inter alia*, served to foster and promote the development of high-quality skills which South Africa is in desperate need of; lay the foundation for open access; facilitate the transition from school to the world of work, which could lie in integrating practical and theoretical training; develop well educated, autonomous citizens capable of making decisions and solving problems; and, creating opportunities for continuous learning through the articulation of education and training programmes across tertiary institutions (Hoppers, 2000).

A key issue identified by Wedekind (2008) concerns the lack of vocational pedagogy in VET, which is hardly addressed. The absence of vocational pedagogy will have implications on the quality of teaching and learning at the VET colleges. According to Wedekind (2008), the recent introduction of the National Certificate (Vocational) NC(V) poses a range of curriculum questions that require research attention, namely: To what extent does the NC(V) address the employability criteria, and what types of knowledge are specified in that curriculum?; To what extent does the NC(V) curriculum fragment knowledge through outcomes specification?; and, To what extent are the existing college lecturers able to teach the new curriculum?

### **2.7.2 Business Studies and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa**

According to Gewer (2010), the NC(V) has been considered to be a significant milestone for VET colleges and despite its shortcomings, the NC(V) has required the colleges to engage with a more demanding level of teaching and learning. Gewer (2010), mentions that NC(V) programmes have positioned colleges effectively in preparing school leavers for occupational and learning pathways. Gewer (2010), states that there are concerns that the NC(V) curriculum is not optimally aligned to the skills demands of employers. A criticism against the DoE was its failure to consult sufficiently with industry when designing the curriculum (OECD, 2008). A more demanding level of teaching and learning required with the NC(V) could be exclusionary to intellectually challenged students.

Gewer (2010), recommends that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), engage with each industry sector to assess the relevance, accuracy, and fitness for purpose of the NC(V). He further suggests that in the medium-term, the DHET should engage with each industry sector to assess the relevance and accuracy of the NC(V) and thereby ensure fitness-for-purpose, without undermining the broader knowledge principles of the curriculum. The DHET, in the long-term, should initiate a process of curriculum review every five years in order to ensure that the NC(V) remains up to date and relevant and to ensure industry's continued buy-in to the NC(V). The DHET should also review what additional programmes could be introduced in the colleges, to add diversity as the demands of the labour market change (Gewer, 2010).

The National Technical Education (NATED) Business Studies programmes which are offered at VET colleges have not undergone major overhaul of the curricula inherited from the apartheid era and the qualifications are still not properly aligned with NQF principles. According to Watters (2008), the recently implemented NC(V) programmes are NQF aligned. Watters (2008) mentions that the NQF, a system which was introduced specifically to redress the inequalities of the past, is reproducing these inequalities because the mechanisms such as the recognition of prior learning and accreditation of programmes intended to facilitate articulation so students can re-enter the formal education system has disadvantaged rural students. A likely reason for this situation is the lack of access to information and the weak infrastructure that still exists in the rural areas of South Africa, including the weak learning histories as a result of attending poorly resourced rural schools with demoralized educators.

Watters (2008), maintains students exiting these schools lack the written language and mathematical competencies. In addition, access to structured education and training is far greater for urban than rural populations. Urban populations appear to be privileged in comparison to rural populations which generally experience exclusion to structured education and training because of their geographies.

The Business Studies curriculum has undergone changes and a new curriculum was introduced in 2007 because the NATED curriculum was considered to be 'outdated' for several reasons. The new curriculum is believed to be geared towards developing

students' 'critical thinking' and making them 'socially conscious' beings which would enable them to function as good citizens and contribute to the growth of South Africa's economy. The country has been plagued by different kinds of oppression and education and training has been the mantra of politicians and society and a way to free the broader South African society from poverty and different forms of oppression.

The NC(V) programmes in Business Studies comprise of, *inter alia*, Office Administration, Management, and Marketing. These programmes were introduced in 2007. The NC(V) programmes are currently offered in all of the 50 public FET colleges. The NC(V) qualifications are awarded at three levels, levels 2, 3 and 4, on the NQF. In 2007, there were 25 000 students enrolled in all NC(V) programmes which has increased steadily over the years. The NC(V) programmes in Business Studies are designed to provide both theory and practical experience in a particular vocational field.

## **2.8 GEOGRAPHIES OF EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.8.1 Exclusionary Dynamics within the Vocational Education and Training Curriculum**

Jeevananthan (1999) and Fiske & Ladd (2004) have found that the Eurocentric curriculum prior to a post-apartheid South Africa only catered for a minor segment of society and excluded the majority of the population. The curriculum design was

influenced ideologically by the apartheid system to protect the institutional racism which was prevalent in the curriculum content and most likely hand-picked to serve the apartheid system. In the new democratic era curriculum design has been revisited to make the curriculum more inclusive to the broader South African society.

The curriculum content during apartheid endorsed white supremacy (Gamble, 2003) and ignored black cultures and practices. The principles of democracy were ignored and the content promoted racial division. Black inferiority was constructed by portraying black culture as being deviant and inferior. The curriculum empowered the white population to exercise control over the black population by endorsing their superiority. The careful selection of the curriculum content was propagated to be the best and had established and justified white supremacy within the South African context. Non-European cultures were exposed to the curriculum to enforce acceptable European standards of cultural practice. The old curriculum was totally against democratic principles and was not sensitive to the needs of the broader South African society.

The NC(V) curriculum was designed to address the curriculum inadequacies of the previous curriculum and is sensitive to the cultural and social backgrounds of students. The NC(V) programmes are intended to address the skills shortages in South Africa and to develop the manpower needs of the country. The new curriculum is race, culture and gender sensitive. The curriculum is cognitively challenging and does not cater for students with learning disabilities and ABET (Adult Based Education and Training)

students because these students generally fail to meet the entry requirements for the NC(V).

The purpose of the current NC(V) programmes is to develop the cognitive skills of students. The intention to develop the cognitive skills implies that the students have to deal with a much more demanding and challenging programme which may be exclusionary to drop-outs and intellectually challenged students. Educational authorities anticipate that the NC(V) programmes would compel students to become competent in analysis and synthesis, logical thinking and problem solving which could be challenging for the students who did not manage with the school curriculum.

The NC(V) curriculum may be cognitively challenging to a slow learner. The majority of NC(V) programmes excludes students with special needs and ABET students.

College lecturers' attitudes towards students or their subjects may also be exclusionary. Some lecturers could become frustrated because they may not be appropriately equipped to teach students with special needs including those who find learning challenging. College lecturers would require appropriate training to enable them to teach slower paced students and students with disabilities. Students with special needs and slow paced students require more personalised attention and support and it may be challenging for lecturers to adequately satisfy the needs of students with learning disabilities and slower paced students.

According to FETI (2012), the lack of bridging courses in VET colleges has not benefited unsuccessful school leavers, resulting in them being poorly prepared for vocationally-orientated programmes such as the NC(V) and learnerships or apprenticeships. The public educational system has been criticized for its failure in developing lower level skills (FETI, 2012).

A future post-school education sector should be in a better position to address social and economic needs, and more specifically the needs of the labour market, in effective and efficient ways that the current system is unable to deliver. It would offer a range of different programmes for school leavers that could be inclusive of second chance opportunities to meet the requirements of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) or NC(V), and even bridging programmes that would provide access to other colleges or universities, as well as vocational and career-oriented programmes that would lead directly to the job market (Perold et al., 2012).

Evidence points to lower level skills development not adequately featuring in the public educational system of South Africa (FETI, 2012). Students who do not respond successfully to school academic education have not been adequately advised and guided to pursue Vocational Education and Training. Students experiencing problems with the school curriculum and with mainstream academic education at the school level should be encouraged to pursue Vocational Education and Training at the colleges. It should be noted that VET colleges have also acquired a poor reputation and have been criticized for producing poor quality results. VET colleges are however, viewed as

“second chance” institutions for students who have not been able to complete their schooling successfully. VET institutions have also been condemned for producing very low throughput rates (FETI, 2012). The VET system would have to put unsuccessful school leavers back on track so that they would be in a better position to improve their prospects, socially and economically.

According to a report by UNESCO (2001), in any education system, the curriculum is one of the major obstacles or tools to facilitate the development of a more inclusive system. The report reveals that in many contexts, the curriculum is extensive and demanding, or centrally designed and rigid, leaving little flexibility for local adaptations or for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. In addition, the content might be far removed from the reality in which the students live, and therefore inaccessible and demotivating. It may even be gender biased and degrading. The extensive and demanding curriculum could in many contexts be responsible for perpetuating the high dropout rate of students experiencing learning difficulties (UNESCO, 2001).

## **2.8.2 Inclusionary Dynamics within the Vocational Education and Training**

### **Curriculum**

Jeevananthan (1999) mentioned that it had become essential for the marginalized majority to have their cultures and values taken into consideration. He proposed the Africanisation of the curriculum. This process would enable the marginalized to have their respective cultures and values recognised in the new democratic era. In order to

achieve the ambitious goals proposed by Jeevananathan (1999), the educational authorities had to change the curriculum to satisfy the needs of the broader society. According to the Department of Education (2001), the curriculum of the new democracy was changed to make it more inclusionary and the curriculum required a review of the content, the language, the manner in which the classroom would have to be organised, and the use of different teaching methodologies, support materials for teaching and learning, and development of appropriate assessment instruments. The mode of delivery and assessment processes had to be transformed to accommodate all students (Department of Education, 2001).

Recent studies reveal that most of the younger students enrolled in the new college training programmes were not enrolled by personal choice (FETI, 2012). These students were brought to the colleges by their parents and school teachers because they were troublesome in school. It is also likely that they may have been unable to cope with the school academic curriculum. In order to accommodate the diversity of students' needs in the classroom, it is necessary to ensure differentiation in curriculum delivery to cater for the learning needs of diverse students. Diverse students can be accommodated by ensuring variations in the mode of delivery and assessment processes.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2011), having a diverse group of students simply means recognising that people are unique in their own way. The same would apply at the VET college level where we find there are students from different

socio-economic, language, cultural, religious, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, and ability groups, for example. All these students add rich diversity to the student population on campus. Students from different backgrounds can be accommodated by identifying any biases or stereotypes they may have absorbed, constantly re-evaluating educators' methods for teaching and assessing students in a diverse setting, considering different approaches, methodologies and strategies when teaching in the classroom, creating opportunities for all students to participate in activities, accepting each student and respecting each student, and avoiding using language that is biased (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Ngcobo & Muthukrishna (2011), provide a framework for systemic change where the goal of the education system is to respond to the full range of barriers to learning and participation experienced by students, including those that may arise from HIV/AIDS, language, disability, race, class, gender and socio-economic status differences. The researchers are of the view that the construction of an inclusive education system requires changes to the way in which people understand, conceptualise, explain and thus respond to diversity in the student population. Curriculum designers need to develop curriculum that are inclusive of language, disability, race, class, gender and socio-economic status differences.

The issues of equity (educational adequacy), inclusion and exclusion are linked to curriculum. It is essential to examine how students experience the present NC(V) curriculum and to examine the extent to which the barriers to learning and participation

are addressed in the curriculum offered at the college as a post-school education and training institution.

## **2.9 CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMING OF THE STUDY**

The age category of the students at the VET college differs and many students at the VET college have completed grade nine at school and are probably in their late teens. Individuals below 18 years are categorized as children (South African Children's Act, 2005). It is essential to define the concept 'child' in this study. A 'child' is a person or human being under the age of 18 years. This conceptualisation is in keeping with the South African Children's Act no. 38 of 2005 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989).

The students as participants usually reflect on their schooling experiences and whether their schooling has set them up properly to access tertiary education. Effective schooling is essential to equip children to make a choice of the tertiary institution in which they intend to pursue their future post school studies. There are many children at school who drop out before accessing Grade 12. The question which arises is whether the schooling system has failed South African children and compromised their future prospects. If the schooling system has been responsible for failing children then the VET colleges are an acceptable alternative form of education which out of school children could use for improving their future prospects.

### **2.9.1 Students Exclusion and Inclusion in Education**

A simple search on the internet or newspaper archives reveals a myriad of issues affecting students and the youth such as drug abuse, binge drinking, teenage pregnancy, and anti-social behaviour and so on, all of which are grave concerns for society if they are not addressed (Weller, 2006). In South Africa, students and the youths' lives are affected by these issues therefore, it is essential to cater for these individuals so that they can improve their educational prospects. These individuals are also vulnerable and they can be accommodated in an inclusive educational system which the VET colleges are capable of delivering.

UNESCO (2007, p.66) views inclusion as *“a dynamic approach of responding positively to student diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning.”*

An analysis of this definition reveals that the move towards inclusion is not simply a technical or organisational change but also a movement with a clear philosophy (UNESCO, 2007). UNESCO (2007) adds that in order for inclusion to be implemented effectively, different countries would have to define a set of inclusive principles combined with practical ideas to guide the transition towards policies addressing inclusion in education. The principles of inclusion that are set out in various international declarations can be used as a foundation through interpretation and adaptation to the context of individual countries. The curriculum has to be revised to make the delivery of

education inclusive for children affected by the myriad of issues that exist. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2006, p.202) provides a definition which in a way touches on the VET curriculum and exposes changes and touches on social justice in the last century and describes this as follows:

“Curriculum has responded to social issues by including such subjects as consumer education (or other applications of the economics of a free enterprise society), ethnic or multicultural education, environmental education, sex and family-life education, and substance-abuse education. Recent interest in vocational-technical education has been directed toward establishing specialized vocational schools, improving career information resources, integrating school and work experience, utilizing community resources, and meeting the needs of the labour market. ... Curriculum reforms have accentuated the academic basics, particularly mathematics, science, and language, as well as the ‘new basics’, including computers. Computers have become increasingly important in education not only as a field of study but also as reference and teaching aids”.

According to UNESCO (2007, p.33), the curriculum must be inclusive and adaptable to the needs of students in different or difficult situations. All teaching and learning materials should be free from gender stereotypes and from harmful or negative representations of any ethnic or indigenous groups. All children with disabilities must be assisted to fulfil their potential and provision must be made to enable them to learn Braille, or sign language, for example (UNESCO, 2007, p. 33).

Curriculum designers need to consider student diversity and individual differences when designing the curriculum. The curriculum has to be responsive to the needs of students with different abilities, different gender, different cultures and values to accommodate diversity in the student population at the different sites of delivery. The OBE (Outcomes Based Education) approach is used for curriculum delivery at the FET colleges. The curriculum should promote equity by meeting the needs of all individuals which implies that the curriculum must be based on the principle of fairness which requires differential treatment according to student diversity.

Education exclusion is an aspect of social exclusion and establishes itself in a range of social and psychological inequities (Sayed, Subrahmanian, Soudien, Carrim, Balgopalan, Nekhwevha & Samuel, 2007). These researchers have found that extreme educational exclusion arises when individuals and groups find themselves systematically excluded from rights and entitlements which are theirs as a result of their membership of a society and includes denial of resources and facilities. At the other end of the spectrum exclusion could take the form of subtle forms of manipulation of the delivery of educational goods and services to favour some individuals and groups at the expense of others, or the reinforcement of negative or discriminatory social attitudes towards individuals. In these cases, while the effects are often as damaging as when extreme forms of exclusion occur, proof is harder to adduce (Sayed et al., 2007).

On the supply side Sayed et al. (2007), state that education policy has been particularly oriented to expanding supply to ensure universal enrolment of students. They mention that poor supply of quality education at institutions continues to be a factor constraining the access of different groups of students in these institutions. The researchers have found that the educational landscape is plagued by consistent gaps in the education participation and achievement of different social groups. Inequalities thus need to be seen not just in relation to the physical access of students in VET colleges, but also in relation to the quality of the education experience and its ability to maximise the potential of every student, build self-esteem and develop capacities to function fully as citizens (Sayed et al., 2007).

### **2.9.2 Students Agency and Research in Educational Contexts**

Weller (2006) argues that the complex transitional positioning of students, teenagers and young adults (situated between childhood, youth and adulthood) has been not been given much attention in geographical and social research and has not led to researchers adequately utilizing participants' own constructions of themselves. Weller (2006), states that the term teenager, for example, is socially and culturally constructed and has been consistently portrayed negatively in the media. Weller (2006) suggests that the focus on teenagers and students' geographies rests on the contribution that geographers can make in challenging negative stereotypes of these groups within policy and the media.

The researcher adopts a similar stance as Weller (2006) as to whether an adequate emphasis on students and young adults' geographies has been established. This research will focus on the experiences of students in a VET college. The study provides students with an opportunity to voice their experiences of the Business Studies curriculum at the VET college. It is essential that students' own self-definitions are adhered to and used by researchers and that by working with and promoting students' voices, researchers have an important role to play in challenging negative stereotypes and power relations within research and policy (Weller, 2006). There are many students who enter the VET system and the environment that they are exposed to could circumscribe their experiences which may affect their personalities and perspectives to an extent, which have been affirmed in social studies conducted by Holloway and Valentine (2000). Students have unique characters and are differentiated by other factors such as gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and class.

The researcher views students as not being passive objects, but as competent social actors that make sense of and actively contribute to their environment. The increasing trend to conceptualize students as social actors has profound implications for the researcher's own geographical research with students, most notably the development of more 'inclusive' and participatory research agendas and student-centred methodologies. The researcher is of the view that students have developed useful knowledge starting from their schooling experiences. They are beings with minds of their own and are capable of making their own decisions and choices.

Students are not a homogenous group. It is interesting to note how they protect their own identities by being different which profoundly impact their lives and they develop ways that prevent themselves from being seen to be different and to fit in and belong (Sutton, 2009).

Sutton (2009), mentions that students with money can buy future life chances and that there is continuing and increasing disparity between the rich and the poor which can be observed in South Africa. The disparity between rich and poor produces social disintegration and a lack of integration and this polarisation affects individuals' life chances. Students are being segregated on the grounds of wealth and place as the wealthy parents transfer their children into private schools and gear them towards a university education, while those without the financial means remain segregated and static. The advantages gained by those with money to buy future life chances are, in turn, passed on to the next generation and young peoples' perceptions and experiences show the impact of this inequality (Sutton, 2009).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

The research will examine the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in the educational lives of the students in a FET college context and how they actively navigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics which they experience at the college. The study aims to examine the extent to which the Business Studies NC(V) curriculum is inclusionary and exclusionary for the diverse students which enter the FET

college system in addressing gender, socio-economic background, culture, age, disability, and race.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the research methodology and the design of the study. The aim is to introduce the research processes that were adopted in researching the participants' experiences of the Business Studies VET programme in a VET college context in KwaZulu-Natal. The study was a narrative study which included the narratives of six participants. The narratives were used as a data generation technique. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to elicit responses from the individual interviews and focus group discussions. The questions in the interview schedule were also prepared in IsiZulu so that the questions could be clearly understood by the participants. The data collection instrument, research method and approach of the study adopted were motivated by the objective and purpose of this research which was to examine the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum through students' experiences in a VET college in the South of Durban. A qualitative approach was adopted in this study.

This chapter also discusses the research design, the sample of the study and sampling techniques, and the techniques of data generation, namely, the narratives of participants which were guided by semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was used to gather all the participants in the study to obtain a clearer account of the participants' experiences, attitudes and

perceptions of the Business Studies curriculum. The chapter proceeds with a discussion on the ethical considerations of the study, validity and reliability, and the procedures utilized to analyse the data. The chapter is concluded with an ensuing discussion of the study's limitations.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study embraced a qualitative research approach because the research concentrated predominantly on the experiences of students based on their narratives. Qualitative research can enable the researcher to obtain rich data from a small number of participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) and is an 'inquiry' process of understanding that explores a social or human problem (Cresswell, 1998, p.1). The research was focused on the adoption of an inquiry process so that rich data could be obtained from a small sample size. The sample comprised of six participants who were purposively selected for this particular study. The sample included three male and three female, NQF level 4, Business Studies students.

This study was conducted at one of the largest and oldest VET colleges in Durban. The VET college is situated close to an industrialised area in an urban environment. The college accommodates students mainly from Lamontville, Umlazi and Mobeni.

### **3.3 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

The study was conducted in a VET college where the researcher has worked for almost eight years. The location of the college made it convenient for the researcher to select the sample used for gathering the data for the research. The choice of location had resulted in minimizing time, travelling, and other costs. The college enrolls diverse students from different social, political and economic backgrounds which had to be represented by the sample.

A sample represents a section of the population that is considered to be used as participants in a study. The sample represents a small portion of the entire set of aims or persons that collectively comprise the focus of study. Sampling is a criterion that is used for selecting the participants of the study. The participants were sampled using purposive sampling which implies that interviewees were targeted according to specific characteristics such as their gender, year of study, and area of study, for example.

The sample was selected from the Office Administration programme (level 4 students) in the Business Studies Department. The researcher is a lecturer in the Business Studies Department and felt that it was important to research the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum by examining students' experiences through the process of narrative enquiry which is based on the stories the participants have to tell. According to Frank (2000), people tell stories, but narratives come from the analysis of the stories. The researcher's role is to interpret the

stories with a view of analysing the underlying narrative that the storytellers may not be able to give voice to themselves (Riley & Hawe, 2004).

The participants were in their final year of study and they would probably have more stories to tell about their experiences of the VET programme than students who are in their first and second year of their studies. The Office Administration programme is the only NC(V) programme currently offered since the inception of the NC(V) in 2007. The Office Administration programme caters for students who usually fail to meet the entry requirements for other programmes, such as Engineering Studies and General Studies.

The sample size was appropriate and yielded sufficient data to answer the research questions of this study. The study was conducted on the premises of the selected college situated in KZN. The reason for using purposive random sampling for selecting the participants is that the results cannot be directly generalized to all VET colleges in South Africa, and this appears to be a limitation of the study.

### **3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The methods of data collection were based on the narratives of six students who were the participants of the study. The tool used for data collection was a semi-structured interview schedule used for the individual interviews and the focus group discussion with the participants of the study. The aim was to develop a more in-depth

understanding and to draw conclusions from the findings of the participants' experiences of VET based on the questions which appeared in the interview schedule.

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed for the individual and focus group interviews. The interview schedule included questions based on the students' experiences relating to the choice of the Business Studies VET programme and curriculum, experiences related to the accessibility of resources for the practicals, experiences related to support and career guidance, forms of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics within the VET college, and navigation of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics. These questions provided data from the perspectives of the students on the adequacy of the vocational and training curriculum in equipping them with skills and knowledge required by the labour market and the effectiveness and efficiency of the Business Studies curriculum.

The interviews helped to access information through students' narratives of their experiences at the VET college. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions. The series of semi-structured questioning and probing succeeded the open-endedness. The probing helped elicit additional information and obtain clarifications on issues raised by the participants. The individual interviews conducted with the participants were audio recorded and later transcribed for data analysis. The participants were informed about the voice recordings prior to participating in the study.

The participants were interviewed individually and thereafter a focus group session was organised. The purpose of the focus-group session was to give the participants a chance to consider and build upon what other individuals in the group may have said about the matters raised. An endeavour was made to put each participant at ease through the implementation of an informal manner, and in explaining to them the nature of the research, and what their participation added to the study.

Researchers have introduced innovative methodologies for working with children and young people and have adapted methods such as interviews and surveys to access and research non-adult worlds (Robinson & Gillies, 2012). The study adopted a qualitative approach with the use of narrative enquiry which was appropriate for the purpose of this particular study which focused on students' stories of their lived experiences of the Business Studies curriculum and the inclusionary processes and exclusionary pressures that have played out during their educational lives at the VET college. A critical approach would focus on the interests of young people and is critical of the unequal and unjust organisation of the social world. Young people continue to be negatively stereotyped by the media and policy makers (Weller, 2006). A critical framework attempts to deconstruct the world and break down institutional structures and relationships that reproduce oppressive ideologies and social inequalities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The researcher used the qualitative method to generate in-depth and rich oral data about the students' personal experiences over time. The participation was voluntary in

providing the information on the issue being explored. The participants were interviewed inside the college in a neutral venue using face-to-face contact. A list of general research questions was developed in advance. Open-ended questions were asked during the individual interviews and focus group discussions because open-ended questions can enable the researcher to probe more deeply to obtain the in-depth responses required from the participants narratives.

The researcher views young people as not being passive objects dependent on adults, but as competent social actors who can make meaning of their lives and are also capable of making sense of, and actively contributing to their environment. The increasing trend to conceptualize young people as social actors has profound implications for the researcher's own geographical research with young people, most notably the development of more 'inclusive' and participatory research agendas and young people-centred methodologies. The term 'young people' is socially and culturally constructed (Weller, 2006) and young people are beings with minds of their own and are capable of making their own decisions and choices.

### **3.4.1 Individual Interviews**

Individual interviews were conducted with the participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. A discussion was held with the participants prior to the commencement of the interviews. The participants were informed about the use of a voice recorder and that all interviews had to be voice recorded. The researcher

requested permission for the voice recording. All participants agreed to the voice recording. The purpose of the voice recording was to assist with the transcription process and to provide an accurate account of the participants' feelings when they provided the narratives during the interviews. The voice recordings captured their emotional and vocal state. The researcher reminded the participants to remain calm and assured the participants that the information would be treated with the strictest confidentiality. The semi-structured interviews aided the researcher to probe, restate and track interesting issues. The interviews were conducted over a three week period. The learners availed themselves for the interviews and the interviews were conducted without any anomalies. The researcher remained professional and was neutral during the process and allowed the participants to speak naturally.

### **3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions**

A focus group was used in the study to clarify data from the previous interviews. The focus group included all the participants. The focus group provided an opportunity for the participants to interact with each other and resulted in the emergence of useable data (Cohen et al., 2000). The focus group session generated a deeper understanding of the participants' responses to the questions which were posed during the individual interviews. The researcher found that with the focus group session he was actually placed in a better position to measure the extent to which his interpretation blended with the participants' understandings. The participants were allowed to clarify details during the focus group session.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical issues applicable to research in general and those that affected the nature of this study in particular were considered. The method adopted was to ensure that the participants were treated with respect and that confidentiality of the participants was ensured. Validity is a common problem concerning all types of research. To ensure that the research was valid and reliable, the researcher had to ensure that the data was authentic. The researcher addressed validity by ensuring that participants spoke freely during the interview process. The researcher had to ensure that the research was sound, in other words it was reliable so that it could be trusted (Cohen et al., 2011).

The researcher had obtained ethical clearance from the University of Kwazulu-Natal and sought permission from other relevant authorities including the DoE, the campus manager of the college, parents and the participants. Ethical issues were not compromised during the research. Letters requesting permission to conduct research were handed to the relevant authorities, including the campus manager. Consent forms were completed by parents/caregivers and the participants involved in the study.

The researcher used simple language in the consent forms for the parents/caregivers and participants so that they were able to understand the information. The parent/caregiver only signed if he/she approved of the child's participation in the research project. It was stressed to all participants that confidentiality and anonymity

would be ensured. The participants were provided with a simple explanation that their participation in the research project was voluntary. The researcher also explained to the participants very simply that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Young and Barret (2001) mentioned that ensuring confidentiality of all information, and anonymity for participants, are necessary components for building trust. It was essential that the researcher developed trust between himself and the participants. The researcher had achieved trust by challenging unequal power relations resulting in ethical ways of knowing and by negotiating access with the participants and promising confidentiality around the participant's identities. The researcher had to detach himself from emotion and biasness as a researcher.

### **3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity is a requirement which is applicable to several stages of the research process (Cohen et al., 2007). Validity is therefore applicable to the instrument design, sampling procedures, data collection and interpretation of the data. It makes absolute sense that if the data collection method, for instance, is not valid, then the conclusion the researcher draws from the data will also not be valid. Triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007) is the use of two or more methods of data gathering. Voice recordings and transcripts were used to improve the validity of this particular study. Another appropriate method which was used to ensure validity in the study was to assure the participants that they would remain anonymous and that they would be given pseudonyms. The effect of

protecting their identities was intended to enable them to speak honestly without the fear of having to be traced. The data was also cross-examined to determine whether it made sense. The data was not tampered with in any way and was made available to the interviewees on completion of the interview process through an informal feedback session to discuss the findings and outcomes of the research. According to Cohen et al. (2007), bias could arise from the participants' subjectivity, opinions, attitudes and feelings.

The study was qualitative in nature and the reliability of the data was dependent on the honesty and integrity in reporting, interpreting the depth of factors and richness of the data acquired (Cohen et al., 2007). The data gathering process was affected by time constraints. The study was conducted in a short period of time and every effort had to be made to reduce the possibility of collecting unreliable data which usually occurs when gathering data during a limited time period. The issue of validity was also safeguarded through the continuous analysis of the data.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Content analysis was applied to the interview data to identify meaningful phenomena in the data. Descriptive codes were allocated and themes were generated after examining the relations in the data to make it more meaningful. For example, codes like "practical training," "employment," "reasons for choosing VET," "learner career induction," "curriculum quality," "students' needs assessment," "preparation for the workplace,"

"societal challenges," and "how students address the challenges" were used to describe the data in relation to the students' experiences of VET.

The researcher had to examine all the data thoroughly to determine whether the coding was accurate in relation to the phenomena. The descriptive codes which had connected with each other meaningfully were grouped in categories such as the students' experiences relating to the choice of the Business Studies VET programme and curriculum, experiences related to the accessibility of resources for the practicals, experiences related to support and career guidance, forms of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics within the VET college, and navigation of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics.

These categories made it possible to identify the main themes present in the data. The data was re-examined and restructured according to these themes. Finally, thematic coding was carried out to determine the general themes for the data. The codes at this level included themes like "students' experiences of the Business Studies curriculum," "inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in the educational lives of these students related to the Business Studies curriculum," and "how students actively navigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they experience at this college." The thematic coding assisted to create the report structure which presented the descriptions and interpretations of the findings.

### **3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research was only conducted in one specific VET college. The size of the sample meant that the findings in this study could not be generalized to all VET colleges in the country. The data could only be analysed inductively, in other words from the findings evolving from gathered data. An attempt was made to draw conclusions from the findings on inferences for the wider population. The study was also subject to time and financial restraints. The data was collected during a period of three weeks and the data gathering had to be as vigorous as possible without appearing to be harassing to any of the participants.

A major challenge of the study was to locate participants who were willing to participate by sharing their experiences related to the research questions which were developed. The challenge was to build and maintain trust with the participants, and some of the participants who initially volunteered to participate withdrew from the study. Other participants had to be selected which made data gathering even more time consuming.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the research design was presented briefly. The research method has also been outlined. The sample yielded an abundance of data for the analysis and interpretation stage.

The next chapter will present a discussion of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies curriculum through the narratives of six students at a VET college in KwaZulu-Natal. The study employed a qualitative research approach comprising of a semi-structured interview schedule. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were the methods employed to collect data. The narratives of the six NQF level 4 (final year) participants from the Office Administration programme yielded sufficient data to answer the research questions of this study. The Office Administration programme is currently the only NC(V) qualification offered full-time in the Department of Business Studies at the selected campus of the VET college.

This chapter presents the research data and provides a narrative overview of the individual interviews and the focus group interviews conducted at a VET college. The data presented is based on the transcribed audio recordings. The chapter is structured to address the following themes. Firstly, it examines students' experiences of the Business Studies curriculum. Secondly, it examines the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in the educational lives of these students related to the Business Studies curriculum, and finally, it examines how the students actively navigated the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics which they had experienced in this VET college.

## **4.2 STUDENTS EXPERIENCES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The participants' experiences relating to the VET college indicated that they had developed useful knowledge and skills which had inspired them and increased their confidence as individuals. They believed that their studies would improve their employment prospects and also make it possible for them to access other institutions, such as, universities or universities of technology in the foreseeable future. The participants felt that the college was able to satisfy most of their needs although some of them were restricted from enrolling in other programmes, such as, Engineering Studies and General Studies because they had either failed to satisfy the entrance requirements or there were no spaces available because the classes were full.

### **4.2.1 Experiences of Vocational Education and Training Programme and the Curriculum**

The participants mentioned that the Office Administration programme had provided them with practical training. They felt that they had an advantage over university graduates because they had developed relevant skills, which employers require. The likely reasons why the participants had pursued VET were to acquire a qualification, which would enable them to find employment and also grant them access to further studies at a university or a university of technology in the future.

The participants felt that the Office Administration programme had assisted them in developing practical competencies which they had not developed adequately during their schooling lives. Majority of the participants believed that the VET programme had improved their chances of securing employment considerably because they had learnt important work-based skills which they had not acquired at school.

The findings indicated that the participants had gained useful knowledge and skills from the VET programme in comparison to the academically inclined education they had received at school. The findings also revealed that the participants were pleased with the vocational subjects such as Business Practice, Applied Accounting, Office Practice, New Venture Creation and Office Data Processing which comprised of theoretical and practical training which made it easier for them to improve their understanding of the subject matter. They found that the practical training in the four vocational subjects was useful and that it had assisted them to develop the essential skills required by the labour market. They were confident that they were placed in a much better position to find jobs when compared to university graduates because of the skills-based training they had received at the college.

The data revealed that the VET programme provided 'second chance' opportunities for students who had not achieved much success with their schooling in terms of the facilities, resources, teaching methodologies and learning materials which had been available and which was also mentioned in studies by Klinck & Combrinck (2012). Some of the participants felt that the Life Orientation subject was not beneficial and one

participant lamented about the Life Orientation subject and why he had to repeat a subject he had already passed at school. He felt that the Life Orientation subject should be replaced with a more 'productive' subject because he had not derived any benefit from the Life Orientation subject. Another participant mentioned that she was pleased with Life Orientation but did not like the name 'Life Orientation' and she suggested that the subject should be renamed.

Some participants had viewed the VET programmes as a second, lesser option in terms of pay prospects. A concern was that the jobs they would secure would not be attractive in terms of pay. The only job that a student would be able to find with the Office Administration qualification would probably be a clerical job, which would not be a well-paying job, was the view expressed by a participant.

The participants responses regarding their experiences based on their choice of the VET programme were as follows:

*Thandi: I did my matric in Green Secondary School [not the actual name of the school attended] and I had a problem because I did hard subjects like physics, accounting and computers. We did not have good resources and access to computers as we do here [in the VET college], and it was hard to write exams and we had problems...we didn't have physics teachers, so it made it impossible for us to pass matric and when we came here we could get an education, computer access and have lecturers that are here when we*

*need them. So I came to this school because I didn't pass my matric and I wanted to get that plus a qualification.*

*Here we are taught how to dress up in an office, how to function in the office, which is very good in the way they show it to us. I have learnt a lot from the college. I'm so prepared to go into the outside world and work. I learnt so much in the college. In fact when I came here I didn't know half the things I know now. I am now thoroughly prepared to start working.*

*Life Orientation is just adding more workload for us and we also covered that part in Business Practice and Office Practice, learning how to work with different people and to interact with them.*

*Sipho: It [Office Administration] is good, it is interesting. It taught me a lot. ...There are a few subjects that are similar to what I studied at school like, LO [Life Orientation], something that I did pass [at school] so I don't see why I'm doing it now. But the other subjects are more productive. Accounting, Business Practice, Office Practice, ODP [Office Data Processing] and English.....I'm judging from what I want to do, they all have something that I have learnt. In English, I don't think I can go anywhere if I don't know English, and ODP. They all have different things that they teach me about the business.*

*Rose: I didn't have a matric so I decided to go to a vocational college. I experienced lots because at first when I came here I didn't know anything about computers. I received*

*more education, more practice. I don't see any job I can get [with my qualification] because judging from my course the only job I can get is being a clerk but in my position that is the only job you can get...but there are not well paying jobs. I was going to say that this is one of the disadvantages about Business Studies. I don't think I'm returning to college next year to further my studies.*

*Sabelo: I think Business Studies is based on management, so it's like that [similar]. In this course I learnt about the office duties like how to answer the telephone, how to make photocopies. This year I learnt about the cultures of different nations.*

*Mandisa: My reason for enrolling at this college is because I didn't make it to matric. I failed my matric and I failed my supplementary, then after that I stayed at home. I was thinking what am I going to do? Okay I've experienced a lot from Business Studies... the way they teach us, I can go to work and enter the job world... except for LO [Life Orientation], they shouldn't call it LO [Life Orientation]. They should name it another subject. There is a lot that we learn in BP [Business Practice], we learn a lot about payments, procedures and all that, everything that happens in the business world. In OP [Office Practice] we have done a few practicals like learning to answer the phone... I don't use the college library but the facilities are not bad. We've got access to go to computer rooms. We can use the internet and also get free textbooks. The facilities are not that bad.*

The VET programme has been designed towards preparing students for social and occupational life. The participants had learnt about different cultures, how to use different office equipment, bookkeeping, communication, and a plethora of other skills. The Office Administration VET programme had provided the participants with an alternative to purely academic education and accommodated students who had been rejected by the universities and universities of technology. In this regard, the participants affirmed that the Business Studies, Office Administration programme had equipped students by providing them with an opportunity to reach their future goals. The institution is perceived to be a 'second chance' institution because unsuccessful and out of school students are provided with opportunities to engage in further study.

The participants schooling experiences as well as their socio-economic backgrounds had prevented them from gaining access into programmes and institutions of their choice. Majority of the participants were not academically inclined and they had preferred practical training to academic education. The participants expressed their need for more practical instruction than is presently offered in the Office Administration programme. The participants were dissatisfied with the extensive theoretical content of the subjects. Many participants had failed Grade 12 (matric) and some participants mentioned that they had not achieved a reasonable pass to enable them to access formal education. The data suggests that some participants may have attended poorly resourced schools which impacted their academic performance at the school level. It is likely that most of the participants had performed better with their studies in the college than in school. There may be several possible reasons for their improved performance

at the college, such as, more hands on training and the availability of resources and other facilities.

The findings which emerged from the participants experiences of the VET curriculum are presented in the following paragraphs. The participants believed that the Office Administration curriculum would enable them to reach their future goals such as finding employment or furthering their studies at a university. The compulsory fundamental subjects which included English and Mathematical Literacy were viewed as important subjects which would enable a person to function effectively in the workplace and some of the participants felt that a person could not get anywhere without having acquired knowledge of these subjects.

Majority of the participants mentioned that they had not passed Grade 12 (matric) and that the Business Studies: Office Administration curriculum would equip them with a certificate at NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level 4 which was equivalent to Grade 12 (matric) which they would use to access academic education. The participants' experiences related to the Business Studies: Office Administration curriculum revealed that the curriculum had been geared in preparing them for occupational life due to the skills-based training they had been exposed to. The participants felt that the curriculum responded to the labour market needs and their needs as well. Most of the participants were not afraid to attest their poor academic performance at school and they emphasized that the vocational curricula provided a means for them to secure employment because of practical training.

The negative sentiment echoed by some participants regarding the curriculum was that it was demanding because some of the subjects were difficult. This finding indicates that the Office Administration curriculum is cognitively challenging for students which was mentioned by Gewer (2010). Some participants felt that the curriculum was comparable to school because there were too many subjects and that each day at the college was long because they had spent too many hours at the college. The participants stated that they were aggrieved by the fact that they had been issued with only certificates after their three years of study. They mentioned that they received certificates when they completed each NQF level, which was of one year duration. One of the participants mentioned that he had completed his matric and that he was not pleased with having to complete NQF levels 2 and 3 because it was a “waste” of his time and prevented him from “advancing” on the NQF. The participants believed that VET would enable them to reach their future goals such as finding employment or furthering their studies at a university. A few participants had failed Grade 12 and they had a further goal which was to obtain a certificate at level 4 which they mentioned would be equivalent to matric.

The participants’ responses regarding the Office Administration curriculum were as follows:

*Mandisa: I wanted to achieve my matric because level 4 is matric. Matric is needed wherever [institutions] you go. You cannot get a job without matric. I wanted to complete the NC(V) so I could study elsewhere but now I’m planning to get a job. I think I have*

*learnt a lot of skills because the things you do in my course, it's like we are already in the job world. There is a lot of theory and there is less practical.*

*Sipho: When you are in high school you had to study from 8h00 to 15h00 [the same as in the college]. The things we do are exactly like high school. If we could do three to four subjects then we [would] have enough time to study and go home and rest and do other work. It's tiring... And NC(V) is basically for those who don't have Grade 10 and upwards. Some of us have matric and the things we do here are hard, for example accounting is hard. Could you imagine if a Grade 9 student was here doing the things I'm doing now. It's hard for me...*

*Thandi: I want to achieve my matric certificate and a job qualification. We have to spend three years just for three certificates; it's not okay because we don't have matric. We have Grade 8 and Grade 11. The thing we wanted from college is matric. To spend three years for a certificate is too much for us. But if it was only a year to do just the certificate then it would be okay. The other two years could enable us to complete maybe level 5 or 6.*

*Rose: Some of us cannot manage, some students are bunking class and they are not going to attend the lectures, and I think it is a challenge for the students because they don't want to go to the class sometimes.*

*If you were going to the workplace maybe you will have two students, university and college...they would take the college student because they know that the college student has practical training...and the university student does not have practical, only theory. So we have practical [training] mostly here. I prefer practicals.*

*Thabo: I experienced with the vocational there is more practical, there is also theory because when you compare with the universities, in the universities there is no practicals. According to my view there are other students that work at Transnet. They tell me..."focus on what you are doing and you will get a better job". I enjoy practicals because when I compare with high schools, it is very different...I enjoyed the training.*

*Sabelo: It is challenging at times....especially at the beginning of the year we are doing a lot of assessments. If you are not submitting the assessments it's going to make trouble with the lecturers. I learnt more. I was a person that was shy and practicals need that person who can talk with each other. I'm good at doing the practical things. Some students are here because of [their] parents, they do not like to be here. I think they like to stay outside with their friends. We see much here [anti-social behaviour} in South Africa. Young people are smoking drugs like wonga and some become gangsters.*

A participant mentioned that some of the students are studying in the college because they were forcibly brought into the college by their parents. These students have been pressurised by their parents to study at the college. If they were allowed the freedom to exercise their own choice, they would have probably preferred to be with their friends.

These individuals would most likely be influenced negatively and indulge in undesirable activities such as consuming alcohol or taking drugs. There are thousands of youth throughout the country who engage in these undesirable activities and if they are not guided and counselled they would contribute to the degeneration of society. VET can contribute to social development and improve the quality of life of such individuals. The VET institutions can protect youngsters and keep them off the streets by inspiring them to acquire knowledge and skills for the real world.

The Office Administration VET curriculum has presented many challenges which the educational authorities would have to address. A major challenge is that the curriculum does not enable students to enter higher education. The participants are confident that they will receive a certificate equivalent to Grade 12 at the end of level 4. The benefit of achieving a Grade 12 equivalent certificate, according to the participants' views, is that they would be granted access to the labour market or higher education. The qualification which is currently offered at the VET college does not allow for articulation into higher education. A student cannot progress vertically (from NQF level 4 towards NQF levels 5 and above) at present because the curriculum for these levels may have not hitherto been developed. NQF levels 5 and above are currently not available at the college. The students could advance horizontally if they choose to enrol for other programmes on the same NQF levels, for example, Tourism, which is pitched on the same NQF levels 2, 3 and 4 as with the Office Administration programme.

The implication is that irrespective of the number of qualifications a student may achieve in a VET college, all of the qualifications attained would be pitched on the same NQF levels, that is, NQF levels 2, 3 and 4. Some participants are of the view that they would be able to gain entry into a university with a level 4 certificate and it is likely that they are unaware of the entry requirements and the point system in place at the universities and universities of technology. The absence of partnerships between higher education institutions and VET colleges may jeopardise the goals of successful level 4 students studying at the VET colleges. The students usually end up studying at the same college in other programmes and achieving qualifications pitched on the same NQF levels 2, 3 and 4. The students are presently awarded with a certificate after successfully completing each NQF level of the selected programme.

The NSC provides articulation into academic education for successful students. VET provides skills training and prepares the students for entry into the labour market. Students have been provided with a 'second chance' opportunity to improve their career and educational prospects and achieve mainly employment goals with VET. The curriculum appears to cater for most students with assumed intellectual capacities for preparation towards employment in industries.

The VET curriculum has provided the students with an alternative to academic education and has accommodated students who have been rejected by the universities which generally follow a purely academic curriculum. The curriculum was found to be challenging by some participants because the NC(V) curriculum appears to be more

demanding than the NATED curriculum. A possible reason is that the NC(V) was designed to develop the students' cognitive skills because practical skills alone are not adequate to prepare the students for the changing workplace demands.

#### **4.2.2 Experiences Related to the Accessibility of Resources for the Practicals**

The participants mentioned that they had spent roughly between 30% and 40% of the time doing practical lessons and between 60% and 70% of the time on theory and that they had acquired important work-based skills from the practical training they received in the relatively well resourced simulated rooms and computer laboratories. They found that the computer laboratories in the college were better resourced than the simulated room which lacked certain essential resources and equipment for practical training.

The data revealed that the resources at the college were adequate and accessible for the practical training when compared to the resources that were available at the schools the participants had attended. The participants emphasized that they had learnt useful skills such as typing, communication, operating different office equipment, computer software application and accessing the internet. A participant related her experience at her school where the students had to share computers and that she had to learn by watching other students because there were not enough computers available in her school. She found that the college was well resourced and even the lecturers teaching the practical component of the subjects were willing to assist the students who were experiencing difficulty during practical training.

When the participants were asked about practical training and resources their responses were as follows:

*Sipho: Practical training takes place in the SIM room. It has adequate resources... for example, the business practice lecturers use the SIM room to make what they are teaching clear.*

*Thandi: We have access to computers which is not easy to access where we live. I have learnt a lot and I can use a computer very well now. The computers we get here and the lecturers are very helpful. We get access to everything we need. We have internet access and almost everything. In high school we studied computers but we didn't have access to computers and the computers had problems. Students had to share computers. One had to do the work and the other had to look. It wasn't good enough for us. When I came here I used to use one finger to type and now I can type faster than what I could do when I came here. I have learnt a lot from NC(V) and I am happy with what I learnt here.*

*Thabo: In Business Studies they also provide theory and practical. There are a lot of things you study in Business Studies. Most of the students focus mostly on the practicals. I enjoyed the training, both practical and theoretical. I enjoy the practicals because when I compare studies with the high schools, it is very different. The school compared to the NC(V), I would say in the high school we used computers. We shared*

*computers sometimes in high school. I know how to type, I know how to address people and it makes a big difference.*

*Sabelo: I think it prepares me for work because I do the practicals. It means I'm ready to work.*

*Mandisa: We've got access to computer rooms and we can use the internet.*

*Rose: We have more theory than practicals...so we take more hours for theory than practical. I think we must have practical more often than theory.*

The dynamics which may have affected the educational lives of these participants could possibly be linked to their schooling. The data suggests that most of the students had attended schools that were poorly resourced and which focused extensively on academic education which could have impacted the schooling of some of the participants.

The VET programme is skills-based. A problem which the participants experienced was that the theory was extensive and challenging hence their preference for more 'hands on' practical training. The participants need for more practical training could present educational authorities and curriculum designers with the challenge of expanding the practical component to facilitate more 'hands on' training for the students at large. The

practical training, resources and facilities available at the college is indicative of the college's commitment to the government's national development agenda.

The participants found that the VET college had provided them with a better quality of education, both theoretical and practical, because the institution had been better resourced in comparison to the schools they had attended. The challenges in providing VET are that it requires buildings, facilities and equipment which are very costly and have implications for finance, instructional delivery, and curriculum development. The quality of training could be compromised if the funds that are required to provide facilities and equipment are not available. In order to address these challenges effectively, institutions need to partner with industries and other institutions.

#### **4.2.3 Experiences Related to Support and Career Guidance**

The participants were asked to explain their understanding of VET and they held very similar views on the meaning of VET. One of the participants had mentioned that VET prepares a person for a job. Some of the other participants had mentioned that VET is a type of education that prepares a person with important skills which are necessary for a particular career or job. The participants understanding of VET had developed either through their own enquiry or from career guidance they may have received from schools or colleges.

The understanding the participants had about VET indicated that they were keen to embark on a field of study that would make them employable. They also had other goals, namely, to be equipped with a certificate equivalent to matric, or to progress to a university or university of technology.

Some of the participants mentioned that they received adequate support and career guidance to assist them with the choice of vocational programmes for their future careers. On the flip side there were some participants who mentioned that they had not received any support and career guidance and had no choice of programme above and beyond Office Administration, hence, they could either enrol or stay at home. Most of the participants did not satisfy the requirements to access other programmes they had desired and some students mentioned that there were no spaces available in the programmes they had desired, as a result they were 'pushed' into the Office Administration programme.

The participants' responses regarding their experiences relating to support and career guidance were as follows:

*Sipho: I firstly went to the hall and there were lots of students and a lot of courses and then I had to choose which course I wanted. I wanted to be an entrepreneur – then I went for that course. They briefly explained everything about the course and the financial aid, etcetera.*

*Sabelo: No (support). I did this course because I like accounting. I wanted to study accounting.*

*Thabo: I joined the queue because it was too long and when you went to the hall there were different tables for engineering and business studies and tourism....that is the way the person was able to choose what they wanted. It was easy to register because when you went there the lecturers that we spoke to said that NC(V) is this and that. NC(V) is for those people who are qualified with Grade 9 and if you do not have enough points you can also do the NC(V).*

*Thandi: I first came to this school to check the courses that were offered and then when I went in I realised that I was interested in this specific course and then I had to go back to the school and check so that I could pay the tuition fee. After that they called me to write a test, to make sure that I qualified for entering the course. We got messages telling us whether we passed or failed the test to enter the school. I passed the test and after that I came in to register.*

*Rose: I came here in January, I saw tables outside and I went and asked for the course that I wanted to do. They told me that the course was full so there was no space for me...I didn't choose something else. I came here for the lectures and they told me there was a space for Office Administration but at the tables outside they told me they had no space.*

*Thandi: Firstly, when I came to this college it was September, they told me to come back in November. The process we followed [was that] we wrote the test. And after we wrote the test we had to come back in January to register. We had to go to the hall. There were lecturers helping us there. You could see which course you would like to do. The test was the same for everyone...When I first came I wanted to do Education and Development because I wanted to be a teacher. But when I came here they told me that Education and Development is for teaching Grade R. Then I decided to change and I went for Office Administration.*

The understanding the participants had about VET could have developed from their own enquiry or career guidance at the college or school level. The data suggests that the support and guidance the participants had received was not adequate and sometimes inaccurate and did not correct the misunderstanding around VET and the issue of articulation. It appears that the agenda has been to place as many students as quickly as possible on classroom seats. The registration process is concluded within three days and students who arrive at the college, meet the minimum requirements and pass the pace test, are accepted. The students who enter thereafter are usually rejected. There are instances where students drop out during the course of the year because they find that they are not happy with their choice of study programme. The finding from ensuing discussions was that participants were not aware of possible barriers to entry into public higher education from VET colleges, a direction that many saw themselves taking. This raised a grave concern about what would happen to the NC(V) level 4 students who had engaged VET in the expectation that they would be able to access higher education.

## **4.3 INCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS WITHIN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE**

### **4.3.1 Social Factors**

The VET college has granted students access to Further Education and Training opportunities. The participants found that the VET college accommodated their needs. They mentioned that most of their lecturers were helpful and approachable. They developed friendship at the college and interacted frequently with their classmates. The OBE approach encouraged participative methods of teaching and learning such as group work, simulations and role plays. Some participants reiterated that the NC(V) programme is good and the universities do not have sufficient space to accommodate all students interested in post-school education and training. One of the participants reflected that persons not in education and training are likely to be the ones engaging in crime, drug and substance abuse. The participants have also had the opportunity to integrate with each other and work together in a multicultural and participative environment. The participants had appreciated the practical component tremendously and praised the practical component. The participants stated that there is a skills shortage experienced in the country and by completing the NC(V) they would acquire essential skills to meet the skills shortage needed to kick start the economy. This practice would also promote social development. Mention was made that some students were attracted to the bursary and that they could study for free. The opportunity to

secure a bursary and receive free post-school education had attracted many students to access the VET college.

*Sabelo: I think that the NC(V) is good for all students because university does not have enough space to accommodate all students that complete matric each year. Some students are going to get a space at the university. The college can help students who do not get a space in the university. It can be of help to students that like to learn - a student like me....it's very important for us.*

*The NC(V) is here to help all those students, for example, in South Africa there is a shortage of skills as well and there is a higher rate of drugs and crime. If there are no colleges maybe the rates of crime would be higher than now. This year we got the ISAT [integrated summative assessment task] and we were working with groups. I think almost all students understand each other. [Some students]....They just come here for the bursary. Some students come because they learn for free here.*

*Sipho: I went to some other places, it was hard to find the course that I wanted and based on finance and all that, that's when I realised the college had everything I needed and they would provide me with the bursary and all that.*

*Thabo: Some students come from different backgrounds so we don't have money to go to university or something.....The college is the best for us. The culture is not a big deal because we understand each other somehow.*

The participants, if they had not been granted access to VET, would have likely joined countless of other persons not in employment, education and training which could have worsened their plight. The prevailing high crime rate, drug and substance abuse could be exacerbated because the future of these individuals would be snatched leaving them demoralised and demotivated to achieve their future aspirations and a better life. These participants were unable to access universities because of financial reasons or poor academic performance at school. The participants believed that VET could help them achieve their future aspirations. The institution has experienced transformation since 1994 and accommodates students from the surrounding African Townships.

#### **4.3.2 Educational Factors**

The participants mentioned that the requirements for enrolling in the Office Administration programme were not as rigid as the entry requirements for the other programmes. The participants mentioned that they had managed to satisfy the entry requirements for the Office Administration programme. The participants' who were keen to register for Engineering or Hospitality could not secure a space. Most of the participants had failed to satisfy the entry requirements for the Engineering and Hospitality programmes. Some of the participants mentioned that they really wanted to study Office Administration because they had a passion for the subject. The participants felt that the tuition fee at the college was lower than university fees. The availability of

bursaries had made the college a more attractive option because the participants had the opportunity of accessing free education.

The participants mentioned that the VET college had accommodated students from different backgrounds. The participants mentioned that they had experienced problems with language. The English language had been a barrier and presented challenges for them. The needs of students with different socio-economic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and gender differences were accommodated at the VET college. The participants stated that most of their lecturers were always available to assist them in their courses. The responses of the participants were:

*Thandi: I'm very confident now I can always come back and ask any of my lecturers if I need help, they will be able to help me.*

*Sipho: I went to some other places. It was hard to find the course that I wanted. With a diploma in finance maybe I will be like a boss, you know.*

*Sabelo: I wanted to continue my studies. I want to go to university you see. I did not have enough points to go to university. I wanted to continue with my studies at the college. Afterwards I will look for a job because there are some duties for this special course.*

*Thandi: I'm doing great here so far. So if I pass I will do both, find a job and do part-time studying. After this I was thinking of doing my in-service and then doing part-time management or something at Mangusuthu.*

The VET college has to respond positively to student diversity and enriched learning by embracing student diversity which was proposed by UNESCO (2007). South Africa is a country of diversity. There are many languages, cultures, and religions. The Bill of Rights enshrined in the constitution ensures that everyone is treated equally and that discrimination is a thing of the past. The college as an institution of the state does not discriminate directly or indirectly on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, ethnicity, age, disability or religion.

The Business Studies curriculum focuses on the cultures and values of the broader South African society which was proposed by Jeevananthan (1999).

The NC(V) curriculum introduced in 2007 had received an overall favourable acceptance by the participants. The curriculum had catered for most of the participants' educational needs because they found that the curriculum had enabled them to acquire new and useful competencies from which they had benefited. The VET college was unable to satisfy all the participants needs in terms of the programmes that the participants had preferred. The lack of spaces in other programmes such as Hospitality had resulted in some of the students enrolling in Office Administration. Office Administration generally prepares students to work in an office environment and the

type of work they would usually perform would either be administrative or secretarial. The most striking support for the Office Administration programme was that it had provided hope to the participants because they had managed to gain access to the VET college. The participants had viewed this opportunity as a milestone to fulfil their educational aspirations and to achieve a degree of stature and productiveness in society.

Most of the participants were rejected by other institutions because they had not passed Grade 12 at school. The VET programmes' accommodates students with at least a Grade 9 certificate. The only challenge was that the participants had to pass the pace test and conclude their registration which has been based on a first come first served principle. The choice of programme depends on the students' achievement at school.

#### **4.4 EXCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS WITHIN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE**

##### **4.4.1 Social Factors**

The data revealed that VET has a negative image in the community and the broader society. Vocational education is perceived to be an inferior form of education in comparison to academic education by students, parents and other sectors of society. The data indicated that students at the college, including some of the participants, had been conscientised by their communities, friends and family about the superiority of

university education. Most of the participants had mentioned that they intended to access a university after completing their VET qualification. The participants also had to deal with negative comments from some of their peers, as well. Peers criticised VET and stated it was a waste of their time. The criticisms levied against VET were very demotivating for the participants.

There is a possibility that certain negative perceptions held by students as well as society could affect some of the Office Administration students in achieving their future goals. Some of the Engineering students and some members of society feel that Engineering is a scarce skill and that Engineering and related programmes are in greater demand with the potential for higher earnings in comparison to a programme like Office Administration. Some male engineering students' self-esteem could have been elevated when they had been accepted into the engineering programmes. They usually feel 'macho' because they have a perception that Engineering is a 'man's' field. They may even tend to believe that a field like Office Administration is secretarial or administrative related and should generally be pursued by female students. The 'sensitive' male students who are in the Office Administration programme could be affected by this perception and become demotivated if they are not confident and passionate enough about the Office Administration field.

The participants mentioned that they had received a certificate at the end of each year or level of study. A certificate is perceived to be a lesser achievement than a degree or diploma because society has attached greater academic achievement to an individual

awarded with a degree. A student who obtains a degree is given greater status and respect from their family and society and is considered to be more successful because there is a perception in sectors of society that obtaining a degree will lead to a better job with higher pay.

The significance attached to a Bachelor's Degree has 'othered' students qualifying with a certificate. Graduates in possession of degrees usually look down on individuals in possession of certificates because they feel that students who graduate with certificates are mainly lower achievers.

*Sabelo: I think most people do not understand the college and NC(V), in most cases they like the diplomas, they do not understand the NC(V). They do not like it. Some of them [lecturers] give special attention and some of them [lecturers] are not doing good work, for example when you ask a question you give the lecturer hard work [troubling the lecturer]. It depends on how the lecturer is.*

*Mandisa: I had a problem with a lecturer but I can't mention names, she is my maths teacher. The boys [male students].....could they be a secretary or a receptionist?...no! There are male students in the class but each year you only find two or three in a class. They get used to it. I'm not sure if they are going to experience any challenges but when they are looking for a job and if they have to continue with Office Administration, I think they are going to find challenges because usually when I see job mails on the internet they say looking for a female, I've never seen males ...*

*Thandi: If you don't have matric you can't do anything in life. You won't get anything [any job]. Even though we are at VET colleges they still look down at us. They think because we don't have matric we are not qualified and we won't get the jobs that we want.*

In comparison to the apartheid era the VET college has applied inclusionary measures to accommodate previously disadvantaged students who would have been excluded from these opportunities under the apartheid system. There has been a marked increase in the number of females studying at the college today than in the past. Today there is a greater acceptance of cultures, religion and equality.

The participants intending to pursue studies at a university could be affected by the NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level of their NC(V) qualification after having successfully completed three years of full-time study at the college. The current NQF levels for the offerings in most of the programmes at the college are NQF level 2 in the first year, NQF level 3 in the second year, and NQF level 4 in the third year of study. A first degree at a university is pitched at NQF level 6. The implication is that a VET student intending to register for a university degree would not be able to secure academic credits towards a degree. The NQF level 4 certificate awarded at the college level creates a gap from college to university and students might not gain any credits for courses they have passed at the college. The student could be required to complete an appropriate bridging course to register at a university, provided that the student qualifies

to meet the criteria for university acceptance. VET colleges and universities should partner with each other to interrogate solutions around the issue of articulation for students from VET to HET (Higher Education and Training).

The Life Orientation course is not awarded any points on the APS (Academic Performance Score) system at HE institutions such as universities and universities of technology. Maths Literacy is limiting to the student because access will not be granted to certain fields of study such as agriculture, engineering, science and commerce. Pure mathematics would have been more beneficial and at the same time more academically challenging for students.

Some students mentioned that they had not received any guidance and enrolled for Office Administration because they had not satisfied the requirements to access other programmes such as, hospitality or engineering. The reason for many students having enrolled for the Business Studies, Office Administration programme was because they were unable to satisfy the requirements in engineering and related subjects. Some students mentioned that they enrolled for Office Administration because it was an area of interest to them. Others stated that there were no spaces available for enrolment in the other programmes. The anxiety of students who did not want to waste the year by being unproductive or staying at home resulted in them enrolling for the Office Administration programme offered by the Business Studies Department in the VET college. Other students spoke about the bursary opportunity which made it possible to study at the college because they could not afford to finance their studies on their own.

Some participants deplored the fact that there was limited guidance offered in certain courses. Students noted the role of parents and friends in helping them to choose a course at the VET college. Some noted that teachers also played a big role in their choice to do vocational courses or to attend a VET college. Others said they chose to register at the college solely through their own initiative.

*Sipho: Compared to college they think university is better. When you go to university, you have more experience and all the practical skills you have from the college.*

*Thandi: I have realised even students who are doing NC(V) look down at themselves because of what they hear from outside and what people say about NC(V), and it's actually quite sad because they spent three years in the college and they won't even try to apply for a job because they don't even believe they are qualified enough or good enough to do a certain job. Basically people think what we do here is nothing compared to universities...They think you can't get a job with this qualification.*

*After this I was thinking of doing my in-service and then part-time management or something at Mangusuthu. I will be able to go there after I complete my studies at the college, and see where it will take me because I want further studies. I want a degree.*

*Mandisa: They always say the same thing - vocational education is useless...That's what they all say all the time.*

The limiting of access to a university would arise from the APS scoring and the effects of subjects like Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation which would weigh negatively on the students actual APS scores, as well as the students overall grade 12 performance. This could prevent VET students from gaining admission into university programmes. It appears that students are unaware of the workings of the APS system.

Students have held a negative image of VET which had been created and exacerbated by society at large. The result of this perception has made many students reluctant to enrol in VET programmes because they lack motivation to do so. There is a belief that a student who fails to gain access to a university or university of technology has limited opportunities for a better future. In their efforts of not being able to access formal education they have no choice but to enrol for VET or remain at home. Many students who have not been successful with their schooling look at VET as a means to articulate into institutions of higher learning. The students may also be excluded from the programmes they desire because they fail to meet the requirements for gaining access into such programmes.

#### **4.4.2 Educational Factors**

Many participants felt excluded from other programmes. Some lecturers were found to be unprofessional because they lacked the commitment and dedication required by the profession. Students mentioned that some lecturers did not come to class and were not

approachable which implies that students did not receive adequate guidance and support in certain subjects which could have impacted their performance.

The male participants intended to register in other programmes but were forced to take Office Administration for obvious reasons, either, because it was the only programme that had spaces available and included Applied Accounting and Business Practice, or they had failed to meet the entrance requirements of other programmes. The Business Studies Department, as mentioned previously, offers only one full-time NC(V) programme which is the Office Administration programme. The reason why the Business Studies Department only offers a single programme, Office Administration, at the college is because the college has limited infrastructure and resources to distribute to the Business Studies Department.

The participants felt that the Office Administration programme offered them an opportunity to engage with studies instead of wasting a year at home. The Office Administration programme had been accessible to many students who were unable to satisfy the entry requirements into other 'exclusionary' programmes such as Hospitality or Electrical Engineering. The Office Administration programme has enabled the participants to achieve relevant knowledge and skills which has renewed their confidence that they would be able to engage in productive activities after their studies at the college. The possibility that these students could have been at home would have resulted in them becoming idle and disillusioned with their future prospects. The Office

Administration programme has inspired these students to reach for higher goals and has established a good foundation for students to build brighter futures for themselves.

*Thandi: In my class we had an issue with the English lecturer that caused them [students] to bunk classes and their performance just dropped. The class started to fail English and that was a huge issue.*

*Sabelo: I think that the learning material confused the students. We are coming from different backgrounds, with different areas, urban and rural. Most students that are coming from rural areas do not understand the materials. I got the studying materials later because at the beginning of the year the material became limited. Some of these books I got late. There are some lecturers that are not doing well in terms of teaching us.*

*Mandisa: Some challenges are when our lecturers don't teach us like in maths, that's a challenge because we have to pass all our subjects.*

There are several factors affecting the participants' studies. The participants mentioned that they had come from different backgrounds. Participants who live in the rural areas may have attended poorly resourced schools which could have affected their academic performance at school. A participant mentioned that he had not received the learning materials provided by the college on time (materials were handed to him much later than he expected) and that some lecturers had not taught him well. The failure of some

of the lecturers to teach the students and provide them with support had resulted in several students not attending class because they felt that it was a waste of their time.

The VET colleges are perceived to be developing lower or middle skills and this perception is largely due to students receiving a certificate after their studies. The awarding of certificates generally places recruits in lower or middle level jobs. University graduates qualifying with a degree or diploma are usually engaged in doing higher level jobs. The level of job determines the income a person earns. High level jobs would require high level skills. The participants mentioned that they are not pleased to be awarded with a certificate after three years of study. A certificate may lead them to dead-end jobs without any scope of advancement unless they are prepared to improve their qualifications. The participants are unable to engage with higher studies at the college because they cannot advance beyond NQF level 4 at the college. In the college, there are a few students who have completed the Office Administration programme successfully and have moved on to other programmes, such as Tourism or Hospitality. These students can acquire a further certificate, but, at the same NQF level, NQF level 4.

Students could sacrifice many years of their lives only to attain qualifications pitched on the same NQF level in a VET college. This is a problem because when the student is eventually employed, the qualifications after evaluation are only pitched at NQF level 4. One of the reasons why unemployment is high in South Africa is because there are too many people possessing lower level skills and a shortage of people having middle and

higher level skills and priority skills. The participants' motivation to access university education is due to their own awareness and societies' acceptance that universities offer a better quality education resulting in higher skills levels and better paying jobs.

#### **4.5 NAVIGATION OF INCLUSIONARY AND EXCLUSIONARY DYNAMICS**

The participants mentioned that they used the various resources that were available such as the internet, the library, and learning materials to assist them in their studies. They even practiced additionally on their own in the computer laboratories. One of the participants mentioned that she had approached her lecturers for guidance and support whenever she needed to do so. Some participants mentioned that they had lecturers who were not approachable and who were not always available to teach. Study groups had also been formed by some students to cope with the subjects. One of the participants mentioned that she had worked on past papers provided by her lecturer.

The participants received assistance from other students and brothers and sisters. Some participants attempted to do their homework on their own and sought assistance from their brothers and sisters if they failed to complete their homework successfully on their own. The participants had often worked on their own steam to succeed with their studies.

*Mandisa: I sit down and do my homework. My brother teaches me maths. He helps me a lot. I believe that you can achieve something.*

*Thandi: We do approach our lecturers, for example, in maths whenever, sir gives us past year papers to learn from, I do them at home at night and then in the morning I'll come to him and I'll ask him to mark it to see whether I know what I am doing or not, whether I understand it or not, and that helps me...I think in our class we help each other – if someone doesn't understand something in English we try and explain it in their language.*

*I had to speak to our lecturer and explain to her what's going on because in the lecture it will be two or three students all the time so she asked me what's going on as a class rep of the class. I had to speak first with the mam and tell her what the problem was. I had to ask the students why they were bunking the lecture. They said they don't understand mam.....she shouts most of the time and all that because of communication, and this and that. So then I went back to the mam and I told her that they fear her because she shouts at them.*

*Rose: We have ignored some people who are talking about the college as lower level or something. They look down on us and we have challenges because of it. They don't look at it at a higher level.*

*Sabelo: I was using the library and computer room, and I was able to understand how to use the computer. We also formed a group to study and had extra classes.*

The NC(V) curriculum at VET college is considered to be more cognitively challenging to students and the NC(V) introduction sought to shift college provision to embrace new knowledge demands and increase the contextual relevance of the curriculum (Gewe, 2013). The participants have found ways to achieve success in their studies amid the cognitively challenging curriculum. The participants mentioned that they had worked often on their own. They had engaged in self-directed study to navigate through the challenges they had experienced in their subjects. It is likely that some of the lecturers lacked the dedication to assist students experiencing difficulties with some of the subjects. The participants went to the extent of studying with their peers and some participants made use of additional resources such as the internet and libraries to improve their understanding of the subject content.

The participants employed varying strategies to navigate through the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they had experienced. The social exclusionary dynamics which concerned members of society's negative perception of VET had been navigated in a way in which the participants have viewed members in society as displaying ignorance of what VET is about and the value it has when compared to academic education. The participants have found justification for VET and have experienced the benefits and limitations of VET.

The factors which had made the NC(V) challenging for the participants was engagement with too many subjects, too much notes, too much theory, and insufficient practical work. Some participants received assistance from family members and through

the formation of study groups so that they could cope with their studies. Despite these challenges, the participants embraced the challenges of the seven subjects by obtaining assistance from their peers, family, lecturers, books and learning materials, the library and internet.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate that most of the participants had found value in the practical training offered at the VET college. The participants were in support of more time being allocated for practical training. They compared the college facilities with their schools and some of them praised the college for the adequate resources which were available for their training. The participants experienced problems with certain subjects and lecturers and most of them worked in groups and with past year papers to progress in their studies. They even went to the extent of asking brothers and sisters for assistance. The participants mentioned that VET did not receive wide acceptance in their communities and that the communities needed education about VET and VET programmes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The study aimed to examine the geographies of inclusion and exclusion in the context of the Business Studies, Office Administration curriculum through the narratives of six students (the participants), at a VET college with the purpose of examining whether the curriculum is responsive to diverse students with diverse needs. This was a narrative study. The objective of the study was to acquire an understanding of students' experiences of the Business Studies, Office Administration curriculum through the use of semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion. The study was inspired by the large numbers of students who have selected the Business Studies, Office Administration programme since its inception. The Office Administration programme is a VET programme. It was essential to examine the effectiveness of this particular programme in terms of students' attitudes and experiences.

The study was informed by the following key research questions:

1. What stories do students tell about their experiences of the Business Studies curriculum at the VET college in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What are the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in the educational lives of these students related to the Business Studies curriculum at this college?

3. How do the students actively navigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they experience at this college?

Individual interviews were conducted with six students who were the participants of the study and a focus group discussion was organised. The participants were sampled through the process of purposive sampling. Three male and three female participants were selected. The sample only included level 4 students because they had been through levels 2 and 3 and were placed in a better position to provide more useful data according to their experiences. The data was arranged according to themes to derive meaning from the collected data and generate findings according to categories and themes (Cohen et al., 2011).

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The study was conducted with six Business Studies students in a VET college and many of the students at the college are from a socio-economic disadvantaged background. Most of the participants had performed poorly at school and they decided to further their studies at the VET college. The students did not appear to understand the requirements for higher education and they were optimistic that VET would enable them to achieve their future aspirations.

The majority of the participants who were interviewed were in support of VET and maintained that they had enjoyed their studies and learnt a lot from the programme. The data had revealed that the participants were satisfied with the Office Administration programme offered in the Business Studies Department. The participants believed that the qualification had prepared them to take up opportunities in employment or engage in higher education studies. Some participants were satisfied to receive a certificate equivalent to matric. Most of the participants interviewed conceded that the college was well resourced for practical training and they recommended that the college offer more practical training. The participants felt that the college offered a better quality of education than their schools did because the college was better resourced.

A problem which surfaced was that there were too many subjects included in the programme and there was a lot of theory and notes which they had to learn. Another problem was that they spent too much time at the college and they had to study seven subjects which were too overwhelming when compared to what they did at school.

The participants mentioned that they had experienced problems with some of the subjects. They indicated that some of the subjects were difficult and that lecturers facilitating these subjects worsened their plight by not being in class regularly and failing to address their educational needs effectively.

Majority of the participants were not pleased with the Life Orientation subject. Some of the participants proposed a name change to the Life Orientation subject because their younger brothers and sisters were studying the same subject at the school level.

The participants were not aware of the process of articulation from further to higher education. Most of them felt that after completing their qualification they could enter higher education and receive academic credits. This finding indicated that the participants had not received adequate guidance and support in this regard.

The participants mentioned that they had experienced difficulty in securing a space in the college. Some participants mentioned that they could not exercise their choice with respect to the programmes on offer freely, because spaces were not available in all the programmes. Several programmes had stricter entry requirements which many of the participants were unable to satisfy.

During the interviews, it was revealed that some of the participants were excluded from the engineering and related programmes. The Office Administration programme had been an inclusionary programme because of its accessibility to the students who were excluded from other programmes or institutions, provided that they had completed grade nine successfully and passed the 'pace' test. The participants had an opportunity to enrol in the Business Studies NC(V) Office Administration programme which had fewer requirements than most of the other programmes offered at the VET college.

The participants mentioned that the Business Studies, Office Administration curriculum catered for their needs. The language was simple. The curriculum took into account different cultures and gender. Some of the participants mentioned that the subjects were difficult and would not accommodate ABET students and students with special needs. The findings indicated that the Office Administration programme prepared the participants adequately for employment. The Office Administration programme prepares a person to become employed as a personal assistant, secretary, receptionist, or bookkeeper, for example. These kinds of jobs would require, *inter alia*, computer, organization and communication skills. It is likely that some of the male participants may have not been pleased with the Office Administration programme but had to continue with the Office Administration programme because they could not exercise any choice.

The study revealed that many participants intended to articulate into higher education because they had believed that they could receive a higher pay if they were in possession with a Bachelor's Degree. The findings indicated that the participants are aware of the status of a Bachelor's Degree in comparison to a VET certificate. This may have largely been influenced by society's image of VET being inferior to university education and society's lack of acceptance of VET.

The study had revealed that society has different perceptions about VET and the general belief is that VET is a 'waste of time' because it is only for academically challenged students. The findings indicated that the participants developed strategies to

navigate through the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they experienced at the college. The participants took it upon themselves to work out previous examination papers, form study groups, obtain assistance from peers and brothers or sisters and engage in self-directed study. They made use of additional resources from the libraries and also used the internet.

The male participants in the Office Administration programme had protected their 'machoism' and emphasised the importance of subjects such as 'Accounting' and 'Business Practice' and how important and valuable these subjects are to the business world. The participants recommended that society needs to be informed and educated about VET for society to gain acceptance of VET. They mentioned that whenever they experienced difficulty in their studies they had asked their lecturers for help.

### **5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **5.3.1 Implications for Policy and Practice**

The study illuminated the challenges of VET and the challenges for policy makers to consider with a view of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of VET. The study has revealed that VET is an important form of education and training and that VET is essential for addressing the socio-economic problems the country is experiencing. The study proposes the following in order to improve VET.

- ❖ The issue of articulation needs to be resolved. Partnerships between the VET colleges and universities need to be established to prevent most of the college qualifications from resulting in a dead-end for students.
  
- ❖ Society does not award the same value to VET as they do to academic education. Educational authorities would have to stimulate greater interest and awareness to VET and to sensitize society of the benefits of VET.
  
- ❖ VET colleges have to forge partnerships with industry so that they plan and align their curriculum and programme offering to the needs of industry and to provide students with experiential learning and employment opportunities.
  
- ❖ VET colleges have to engage in staff development to offer improved guidance, support, and education and training to students.
  
- ❖ Articulation from VET colleges into universities and universities of technology will be necessary to ensure currency and esteem of college qualifications. Limited articulation arrangements between colleges and local universities exist at present and the extent of the agreement and development of partnerships has not been interrogated.

### **5.3.2 Implications for Further Research**

The study presented the following implications for further research.

- ❖ The study was conducted at an urban VET college in Umlazi, south of Durban. The researcher would like to suggest that should a similar study be undertaken in future, it would be conducted in a rural college in a different province, and perhaps a comparison be made with the findings.
- ❖ The study focused on students' geographies of inclusion and exclusion relating to the Business Studies curriculum at a VET college in KwaZulu-Natal. It would be interesting to use a different sample, perhaps the head of department and lecturers in a future study.
- ❖ The participants mentioned Life Orientation and lamented that they don't understand why they are doing a subject they have already passed at school. A study could be done as to whether there is a purpose for Life Orientation to be included in the VET curriculum.

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

The qualitative study examined students' experiences of the Business Studies Office Administration curriculum in the south of Durban and provided students with the opportunity to share their attitudes about the Business Studies Office Administration VET curriculum. It is hoped that this particular study would contribute to the list of

student view research in VET. The use of narrative enquiry adopted through individual and focus group interviews has resulted in unpacking student voices in terms of their experiences of the VET programme and curriculum, student support and career guidance, accessibility of resources for the practical training, forms of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics within the VET college, and navigation of the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics, particularly at a VET college context in South Africa.

The low esteem in which vocational education is held may be influenced largely by society's perceptions of VET as a form of education and training for those who cannot access universities because they cannot satisfy the stricter entry requirements and that VET is an easier option to access. The scenario in South Africa with regard to VET is that it appears to be virtually invisible at school level, and some schools even being adamant to such perceived low-esteem pathways being promoted at their schools.

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## APPENDIX A

School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605. Durban  
28 August 2013

The Principal  
Coastal KZN FET College  
20 Swinton Road  
Mobeni  
Durban  
4001

Dear Sir/Madam

*Re: Request for permission to conduct research at your school*

We are student and staff members in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. We plan to undertake a study titled: "The geographies of Vocational Education and Training in economically unequal countries: Narratives of children in diverse contexts." South Africa is one of the countries. We are the project leaders for the research project.

We hereby request your permission to conduct a study at the Swinton Campus. The participants in the study will be learners from your college. They will be required to participate in individual interviews and focus group interviews that are expected to last between 90-120 minutes in two sessions.

Please note that

- The college and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.

- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The college and the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- All learner responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary, and therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in a locked cupboard at the University for a maximum period of five years, thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you.

Yours sincerely

---

Navin Maharaj (Student)

Tel: 0836393674

031 2628731

[navinmaharaj@webmail.co.za](mailto:navinmaharaj@webmail.co.za)

Professor Phololo Morojele

Tel: 071 0410352

031 2603234

[Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

**CONSENT FORM:**

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your college, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, ....., (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at the\_\_\_\_\_ campus. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
N. Maharaj  
Tel: 084 6393674  
031 2628731  
Email: navinmaharaj@webmail.co.za

\_\_\_\_\_  
Professor Pholoho Morojele  
Tel: 071 0410352  
031 2603234  
Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

## APPENDIX B

School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605. Durban  
30 August 2013

Dear learner

*Re: Request your participation in a research project*

It was good to meet you on \_\_\_\_\_ date. As we told you in our meeting, we are staff members in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. We would like to do a study called, "The geographies of Vocational Education and Training in economically unequal countries: Narratives of children in diverse contexts." South Africa is one of the countries. We are the project leaders for the research project.

We kindly ask your permission to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be learners from the college. We value what you think about your studies and how you are experiencing your studies. You will be required to allow us to interview you individually and in focus groups. The interviews will be approximately 90-120 minutes. We will meet in two sessions on two different days that are convenient for you. We will be requesting permission from your parents/caregivers to work with you on the project.

Please note that

- The college and learners will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion.

- The college or your identities will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- All learner responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (your real name and the name of the college will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary, and therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences.
- You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what you do not want to tell us.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if you give us permission.
- Data will be stored in a locked cupboard at the University for a maximum period of five years, thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you.

Yours sincerely

---

Mr N. Maharaj  
 Tel: 084 6393674  
 031 2628731  
 Email: navinmaharaj@webmail.co.za

---

Professor Pholoho Morojele  
 Tel: 071 0410352  
 031 2603234  
 Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

---

**CONSENT FORM:**

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below.

I, ....., (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby agree to take part in the project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time should I want to.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

---

Mr N. Maharaj

Tel: 084 6393674

031 2628731

Email: [navinmaharaj@webmail.co.za](mailto:navinmaharaj@webmail.co.za)

---

Professor Pholoho Morojele

Tel: 071 0410352

031 2603234

[Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

## APPENDIX C

### Individual Interview Questions

#### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you understand vocational education to mean?
- 2) Can you tell me a story about the processes you followed when enrolling for this course?
- 3) Can you tell me the story of how you enrolled for this course? How did you choose this course? What attracted you to this course?
- 4) Please explain what were the reasons that allowed you to enrol for vocational training?
- 5) What did you want to achieve in your life by enrolling for vocational training?
- 6) What were your expectations for enrolling in vocational training education?
- 7) Can you please tell me a story detailing your experiences about vocational education training? Give specific examples.
- 8) What has been your experience regarding the Business Studies curriculum that is offered in this college?
- 9) Please tell me a story of some of the things you liked about the Business Studies curriculum.
- 10) Kindly explain, giving specific examples regarding the reasons why you like the things that you say you do regarding the Business Studies curriculum in the college.
- 11) Please tell me a story of some of the things you disliked about the Business Studies curriculum in this college?
- 12) Kindly explain, giving specific examples regarding the reasons why you dislike the things that you say you do regarding the Business Studies curriculum in the college.
- 13) How do you think the skills that you have been taught at the college will assist you to achieve your goals?

- 14) What are the challenges related to the skills you have been taught in this college in assisting you to achieve your goals?
- 15) In what ways do you think the Business Studies curriculum is responsive to the diverse needs and aspirations of the learners?
- 16) Please explain in detail giving specific examples in each case.
- 17) Which categories of learners do you think the curriculum is most responsive to? Please explain by giving specific examples.
- 18) In what ways do you think the Business Studies curriculum is not responsive to diverse needs and aspirations of the learners in this college?
- 19) Please explain in detail giving specific examples in each case.
- 20) Which categories of learners do you think the curriculum is not responsive to? Please explain further giving specific examples.
- 21) What other options did you have?
- 22) What are the issues about doing Vocational Education and Training in the college and in society, do you think this might impact the success of Vocational Education and Training?
- 23) What do you think needs to be done to address issues in the college or society that might negatively affect vocational education training? Please give specific examples.
- 24) Do you believe that Vocational Education and Training will enable you to acquire skills that are needed by employers? Please explain why.
- 25) Please explain what you do in order to overcome some of the challenges you mentioned about doing Vocational Education and Training? Give specific examples.
- 26) What are some of the ways in which you or learners in the college do to overcome some of the challenges you experience related to Vocational Education and Training?
  - Challenges related to the exclusionary aspects of the curriculum
  - Challenges related to employment expectations on completion of the course.
  - Challenges related to the value given to vocation education training in the college or society.

27) Please explain what resources you draw on in order to overcome each of the above challenges?

## APPENDIX D

### Individual Interview Questions [Local IsiZulu Version]

#### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) I Vocational education isho ukuthini kuwe.
- 2) Ngicela ungitshele ngendlela oyithathile ngenkathi uzoqala ukufunda kule course.
- 3) Ngicela ungitshele ukuba yini eyakwenza ukhethe lezizifundo nokuba wazikhetha kanjani.
- 4) Ngicela ungichazele ukuba iziphi izizathu ezakuvumela ukuze ungene ku Vocational training?
- 5) Yini ofuna iVocational training ikwenzele yona empilweni yakho.
- 6) Imuphi umuvuzo owulindele ngokuba ukungene ngaphansi kwalezi zifundo zakwa Vocational training education.
- 7) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngesipiliyoni nangezifundo osuzitholile ngokungena ku Vocational Education, sekela impendulo yakho.
- 8) Ibuphi ubungcweti osubutholile mayelana ne Business Studies curriculum etholakala kuleli kolishi?
- 9) Ngicela ungixoxele kabanzi ngezinye zezinto ozithandile nge Business Studies curriculum.
- 10) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngokuba iziphi izizathu ezenza uthande lezizinto othi uyazithanda nge Business Studies curriculum kuleli kolishi.
- 11) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngezinye zezinto ongazithandi nge Business Studies curriculum kuleli kolishi.
- 12) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngokuba iziphi izizathu ezenza ungazithandi lezinto othe awuzithandi nge Business Studies curriculum kuleli kolishi.
- 13) Amakhono lawa osuwafundisiwe azokusiza kanjani ekufeveni amaphupho akho.
- 14) Ibuphi ubunzima ngamakhono osuwafundisiwe kuleli kolishi?

- 15) Ngayiphi indlela ocabanga ukuba I Business Studies curriculum ivumelana nokuhlukana kwezidingo nezifiso zabafundi.
- 16) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi unikeze izibonelo esimeni ngasinye.
- 17) Imiphi imikhakha yabafundi ocabanga ukuba I curriculum ehambiselana nabo kakhudlwana? Chaza ngezibonelo.
- 18) Ngayiphi indlela ocabanga ukuba I Business Studies curriculum ayivumelani nokuhlukana kwezidingo nezifiso zabafundi baleli kolishi.
- 19) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi unikeze izibonelo esimeni ngasinye.
- 20) Imuphi umkhakha wabafundi ocabanga ukuba I curriculum ayihambiselani nabo? Chaza kabanzi ngezibonelo.
- 21) Ikuphi okunye okukhethwa kukho obunakho?
- 22) Yiziphi izingqinamba ukwenza iVocational Education and Training kulelikolishi futhi nase mphakathini, ucabanga lokhu kungase kube nomthelela ekuphumeleleni kwe Vocational Education and Training?
- 23) Ucabanga ukuthi yiziphi izidingo okumele zenziwe ukubhekana nezingqinamba kulelikolishi noma emphakathini okungase zilimaze ivocational education training? Sicela unike izibonelo ezithile eziqondile.
- 24) Ingabe ukholelwa ukuthi ivocational education training kuyokwenza ukwazi ukuthola amakhono adingwa ngabaqashi? Sicela uchaze ukuthi kungani.
- 25) Sicela uchaze ukuthi wenzani ukuze unqobe ezinye izinselelo ozishilo ukwenza ivocational education training? Nikeza izibonelo ezithile eziqondile.
- 26) Yiziphi ezinye zezindlela wena noma abafundi ekolishi ongakwenza ukuze unqobe ezinye zezinselelo ohlangabezane nazo ezihlobene ne vocational education training.
  - Izinselelo ezihlobene nezici zabathile kwi curriculum.
  - Izinselelo ezihlobene okuqashwa okulindelwe mase usuqedile izifundo.
  - Izinselelo ezihlobene nokubaluleka okwanikwa ivocational education training kwi-ekolishi noma umphakathi.

27) Sicela uchaze ukuthi yiziphi izinsiza ofinyelela kuzo ukuze unqobe ngayinye izinselelo ezingenhla?

## APPENDIX E

### Focus Group Interview Question

- 1) What do you understand vocational education to mean?
- 2) Can you tell me a story about the processes you followed when enrolling for this course?
- 3) Can you tell me the story of how you enrolled for this course? How did you choose this course? What attracted you to this course?
- 4) Please explain what were the reasons that allowed you to enrol for vocational training?
- 5) What did you want to achieve in your life by enrolling for vocational training?
- 6) What were your expectations for enrolling in vocational training education?
- 7) Can you please tell me a story detailing your experiences about vocational education and training? Give specific examples.
- 8) What has been your experience regarding the Business Studies curriculum that is offered in this college?
- 9) Please tell me a story of some of the things you liked about the Business Studies curriculum.
- 10) Kindly explain, giving specific examples regarding the reasons why you like the things that you say you do regarding the Business Studies curriculum in the college.
- 11) Please tell me a story of some of the things you disliked about the Business Studies curriculum in this college?
- 12) Kindly explain, giving specific examples regarding the reasons why you dislike the things that you say you do regarding the Business Studies curriculum in the college.
- 13) How do you think the skills that you have been taught at the college will assist you to achieve your goals?
- 14) What are the challenges related to the skills you have been taught in this college in assisting you to achieve your goals?
- 15) In what ways do you think the Business Studies curriculum is responsive to the diverse needs and aspirations of the learners?

- 16) Please explain in detail giving specific examples in each case.
- 17) Which categories of learners do you think the curriculum is most responsive to? Please explain by giving specific examples.
- 18) In what ways do you think the Business Studies curriculum is not responsive to diverse needs and aspirations of the learners in this college?
- 19) Please explain in detail giving specific examples in each case.
- 20) Which categories of learners do you think the curriculum is not responsive to? Please explain further giving specific examples.
- 21) What other options did you have?
- 22) What are the issues about doing Vocational Education and Training in the college and in society, do you think this might impact the success of Vocational Education and Training?
- 23) What do you think needs to be done to address issues in the college or society that might negatively affect vocational education training? Please give specific examples.
- 24) Do you believe that Vocational Education and Training will enable you to acquire skills that are needed by employers? Please explain why.
- 25) Please explain what you do in order to overcome some of the challenges you mentioned about doing Vocational Education and Training? Give specific examples.
- 26) What are some of the ways in which you or learners in the college do to overcome some of the challenges you experience related to Vocational Education and Training?
- Challenges related to the exclusionary aspects of the curriculum
  - Challenges related to employment expectations on completion of the course.
  - Challenges related to the value given to Vocational Education and Training in the college or society.
- 27) Please explain what resources you draw on in order to overcome each of the above challenges?

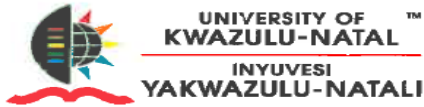
## APPENDIX F

### Focus Group Interview Questions [Local IsiZulu Version]

- 1) I Vocational education isho ukuthini kuwe.
- 2) Ngicela ungitshele ngendlela oyithathile ngenkathi uzoqala ukufunda kule course.
- 3) Ngicela ungitshele ukuba yini eyakwenza ukhethe lezizifundo nokuba wazikhetha kanjani.
- 4) Ngicela ungichazele ukuba iziphi izizathu ezakuvumela ukuze ungene ku Vocational training?
- 5) Yini ofuna iVocational training ikwenzele yona empilweni yakho.
- 6) Imuphi umuvuzo owulindele ngokuba ukungene ngaphansi kwalezi zifundo zakwa Vocational training education.
- 7) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngesipiliyoni nangezimfundo osuzitholile ngokungena ku Vocational Education, sekela impendulo yakho.
- 8) Ibuphi ubungcweti osubutholile mayelana ne Business Studies curriculum etholakala kuleli kolishi?
- 9) Ngicela ungixoxele kabanzi ngezinye zezinto ozithandile nge Business Studies curriculum.
- 10) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngokuba iziphi izizathu ezenza uthande lezizinto othi uyazithanda nge Business Studies curriculum kuleli kolishi.
- 11) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngezinye zezinto ongazithandi nge Business Studies curriculum kuleli kolishi.
- 12) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi ngokuba iziphi izizathu ezenza ungazithandi lezinto othe awuzithandi nge Business Studies curriculum kuleli kolishi.
- 13) Amakhono lawa osuwafundisiwe azokusiza kanjani ekufeveni amaphupho akho.
- 14) Ibuphi ubunzima ngamakhono osuwafundisiwe kuleli kolishi?
- 15) Ngayiphi indlela ocabanga ukuba I Business Studies curriculum ivumelana nokuhlukana kwezidingo nezifiso zabafundi.
- 16) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi unikeze izibonelo esimeni ngasinye.

- 17) Imiphi imikhakha yabafundi ocabanga ukuba I curriculum ehambiselana nabo kakhudlwana? Chaza ngezibonelo.
- 18) Ngayiphi indlela ocabanga ukuba I Business Studies curriculum ayivumelani nokuhlukana kwezidingo nezifiso zabafundi baleli kolishi.
- 19) Ngicela ungichazele kabanzi unikeze izibonelo esimeni ngasinye.
- 20) Imuphi umkhakha wabafundi ocabanga ukuba I curriculum ayihambiselani nabo? Chaza kabanzi ngezibonelo.
- 21) Ikuphi okunye okukhethwa kukho obunakho?
- 22) Yiziphi izingqinamba ukwenza iVocational Education and Training kulelikolishi futhi nase mphakathini, ucabanga lokhu kungase kube nomthelela ekuphumeleleni kwe vocational education and training?
- 23) Ucabanga ukuthi yiziphi izidingo okumele zenziwe ukubhekana nezingqinamba kulelikolishi noma emphakathini okungase zilimaze ivocational education training? Sicela unike izibonelo ezithile eziqondile.
- 24) Ingabe ukholelwa ukuthi ivocational education training kuyokwenza ukwazi ukuthola amakhono adingwa ngabaqashi? Sicela uchaze ukuthi kungani.
- 25) Sicela uchaze ukuthi wenzani ukuze unqobe ezinye izinselelo ozishilo ukwenza ivocational education training? Nikeza izibonelo ezithile eziqondile.
- 26) Yiziphi ezinye zezindlela wena noma abafundi ekolishi ongakwenza ukuze unqobe ezinye zezinselelo ohlangabezane nazo ezihlobene ne vocational education training.
- Izinselelo ezihlobene nezici zabathile kwi curriculum.
  - Izinselelo ezihlobene okuqashwa okulindelwe mase usuqedile izifundo.
  - Izinselelo ezihlobene nokubaluleka okwanikwa ivocational education training kwi-ekolishi noma umphakathi.
- 27) Sicela uchaze ukuthi yiziphi izinsiza ofinyelela kuzo ukuze unqobe ngayinye izinselelo ezingenhla?

## Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Certificate



26 April 2013

**Professor A Muthukrishna 845**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013**

**Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers**

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

**Expedited approval**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.**

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**

/px

cc Dr P Morojele  
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids  
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

**Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee**  
**Professor S Collings (Chair)**  
**Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building**  
**Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa**  
**Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za /**  
**snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za**

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**



## Appendix H: Declaration by Project Leader



The research presented in this dissertation is part of a larger project in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal titled, ‘The geographies of children’s schooling experiences in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers’ (School of Education, 2013). Ethical clearance for the project has been obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (HSS/0250/013).

Professor Nithi Muthukrishna  
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# Appendix I: Turnitin Report

Turnitin Originality Report

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