

University of the Western Cape  
Institute of Post School Studies (Adult Education)

The curriculum as preparation for the world of work:  
A critical analysis of the learner curriculum for young adults at a  
Community Education and Training College.

Research paper completed in part fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master's Degree in Education (Adult Learning and Global Change)

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this research report titled:

*The curriculum as preparation for the world of work: A critical analysis of the learner curriculum for young adults at a Community Education and Training College* is my own work, it has not been submitted for any degree or examination purposes at any university, and the sources cited have been acknowledged.

Full name: Margaret Daniels

Date: 12 December 2019

Signed:  .....

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABET	–	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	–	Adult Education and Training
DHET	–	Department of Higher Education
FET	–	Further Education and Training
GET	–	General Education and Training
GETC	–	General Education and Training Certificate
NASCA	–	National Senior Certificate for Adults
NCV	–	National Certificate Vocational
NEET	–	Not in Employment, Education and Training
NQF	–	National Qualification Framework
NSC	–	National Senior Certificate
PALCs	–	Public Adult Learning Centres
PSET	–	Post-School Education and Training
SAIVCET	–	South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training
SAQA	–	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	–	Sector Education and Training Authorities
SMME	–	Small Medium and Micro Enterprise
VET	–	Vocational Education and Training
TVET	–	Technical and Vocational Education and Training



## KEYWORDS

1. Curriculum
2. Knowledge and skills
3. Generic skills
4. Critical cross-field outcomes
5. Employability
6. Capability approach
7. Young adults
8. Youth at risk
9. Post-school education and training
10. Community Education and Training College

## ABSTRACT

The main objective of the research is to analyze critically how the curriculum at a Community College in the Western Cape prepares young adults for the world of work in the fields of Travel and Tourism and Small Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) and develops their capabilities to become functioning members in society. I was guided by concepts such as knowledge and skills necessary to enhance employability as well as people's wellbeing and capability development.

The data was gathered through interviews and analysis of national and institutional policy documents. The analysis of documents helped me to understand the curriculum's orientation to the world of work and its responsiveness to personal and social needs of young adults. The interview data helped me to reflect on the main research question, "What are the perspectives of academic staff, industry/sector representatives and young adults themselves on the knowledge and skills needed in the curriculum to prepare young adults for the world of work?"

My research shows that the curriculum of the ABET Level 4 programme has become more vocationally oriented. It prepares students for the world of work in a general way; but there are some limitations. There is no practical work experience or work exposure as in the curricula of programmes at TVET colleges and universities. The research also found that the formal curriculum in combination with the extra-curricular activities had benefits for students in terms of personal development and equipping them to function better in their social environments. However, offering these activities depends on efforts made by lecturers over and above their normal duties and on donations from various sources. Extending or sustaining this combination of activities requires adequate staffing and resources.

Finally the research highlighted various barriers students encountered and suggested that many of these barriers arise from structural constraints in the world of work and society. The research suggests that it is necessary but not sufficient to focus on the employability of young people and to equip them with knowledge and skills to prepare them for the world of work; it is also necessary to look beyond employability and consider the wellbeing of students (Powell, 2012; Jackson, 2005; Baatjes and Baatjes, 2008; Ngcwangu, 2019; Motala and Pampallis, 2007).

Therefore my research suggests that education should not have a narrow focus and that the curriculum should integrate vocational and general education (Young, 1999). Furthermore, there should be a holistic approach in the curriculum which responds to multiple objectives including preparation for work and for functioning effectively in other areas of one's life. This implies that the curriculum should prepare students for the world of work AND take into account their wellbeing, dreams and aspirations for a better life.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research is to analyze critically how the curriculum at the Community College prepares young adults for the world of work in the fields of Travel and Tourism and Small Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) and develops their capabilities to become functioning members of society.

The site of the research is a community college in the Western Cape, which is a pilot project for transforming an Adult Education and Training (AET) Centre / Public Adult Learning Centre (PALC) into a community college in terms of the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013). The research site is discussed more fully in Chapter 3 (3.2.) and Chapter 4 (4.2.3.).

The majority of students at the AET Centre were mature adult learners who were employed or have work experience and wanted to improve their education for personal reasons, career progression or to seek alternative employment opportunities. Since the transition to a community college the demographic profile of students has changed - the majority of students now are young adults who have little experience of formal employment. The curriculum now has to respond to the needs of both young and mature adults.

I started working as a lecturer at The Community College in 2016 after many years of working in Adult Education in non-governmental organizations and companies. I have experienced and observed the transition from an AET Centre to a pilot community college. I felt connected to the environment, students and staff. Being an insider was an advantage because it facilitated the process of gaining permission to use The Community College as a research site and gaining access to potential interviewees. Ethical issues arising from my role as an insider are discussed in Chapter 3.

I was interested in how the transition to a community college would affect the ABET Level 4 curriculum. The demographic profile of students has changed with the transition from an AET Centre to a community college. The Community College still enrolls both young and more mature adults ranging in age between 16 and 55 years. Since the pilot project was initiated in 2015 the number of young students has increased and by 2018 the majority (95%) of students was between 16 and 21 years old, mostly males. The profile of students includes young people at risk – such as young people awaiting trial, some with physical disabilities, school dropouts and those who regard The Community College as a last resort to further their education. Working with young adults was going to be a new experience for me and I wanted to understand how the curriculum could respond to the needs of young adults.

Community colleges are a fairly new type of institution and an under-researched area in the academic literature. There are some reports and studies prepared as inputs into policy processes. Some of the more recent literature focused on issues relating to policy implementation, including institutional form, governance, funding and staffing. There is very little on the curriculum. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to the views and experiences of those who are directly involved in the curriculum.

Through this study I hoped to develop an understanding of the perspectives of those directly involved in the curriculum – particularly students. I wanted to explore their views on what the curriculum at ABET level 4 responds to. Does it prepare young people for the world of work and if so how does it do this? Does it also include a broader focus on the well-being of students and develop their capabilities to become functioning members of society?

To explore these questions, I analyzed national and institutional policy documents and conducted semi-structured interviews to give participants an opportunity to share their views and experiences related to the curriculum. I analyzed policy documents such as the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013), The ABET Level 4 qualification, The Code of Conduct at The Community College and Extra-mural activities. Interviews were conducted with past and present students, the Centre Manager and sector representatives.

My research shows that the curriculum of the ABET Level 4 programme has become more vocationally oriented. It prepares students for the world of work in a general way; but there are some limitations - there is no practical work experience or work exposure as in the curricula of programmes at TVET colleges and universities. Students who completed the ABET Level 4 programme encountered difficulties when pursuing further studies because of limited articulation with the current matric curriculum and entry requirements for programmes at TVET colleges. The research also found that the formal curriculum in combination with the extra-curricular activities had benefits for students in terms of personal development and equipping them to function better in their social environments. However, offering these activities depends on efforts made by lecturers over and above their normal duties and on donations from various sources. Extending or sustaining this combination of activities requires adequate staffing and resources.

Finally the research highlighted various barriers students encountered and suggested that many of these barriers arise from structural constraints in the world of work and society. These structural constraints cannot be overcome solely through education and training interventions. A more comprehensive strategy is needed in which education plays a necessary although not a sufficient role.

This research paper is structured according to the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Literature Review
- Chapter 3 – Research Methodology
- Chapter 4 – Analysis of Policy Documents
- Chapter 5 – Analysis of Interview Data
- Chapter 6 – Findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of my research is to analyze critically how the curriculum at The Community College prepares young adults for the world of work and develops their capabilities to become functioning members of society. This chapter explores debates in the literature related to these questions.

I started by examining literature on community colleges in South Africa to understand the background to current policy discussions on community colleges with particular reference to the role of community colleges and the priorities they respond to. I then explored debates in the literature about the issues relevant to my research such as perspectives on preparing people for the world of work and what the curriculum should respond to.

I used the following headings to present the review of literature:

- 2.2. Community Colleges
  - 2.2.1. Early conception of community colleges until 2013
  - 2.2.2. Community Colleges 2014 – 2018
  - 2.2.3. Academic literature
- 2.3. Employability and preparation for the world of work
- 2.4. Employability and the curriculum
- 2.5. Relevance to my research

### 2.2. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

#### 2.2.1. *Early conception of community colleges until 2013*

The concept of community colleges in South Africa was discussed in the early 1990s as part of national policy discussions about the most appropriate institutional form for responding to the education and training needs of adults and youth. Many of the discussions focused on these issues within debates about policy on adult basic education and training (ABET).

In the 1990's the National Institute for Community Education (NICE) advocated for a community college model through which education and training could be offered in collaboration with community-based organizations and other education institutions. NICE refers to community education as "educational programs and services, which are directly relevant to local community needs and which are of most benefit to the communities concerned" (NICE, 1995b, pg. 2 in Malale 2003, pg. 39).

The need for a curriculum based on individual and community needs is also emphasized in Malale (2003) who draws on the experiences of community colleges in the USA to discuss their purpose and possible features in the context of South Africa. One of these features is "curriculum comprehensiveness" or the "multi-purpose character of the curriculum" (Mokgatle, 1995, pg. 3 in Malale, 2003, pg. 59). It was therefore proposed that community colleges should offer:

*...a wide range and combination of programmes to a diversity of students who have different abilities, past achievements and educational goals. Students would include workers, unemployed adults and post school or out of school youths (NICE, 1995a, pg. 13 in Malale 2003, pg. 59).*

The early conception of community colleges in South Africa was influenced by approaches such as popular education and education for emancipation (Baatjies and Baatjies, 2008). Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) were to be established to meet specific needs within local communities and be driven by the community within which they were located. Members of staff were to be drawn from the local area and trained to run the college. Youth and adults from the local community would play a role in governance and determine programmes and courses that the college should offer. The community college would thereby respond to education and training needs in the local community and offer employment opportunities to unemployed youth and adults as part of broader development efforts (ibid.).

It was recognized that the needs of youth and adults are diverse and that they need access to different kinds of services such as access to information, counseling, library services and provision of sites where vocational education and training and non-formal programmes can be offered (ibid.).

Similarly discussions about community education emphasize that the goal of community education is to respond to the development needs of a particular community. It is argued that “the dominant feature of community education is its intimate relation to the life of the community it serves” (Singh, 1996, pg. 108 in Malale, 2003: pg. 37). Others make similar points (Hamilton, 1997; Morphet and Millar, 1981).

With the end of formal apartheid in 1994 the new Department of Education initiated a national Youth/Community Colleges Programme. Pilot projects were set up in 9 provinces to provide education and training to out of school youth. There were differences in the conceptualization, organization and delivery in the different pilot projects in each province. However, there was a degree of commonality in programme offerings across provinces which according to Omar (1999) had objectives to:

- *facilitate access to second-chance matriculation programmes;*
- *facilitate access to higher education.;*
- *offer skills and trades training, much of which is accredited by industry training boards;*
- *offer vocational education, mostly between N1 and N4, but sometimes also courses up to N6 level;*
- *offer ABET (in some sites on both a full- and part-time basis); and*
- *deliver special education, such as voter education.*

(Omar, 1999 in OLTDE, November 1999, pg. 19).

A review of this programme concluded that:

*The experience of the provincial pilot projects provides insights about education and training programmes for youth in relation to policy, implementation, staff training and development, piloting of innovation, and implications for the mainstreaming of these innovations. These insights are intended to inform the formulation of a strategy for repositioning the Youth/Community Colleges Programme (Omar, 1999 in OLTDE, November 1999, pg. 23).*

It is worth noting that recent policies identified similar objectives for education and training for youth in community colleges. One of the key insights of the review is that there were distinctive features in the conceptualization, organization and delivery of programmes in the pilot projects in each province, although there was a degree of commonality in programme offerings across

provinces. These distinctive features are important for exploring the role of community colleges in the current context. It is unclear whether or how the experience of the provincial pilot projects has influenced later thinking and policies on community colleges.

The period of transition from apartheid also saw intense debates about adult basic education and training. Processes of policy development, for example in NEPI, generated proposals about a national system of adult basic education and training. Policies were adopted such as the ABET Policy of 1997 and Adult Basic Education and Training Act of 2000 (now repealed with the passing of the policy on post-school education and training) and ABET became formalised within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The policies were operationalized through the Multi-year Implementation Plan (1997), a national ABET programme through the Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), and national campaigns such as the South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI) and Kha Ri Gude (Baatjes and Baatjes, 2008).

This was followed in 2012 by the Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training (PSET) and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) which proposed that PALCs be reconceptualised as Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) for provision of education and training of youth and adults and be more responsive to the issues and needs of communities.

## 2.2.2. Community colleges – 2014 to 2018

### 2.2.2.1. Transition from PALCs to community colleges

The White Paper on PSET (2013) signaled a transition from PALCs to community colleges. One of the main policy objectives was for community colleges to create pathways for students to learn in directions which are of interest to them or to develop knowledge and skills for sustainable livelihoods. In other words this was a move away from the old PALC curriculum towards greater curriculum comprehensiveness:

*Thus we need to provide pathways for those who want to learn simply for interest or livelihoods as well as for those not catered for by schools, TVET Colleges or universities, but who seek access to institutions, learning programmes and modes of accessing learning that they can take advantage of (HESA 2011). The Community College system must avoid the limitations of the PALC system which focused exclusively on school type literacy, numeracy skills and school subjects, and failed to actually make the T in ABET into a real offering (Land and Aitchison, 2017, pg. 63).*

Since then policy and implementation concerns have focused on institutional restructuring (creating multi-campus and pilot colleges), governance and financing (PALCs were governed provincially and community colleges are now governed nationally).

However, there was little focus on the curriculum in the transition to community colleges except for the inclusion of more vocational subjects. Furthermore there has been little attention given to the issue of articulation with TVET college programmes despite the assumption that students in community colleges who wish to study further after completing ABET Level 4 are likely to enroll for programmes in TVET colleges.

### 2.2.2.2. Policy mandate

Both community colleges and TVET institutions form part of the post-school education and training system but have different mandates. TVET is seen as driven primarily by economic imperatives i.e. developing the intermediate level skills needed in the economy. Wedekind (2016) asserts that:

*The common feature of all TVET is the link to the world of work, either through the overt preparation of new people for particular types of work, the retraining of working people for new forms of work, or the improvement of people's skills in existing workplaces.*

In the UNESCO definition:

*Technical and vocational education and training' (TVET) is understood as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods (UNESCO, 2015, Annex ii, pg. 2).*

Similarly in McGrath's (2012) description of VET:

*VET is conventionally understood as encompassing the myriad forms of learning that are primarily aimed at supporting participation in the worlds-of-work, whether in terms of (re)integration into work or increased effectiveness of those currently defined as being in work (McGrath 2012, pg. 3).*

The policy mandate for community colleges on the other hand, extends beyond an economic rationale for education. According to the White Paper on PSET (2013) the mandate of community colleges includes preparation for the world of work and employability which can be seen in the mandate for TVET institutions; but community colleges are also expected to focus on local community needs, poverty reduction and education for active citizenship (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013).

The direct connection with community needs suggests that there is some continuity between current policy and the early conception of community colleges:

*An important aspect of the work of the Community Colleges is their direct connection with community needs and issues and with other government programmes such as the Expanded Public Works and the Community Works Programmes. This policy objective has the potential to provide greater people-oriented and socially useful programmes and work responsive to community needs and environmental standards, which in turn, could further promote greater social justice, opportunity and equality (Kgobe and Baatjes (2014, pg. 3).*

However, the strong emphasis on education for emancipation or popular education which Baatjes and Baatjes (2008) referred to is not evident.

Similarly the objectives of the ABET Level 4 qualification offered at The Community College are not limited to equipping students for the workforce but include equipping them with knowledge and skills to function better within their communities or society at large. A fuller discussion on the ABET Level 4 qualification and the White Paper on PSET (2013) is given in Chapter 4.

### *2.2.3. Academic literature on community colleges*

Community colleges are an under-researched area in the academic literature in South Africa compared to literature on higher education and TVET.

Much of the literature on community colleges has focused on policy discourses, transformation agendas and policy implementation (Motala and Vally, 2014; Simkins, 2019). Some studies have taken the form of reports prepared as inputs into policy processes (Raphotle, 2012; Aitchison, 2012) and drew on South African and international case studies of different institutional forms for community colleges, governance, staffing and funding (Raphotle, 2012; Land and Aitchison, 2017).



However, there was little focus on curriculum. The study by Land and Aitchison (2017) discussed types of formal and non-formal learning programmes at community colleges and presented a summary of the learning needs of students in community colleges (Land and Aitchison, 2017, pg. 63). However it did not discuss curriculum in the sense of what is taught or how it is taught. Furthermore, there was little focus on how the curriculum at community colleges was experienced by students and lecturers and the voices of students were absent in this discussion.

This is not unique to community colleges. The views of workers and students about their reasons for wanting to acquire learning were not considered in the literature on TVET (Powell and McGrath, 2014). The assumption was that students' voices are not important and what they want is jobs; however this is not a true reflection of their expectations and aspirations. Their educational needs are not limited to work-related needs; they have a wide range of changing objectives and desires that are not limited to economic objectives. Students make active choices to participate in further education and training and if there is no understanding of their reasons the education and training may limit students in their aspirations to live a better life (ibid.).

A re-examination of the curriculum is an urgent and important task in the light of the transition from PALCs to community colleges. Student demographics have changed. The Community College now accommodates many more young people compared to when it operated as a PALC or AET Centre. However many adults are still enrolled at community colleges despite the policy emphasis on the needs of young people. This implies that the curriculum at community colleges must be redesigned to respond to the needs of both target groups.

In the light of these comments and the expectation that students from community colleges are likely to pursue further studies at TVET colleges, I have drawn on literature related to both TVET and community colleges to explore debates about employability and how the curriculum can prepare young adults for the world of work and to function effectively in other areas of their lives.

### **2.3. EMPLOYABILITY AND PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD OF WORK**

Discussions about how the curriculum can prepare people for the world of work often focus on the knowledge and skills needed to improve their employability in the context of rapid changes in the world of work. However there is no standard definition of employability, internationally.

The ILO defines employability as:

*“the skills, knowledge and competencies that enhance a worker’s ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change, secure another job if he/she so wishes or has been laid off and enter more easily into the labour market at different periods of the life cycle” (Brewer, 2013, pg. iii).*

Similarly, “employability” is defined as being able to find employment or “the ability to retain work and grow within an occupational pathway” (Wedekind and Mutereko, 2016, pg. vi). This gives a view of employability which involves not only finding employment but also retaining employment and growing within a sector.

It follows that employability of individuals is more than just being employed. The quality of work also matters as individuals may get a job but it may be low paid and not sustainable or not fulfilling the individual’s desires (Hillage and Pollard, 1998).

The discussion about employability has gained greater importance as a response to changes in the world of work (McGrath, 2009). In an era of increasing competition, the environment and nature of work has changed and continues to change rapidly due to factors such as the spread of technology and a competitive global market (Hager, Holland and Beckett, 2002, pg. 5).

Jackson (2005) argues that youth can expect that things will not stay the same for too long in the world of work:

*Products change, markets change, customers or clients change, machines change, material change, tools change, management methods change, pay arrangements change, working practices change, supervision methods change, knowledge needed at work changes, skills needed at work change (Jackson, 2005, pg. 39).*

These rapid and constant changes in the world of work have implications for youth and adults. It leaves many unemployed because often job seekers such as graduates do not possess the required attributes that employers are looking for even though they have pursued studies in a certain field. They are expected to demonstrate a broad skill range which is often measured in job applications or job interviews (Hager, Holland and Beckett, 2002). The need for routine tasks in workplaces has diminished and the demand exists for highly skilled workers who possess critical and social skills (ibid.).

Employability skills are said to equip individuals to find employment in a labour market which is becoming more and more insecure. In earlier years people used to stay in one workplace or position at work for a number of years. They acquired particular skill sets for particular jobs and stayed in those positions or workplaces sometimes until retirement.

Now young people will need skills to enhance employability i.e. skills which an individual can utilize across a range of jobs (Jackson, 2005). Jackson (2005, pg. 38) identifies nine essential skills namely, "reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, and computer use". Skills are defined in this way because they can be used across jobs and their flexibility is advantageous to both the employer and the employee.

According to Jackson (2005) both these terms, essential or generic skills are becoming more familiar in many countries and are regarded as a priority on the agenda of employers. Cochran & Ferrari (2009) assert that the skills employers most value in employees are critical thinking skills, communication, teamwork and leadership skills.

Employers and business leaders claim that they find a consistent skills gap in students coming from high school and post school institutions - i.e. a gap or difference between the skills necessary on the job and skills possessed by job seekers (Cochran & Ferrari, 2009; Robinson, 2000).

Wedekind and Mutereko (2014) confirm that there is a shift in focus from employment to employability. Employability focuses on the "product" of the system based on the needs of employers and it often becomes a checklist of attributes (Wedekind and Mutereko, (2014, pg. 4). The perceived lack of responsiveness to the needs of employers results in students not being employable. The curriculum is viewed as outdated because standards are not appropriate, key general skills are not taught and educators are out of touch.

There is therefore a shift from a curriculum that will prepare young people with skills and knowledge for particular jobs to a curriculum that will equip them with skills to improve employability.

## 2.4. EMPLOYABILITY AND THE CURRICULUM

According to McGrath, Needham, Papier and Wedekind (2010:2):

*It is widely argued that the job of the educational system is to identify a list of employability skills (or, rather, these should be read off what organised business says are its needs) and then providers should teach these. Such lists have proliferated (e.g., Harvey and Green 1994; Coopers and Lybrand 1998; Lees 2002; Hartshorn and Sear 2005; Yorke 2006; Griesel and Parker 2009). Some authors, such as Hartshorn and Sear, have identified employability skills with enterprising skills, as defined by Gibb (1993).*

However there is no clear understanding of the concepts of employability and skills for employability. From the perspective of education providers, even expanded notions of employability are insufficient as they do not provide “the necessary grounding within the educational institutions in which employability is both made sense of and acted upon” (McGrath, Needham, Papier and Wedekind, 2010, pg. 2).

Employability skills are often seen as generic or essential skills but more critical views suggest that focusing on generic skills is “too narrow because they focus only on jobs, not on rest of life” (Jackson, 2005, pg. 38).

Similarly Baptiste (2001) acknowledges the importance of education and training for economic survival but argues it is crucial that education and training should not fit entirely within an economic or human capital paradigm. A human capital perspective regards human beings as incapable of engaging in activities from which they will not reap benefit. By implication the theory suggests that young people are only interested in personal gain and do not consider how they can plough back or assist in transforming their communities (ibid.).

Furthermore, human capital approaches ignore changes in the labour market and the impact it may have on students or individuals (Ngcwangu, 2019). Students may find themselves in situations where they have acquired skills for particular occupations but there may not be a need for those occupations in the labour market. Powell (2012) argues that there is a decline in skilled and semi-skilled occupations in South Africa and that vocational qualifications do not match with available jobs. Ngcwangu (2019) further argues that individuals may be restricted from exploring other occupations or employment opportunities available in the job market and may actually be marginalized. In the light of these concerns it is important that vocational education should not have a narrow focus of preparing students for specific jobs, tasks or roles; rather students should be equipped with a broad range of skills and attributes.

Young (1999) asserts that the curriculum is not just an educational issue because it has an impact on the lives of young adults. He stresses that if a curriculum is to be truly inclusive then it “must be skeptical of putting the sole focus on vocational education or work-based programmes because of its marginalizing effects on youth (Young, 1999, pg. 475). He argues that the curriculum for young people should not have a narrow vocational or skills focus but should include both general and vocational education to broaden opportunities for students.

Similarly Baatjes and Baatjes (2008, pg.19) suggest that although the economic purpose of education is important, it should never be regarded as superior to all the other purposes because human beings play different roles within society which include but are not limited to economic roles. People enter into learning activities for a variety of reasons, including personal, social, political and economic reasons. Personal involves personal development; social includes to understand or enhance knowledge of the community or the world in which learners live in

order to participate effectively; political includes to understand human rights and equality in society and economic includes to develop vocational knowledge and skills for work purposes (Baatjes and Baatjes, 2008, pg. 16 - 19).

Powell (2012) also argues that the curriculum for young people should expand the capabilities of students and allow them to dream of or aspire to opportunities or futures outside the scope of their existing lives. She argues that students have interests that expand to a personal level, which includes gaining self-confidence and respect, personal pride and dignity. They are concerned about their own spiritual development and want to contribute meaningfully to relationships with family and to their communities. Students value the “capability to aspire and to dream of a future beyond their current circumstances which is equally important, if not more important than the curriculum content that they engaged in” (Powell, 2012, pg. 651).

## **2.5. RELEVANCE OF LITERATURE TO MY RESEARCH**

The objective of this study is to analyze how the curriculum at The Community College prepares young people for the world of work and develops their capabilities to become functioning members of society.

As noted earlier one of the features of community colleges is that its curriculum should be comprehensive in nature and responsive to the diverse needs of young people and adults (Mokgatle, 1995 in Malale, 2003).

The curriculum is often referred to as the syllabus or the outline of the content of a programme or qualification. This is a narrow view of a curriculum; an expanded view of the curriculum is useful to explore the responsiveness of the curriculum to the needs of young people. I drew on the view that:

*Curriculum is not to be narrowly reduced to a blueprint such as a syllabus, but needs to include the full gamut of learning and teaching experiences, intended and unintended, overt and covert, that students experience (Wedekind and Mutereko, 2016, pg. 25).*

In drawing on a broader notion of the curriculum my research explored both the formal curriculum and extra-curricular activities at The Community College which is the site of this research. However it was not possible within the limited scope of a research paper<sup>1</sup> to explore all the teaching and learning experiences of students.

The literature on employability explored two issues which were of particular relevance to my research.

The first is that responsibility for developing employability skills is placed either on individuals or on education providers who are expected to develop the employability skills their students need and to modify their curriculum and pedagogy as needed. Education providers are expected to design the curriculum and pedagogy on the basis of a list of employability skills, usually based on employers' views of what is needed. In these lists employability skills are often seen as generic or essential skills; however more critical views suggest that focusing on generic skills is “too narrow because they focus only on jobs, not on rest of life” (Jackson, 2005, pg. 38).

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<sup>1</sup> A research paper contributes 25% towards fulfilling the requirements for completing the M.Ed (Adult Learning and Global Change).

A second issue is that employability is seen as a matter of individual attributes, aptitude and skills an individual has or should develop and depends on the behavior and will of the individual (McQuaid, Green and Danson, 2005). The views of workers and students about their reasons for wanting to participate in learning programmes are not considered. The assumption is that they enter into learning opportunities only to improve their employability and find employment. However their educational needs are not limited to work-related needs and the curriculum should expand their capabilities and allow them to dream of or aspire to opportunities or futures outside the scope of their current lives (Powell and McGrath, 2014).

I was guided by critical perspectives in the literature on the curriculum and its orientation to the world of work. I noted the argument that the curriculum for young people should include both general and vocational education, as a narrow vocational or skills focus is “likely to sustain the marginality of such groups” (Young, 1999, pg. 475). Therefore the curriculum cannot be seen only as an educational issue because of its impact on the lives of young adults. Furthermore there was a need to include students’ voices which are usually absent in discussions about the curriculum. My research therefore explored what students’ expectations were of the curriculum, and their views on how it responded to their needs to improve their employability as well as to function more effectively in other areas of their lives.

In contrast to the individualised notion of employability the concept of ‘interactive employability’ (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2004, pg. 202) suggests that employability is about overcoming a broad array of barriers to work faced by individuals and that the focus of employability policies should therefore not be just on individuals. This view underscores the importance of understanding the context in which the individual is located, including their personal circumstances and the labour market in which they are seeking work. From an educational perspective it suggests the need for a focus on the barriers to learning which students encounter including institutional, situational and dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981)<sup>2</sup>.

These arguments suggest that assuming that society can be transformed solely through educational interventions is a too narrow view:

*...the expectation that educational interventions through policy reform can (on their own) resolve the legacy of apartheid is both misleading and short-sighted. For instance, formal and increased access to PSET does not always translate into effective equity outcomes. This means that the commitment to social justice in education requires both broader reforms in social and economic policy including the redistribution of resources as well as a careful consideration of the historical conditions that produce inequalities. Therefore, while important proposals are made in the White Paper, the extent to which these will transform education and society will depend on a number of factors, including the broader historical and political context in which the White Paper is located, the conditions which continue to reproduce inequality and the external determinants that limit the ability of the nation-state to redress it (Motala and Pampallis, 2007, in Kgobe and Baatjes, 2014, pg. 4).*

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<sup>2</sup> Situational barriers are factors such as poverty, lack of transport or the distance to the institution, financial problems and family or work-related commitments that hinder their participation in learning activities. Institutional barriers refer to rules, procedures or practices at the educational institution where students want to study or are studying, such as admission requirements, classes offered in a student’s second language, particular courses not offered and timing or scheduling of classes. It is often within the capacity of the institution to limit these barriers. Dispositional barriers include factors such as a student’s attitude, personality or state of mind towards their learning. These barriers can arise from a state of depression or stress, having a lack of confidence or a negative attitude towards life (Cross, 1981).

The arguments in the literature suggests that it is necessary but not sufficient to focus on the employability of young people and to equip them with knowledge and skills to prepare them for the world of work; it is also necessary to look beyond employability and consider the wellbeing of students (Powell, 2012; Jackson, 2005; Baatjes and Baatjes, 2008; Ngcwangu, 2019; Motala and Pampallis, 2007). Therefore a strong argument is made that education and training should not have a narrow focus and that the curriculum should integrate vocational and general education (Young, 1999). Furthermore, there should be a holistic approach in the curriculum which responds to multiple objectives including preparation for work and to function effectively in other areas of one's life. This implies that the curriculum should prepare students for the world of work AND take into account their well-being, dreams and aspirations for a better life.

I explored these arguments in my research. I analyzed national and institutional policy documents and curriculum statements to help me to understand the policy context in which community colleges operate, what is expected of these colleges, the curriculum for students in the ABET Level 4 programme and how it responds to expectations of participants. In the semi-structured interviews I explored the views and perspectives of those directly concerned about the curriculum, including students, the Centre Manager and industry representatives. I asked about their perspectives and experiences of the curriculum; and with students I asked about dreams that they have for themselves for their future, their learning needs and expectations and how these compare with what the curriculum currently offers. Both groups shed light on dreams that they have for themselves, their expectations of the curriculum, how the curriculum prepared them for the world of work and other areas of their lives.

The next chapter discusses the research approach and data collection methods used in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research methods used in this study and includes a discussion of the research site, the research approach and data collection methods. The final section comments on how ethical principles were observed in this research process.

### **3.2. RESEARCH SITE**

The research site, referred to as The Community College, is located in the Western Cape and was formerly an AET Centre for mature adults who were or had been employed, had work experience and wanted to improve their education. The Community College is now a pilot project for transforming the AET Centre into a community college which is expected to respond to the needs of individuals (both youth and adults), the community and the economy (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013).

The demographic profile of students has changed with the transition from an AET Centre to a community college. The Community College still enrolls both young and more mature adults ranging in age between 16 and 55 years. Since the pilot project was initiated in 2015 the number of young students has increased and by 2018 the majority (95%) of students was between 16 and 21 years old, mostly males. The profile of students includes young people at risk – such as young people awaiting trial, some with physical disabilities, school dropouts and those who regard The Community College as a last resort to further their education.

Students at The Community College generally do not meet the requirements for admission to a university or a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college. The majority of students at The Community College are young adults who have not been employed and who have little formal work experience compared to the more mature adults at the AET Centre.

Students live in areas relatively close to The Community College, which were formerly townships reserved for people classified as “coloured” and “black” under the apartheid Group Areas Act. They are not elite suburbs and are seen as having a sub-economic status associated with low levels of education, high rates of unemployment, gangsterism and crime.

There have been few changes in the curriculum since the transition from an AET Centre to a community college. In the curriculum for ABET Level 4 a distinction is made between academic subjects and vocational specializations. As an AET Centre, the curriculum included mostly academic subjects, such as Human and Social Studies, Arts and Culture and Economic and Management Sciences. Currently the curriculum at The Community College offers more vocational specializations in response to the perceived need to prepare young students for the world of work. These changes are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

The Community College was therefore an appropriate site to explore how the curriculum prepares young adults for the world of work. I considered aspects relevant to my research question, such as the curriculum at The Community College, its orientation to the world of work and views of students, Centre Manager and industry representatives. This enabled me to gather the data needed to reflect on the question: “What are the perspectives of academic staff, industry/sector representatives and young adults themselves on the knowledge and skills needed in the curriculum to prepare young adults for the world of work?”

### **3.3. ACCESS AND PERMISSION**

The first step was to obtain permission to conduct research as part of the Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change (MALGC) at the University of the Western Cape. I submitted my research proposal and applied for ethical clearance from the research ethics committee at the University before undertaking fieldwork. The research proposal was approved and ethics clearance was granted (Appendix 1: Ethics Clearance Certificate).

I also requested permission in writing<sup>3</sup> from the Centre Manager at The Community College. Gaining permission to conduct the study at The Community College was relatively easy because I am employed at The Community College as a lecturer and the Centre Manager knows me and is aware that I am conducting this research for my postgraduate studies.

Access to interviewees was uncomplicated because most of them were located at The Community College. These include the Level 4 students and the current Centre Manager who was the former Curriculum Coordinator. The Centre Manager and some lecturers directed me to potential student interviewees (see details below in 3.5.2.3. Sampling criteria).

### **3.4. RESEARCH APPROACH**

This is a qualitative research study which explores the perspectives of academic staff, industry/sector representatives and young adults themselves on the knowledge and skills needed in the curriculum to prepare young adults for the world of work.

Qualitative research is exploratory research that generally emphasizes texts or words - which is appropriate for this study as it enabled me, as the researcher, to gain information about The Community College and insight into participants' experiences and perspectives through interviews and analysis of policy documents. It also helped me to understand what the learning needs of students are and how the curriculum responds to their needs. It enabled me to gain deeper insight into the context of participants by viewing their world through their eyes and examining their interpretation of their world. In other words, I took an interpretivist and non-positivist position which "appreciates that participants will have different views and that each of them understands their contexts differently" (Bryman, 2012, pg. 27).

There are different understandings and interpretations amongst the students of what the curriculum offers and what young adults experience. Some students are concerned about changes that they feel are needed in the curriculum to prepare them more fully for the world of work or dreams they have for themselves, whereas others are satisfied with how the curriculum is currently structured. Similarly, the Centre Manager who was formerly the Curriculum Coordinator is concerned about whether the curriculum is meeting the needs of students and whether offering the number of subjects will be operationally viable.

It is clear that participants have different views and assign meanings based on the roles they have in relation to the curriculum. In addition, as the researcher, I analyzed the curriculum and brought to the research my own interpretation of the curriculum. Therefore, this is a qualitative research study with an interpretivist epistemology and a non-positivist position.

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<sup>3</sup> The letters requesting and granting permission to conduct the study at The Community College are available on request. I have not attached these letters because details of the Centre Manager and the college appear on the letter and I have an obligation to adhere to the agreement to protect their identities.



The study embodies a constructivist ontological orientation. Ontology is concerned with how a social phenomenon is being studied with reference to the relationship between the researcher and the phenomena being studied (Bryman, 2012, pg. 32). Bryman refers to two ontological positions namely objectivism and constructivism. This relates to a subjective approach to research as the researcher interacts with the reality to investigate what the truth is.

A constructivist position is taken in this study and acknowledgment is given to the fact that the researcher brings potential influence to the research. This is in contrast to the idea that the investigation is done objectively and that the researcher does not influence the data gathered. Constructivism acknowledges that “the social phenomena and its meanings are continually accomplished or constructed by social actors” (Bryman, 2012, pg. 32). The research process involved the co-construction of knowledge by the participants and me as the researcher.

Participants gave their views about the curriculum based on the meaning it has for them. I listened to their views and analyzed the responses as the researcher. I constructed my analysis based on my interpretations of interviewees’ responses about how they understood and experienced the curriculum. I also constructed knowledge based on my own analysis of the curriculum, which included national curriculum statements and policy documents. This constructivist position allowed for an in-depth understanding of how skills and knowledge in the curriculum contributes to preparing young adults for the world of work or other areas of their lives.

### **3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Data collection methods refer to the process of gathering data from the research sample to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2012). Data collection methods commonly used in qualitative research includes participant observation, focus groups and qualitative interviews. Each of these methods is used to gain specific data.

In this study I used semi-structured interviews to elicit detailed answers and develop an in-depth understanding of participants’ perspectives on the curriculum. The use of semi-structured interviews is discussed in section 3.5.2. I also analyzed national and institutional policy documents and curriculum statements to help me to understand the policy context in which community colleges operate, what is expected of these colleges, the curriculum for students in ABET Level 4 programmes and how it responds to expectations of participants (see 3.5.1.2. below).

#### *3.5.1. Document Analysis*

##### *3.5.1.1. What is document analysis?*

Document analysis is described as the procedure followed by the researcher to review or evaluate electronic or printed documents, whether it is in the form of text or images, to gain understanding of a particular phenomenon (Bowen, 2009, pg. 27-28).

Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods, a process which is referred to as triangulation. This means that the researcher draws on more than one data collection method and sources of data on the same topic. More than one method is regarded as beneficial because it gives credibility to a study, helps the researcher to validate findings and it reduces the possibility of biases from existing in a study.

In this study, I drew on more than one data collection method and sources of data - I used document analysis and semi structured interviews with different categories of participants i.e. students, Centre Manager and sector representatives.

### *3.5.1.2. Selection and analysis of documents*

The research question focuses specifically on the ABET Level 4 curriculum at The Community College and how it prepares young adults for the world of work in two sectors - Travel and Tourism and SMME. I analyzed the national curriculum for ABET Level 4 as set out in the SAQA ABET Level 4 qualification (SAQA, 2007) to understand what kinds of knowledge and skills the curriculum aims to develop through the combination of academic subjects and vocational specializations offered at this level. I also studied the national unit standards related to the vocational modules on Travel and Tourism and SMME.

I analyzed national policies and legislation such as the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) to gain background and contextual information about national policy objectives for community education and training colleges and reasons underpinning the establishment of these colleges.

In addition I looked at institutional policies which support or supplement the national policies on the curriculum and regulate interventions which do not form part of the formal curriculum. These institutional policies (such as the Code of Conduct) regulate the conduct of students and aim to create a safe environment for learning. Some of these policies were developed when The Community College operated as an AET Centre and continue to be implemented with the transition to a community college.

The national policies and the ABET Level 4 curriculum was fairly easy to access because they were available online on the website of Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). I obtained institutional policy documents such as the Code of Conduct from the Centre Manager at The Community College.

In preparation for analyzing the documents I considered the research objectives and questions carefully to develop themes for analyzing the documents.

These included themes related to the policy context in which community colleges operate and curriculum changes with the transition from AET Centres to community colleges. A key theme was to explore how the policies define the role of community colleges - is their role to prepare young adults for the labour market or do the policies recognize that young adults have varied needs that include but are not limited to the need for improving their employability i.e. that these needs extend to other areas of their lives.

The analysis of the ABET Level 4 curriculum focused on themes such as the objectives of the curriculum and how it aims to develop skills and knowledge in the context of preparing young people for work and other areas of their lives. Similarly the analysis of institutional policies focused on gaining an understanding of interventions such as the Code of Conduct which aim to regulate the conduct of students.

I also drew on my knowledge as an insider to comment on extra-curricular activities which are not part of the formal curriculum at The Community College and how they contribute to developing skills and knowledge to support young people's participation in the world of work and other areas of their lives.

### 3.5.2. *Semi-structured interviews*

#### 3.5.2.1. *What are semi-structured interviews?*

Interviews are the most common data collection method in qualitative research through which the researcher presents questions or topics that need to be explored or answered by the interviewee (Jamshed, 2014, pg. 87).

Semi-structured interviews allow for a more conversational type of interview guided by a prepared list of questions, which cover broad themes in the interview and direct the conversation towards the particular topic or area of focus. Questions are phrased as open-ended questions and allow for more detailed responses to questions and give respondents more flexibility in how to respond, with no fixed choice answers or limitations to responses as in structured interviews (Bryman, 2012, pg. 471).

In this study I conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview schedule with open-ended questions (Appendices 4A, B and C) which I used in a flexible manner to guide and focus the interview on certain themes and issues. The sequence of questions varied from interviewee to interviewee, based on their responses. These semi-structured interviews helped me to gain an in-depth understanding about participants' perspectives and experiences of the curriculum (as discussed below in 3.5.2.6. Interviews).

#### 3.5.2.2. *Sampling Strategy*

Bryman (2012) refers to the sample as the selected population for the study. He explains that the method employed for selecting the sample can be based on non-probability or probability sampling. The research questions are significant because it identifies the objectives of the study and serves as a guide in directing the researcher to the sample. It requires careful consideration for selecting participants based on the objectives of the study.

In this study, I employed a purposive or non-probability sampling strategy which is when the researcher selects participants in a strategic way so that participants are relevant to the study's research questions and are in a position to shed light on the questions that the study aims to answer (Bryman, 2012, pg. 418).

#### 3.5.2.3. *Sampling Criteria*

The criteria for selecting participants were developed after analyzing the research questions.

Since the focus of the study is specific to Travel and Tourism and SMME, the criteria included both current students and graduates who had Travel and Tourism and/or SMME as subjects. They provided their understandings and interpretations of what the curriculum offers and what young people experience during and after the programme.

Students who have completed their studies were selected because they could, based on their work experiences, shed light on what is needed for work in the sector of Travel and Tourism and SMME and compare this with what the curriculum offered. Students who are in the process of completing ABET Level 4 shed light on their learning needs, expectations and what the curriculum currently offers. Both groups of students also gave insight into how the curriculum develops their capabilities to function effectively in other areas of their lives.

The current Centre Manager who was the former Curriculum Coordinator was selected because she could provide background information about The Community College and explain changes that transpired with its transition from an AET Centre to a community college. The Centre Manager could also give insight into what the curriculum offered between 2014 and 2017 as an AET Centre and how the curriculum changed since the transition to a community college.

Industry/sector representatives were selected because they could comment on the perspectives of employers on skills and knowledge they consider necessary for working in the sectors of Travel and Tourism and SMME.

The sample thus included those who are involved in the curriculum at The Community College (such as the Centre Manager and students) as well as representatives in the sector of Travel and Tourism and SMME. Participants included:

- students who are in the process of completing the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) qualification and have Travel and Tourism or SMME as a subject/s
- Students who obtained their qualification between 2014 and 2017 and who had Travel and Tourism or SMME as a subject/s
- the current Centre Manager who was also the former Curriculum Coordinator for some years and
- two industry / sector representatives.

The sampling criteria were used to ensure that the researcher could gain different perspectives on the curriculum. Students receive and experience the curriculum and it is ultimately their lives that are impacted by the curriculum. Therefore it was necessary to gain insight into their perspectives. Interviewing these students as well as the Centre Manager and industry representatives allowed for triangulation which enabled me, as the researcher, to discover perspectives on the curriculum from different angles and from different sources.

#### *3.5.2.4. Research Sample*

I interviewed approximately ten participants, which included:

- four students who are in the process of completing their GETC qualification
- three graduates who studied for their qualification between 2014 and 2017
- the current Centre Manager who was also the former Curriculum Coordinator for some years at The Community College
- two industry / sector representatives.

As shown in the table below, the student participants were all young adults, both males and females. More female students responded positively to the invitation to participate in the study. The table below shows the criteria related to each participant in the study, their area of specialization and background information.

<b>Interviewee's Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age in years</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Specialization</b>
<b>Current students</b>						
Michelle Wyngaard	F	20	English	Student working part-time (packer and cashier in a retail store)	2017 Level 4 student	Travel and Tourism and SMME
Kyle Hester	M	17	Afrikaans	Student	2017 Level 4 student	Travel and Tourism and SMME
Allister Campher	M	17	Afrikaans	Student	2017 Level 4 student	Travel and Tourism and SMME
Jack Gabriels	M	18	Afrikaans	Student	2017 Level 4 student	Travel and Tourism
<b>Graduates</b>						
Samantha Louw	F	51	Afrikaans	Graduate	Level 4 Graduate	Travel and Tourism
Rashieda Jansen	F	30	English	Graduate	Level 4 Graduate	SMME
Sandy Williams	F	Between 35 and 40 years	Afrikaans	Graduate	Level 4 Graduate	Early Childhood Development and Ancillary Health
<b>Centre Manager</b>						
Mrs Mariam Samuels	F	60		Current Centre Manager and former Curriculum Coordinator		Responsible for the operation of The Community College and involved in Curriculum matters
<b>Sector Representatives</b>						
Cassidy Daly	F	Between 40 and 50 years	English	Sector representative	In Travel and Tourism sector	Tour guide
Ian Kock	M	60	Afrikaans	Sector representative	In SMME Sector	Small business owner

As anticipated, the participants who completed the ABET Level 4 programme were able, based on their work experiences, to shed light on the requirements for working in the sector of Travel and Tourism and SMME and compare these to what the curriculum offered. Participants who are in the process of the programme shared their views on their learning needs and expectations and how these compare with what the curriculum currently offers.

Both groups shed light on dreams that they have for themselves, their expectations of the curriculum, how the curriculum prepared them for the world of work and other areas of their lives. Industry/sector representatives provided insight on the perspectives of employers in each industry/sector on what they consider necessary in the curriculum (see Chapter 5).

The current Centre Manager was the former Curriculum Coordinator and provided insight into what the curriculum of The Community College offered between 2014 and 2017.

#### *3.5.2.5. Preparation for Interviews*

Research instruments were drawn up beforehand and submitted with the research proposal for approval as part of the university's ethics clearance process. The approved information sheet, consent form and interview schedules were given to participants beforehand and were discussed again during interviews to ensure informed consent.

The information letter (Appendix 2) outlined the purpose of the study, interviewees' rights, risks and benefits involved if they decide to participate in the study and the planned use of data. It also highlighted that I am a student at the University and that the research was for academic purposes only as part of the requirements for completing the Master's degree.

The consent letter (Appendix 3) informed participants that by signing the consent letter, they declare that they have read and understood the information sheet, that they would remain anonymous, that they may ask questions related to the research and could withdraw from the research at any stage if they chose to. They also declared that their participation in the study is voluntary and gave permission for the interview/s to be audio-recorded as well as anonymized quotes to be used in the research paper.

The interview schedules (Appendices 4A, B and C) required participants to provide the researcher with background details about themselves and included a list of questions intended to focus and guide the interview. The questions were open-ended and focused on why students enroll for the programme, what they are hoping to gain from the programme, what they find useful in the programme and areas in the curriculum that they find not so useful. Questions also asked what participants think should be included in the programme to prepare them for the workplace or other areas of their lives.

Open-ended questions for the Centre Manager focused particularly on the objectives of the curriculum and how the curriculum responds to the needs of students as young adults and as members of families and communities. Questions were used in a way to allow for openness and not to constrain individual responses but rather encourage interviewees to respond freely based on their own experiences. It also enabled me as the researcher to probe for further information.

#### *3.5.2.6. Interviews*

One pilot interview was conducted and was approximately one hour in duration; other interviews took less time. It was useful to conduct a pilot interview because I could check whether the

questions were clear and understandable to interviewees. Interviewees could answer all questions and no questions had to be altered.

Interviews took place between September 2017 and January 2018. It was convenient for the current students to be interviewed at The Community College either during interval times or at the end of the day after classes ended. Interviews were done individually and took place in a classroom which was physically conducive to interviews, although interviews were interrupted by a knock on the door on one occasion or the bell signaling the end of an interval on another occasion.

In general, all interviews proceeded well. Interviewees were forthcoming with information and openly shared their experiences and thoughts.

Giving the interview questions to participants beforehand helped because it seemed to have allowed participants to feel safe - it gave them a sense of what kind of questions will be asked and gave them an opportunity to gather their thoughts and ideas on the questions posed within the interviews. It also helped interviewees to remain focused on the questions despite occasional interruptions that took place.

I generally started with questions that interviewees could answer easily such as questions about their background, age and things that they enjoy doing. Thereafter I posed the questions which required more thought, such as how the curriculum prepared them for the world of work and dreams that they have for themselves. This technique worked well because participants seemed relaxed and expressed themselves freely.

Semi-structured interviews guided by the open-ended questions helped me as the researcher to understand how participants view the curriculum. Some interviewees emphasized the relationship between the curriculum and their work and others emphasized other areas of their lives.

Interviews were conducted in English, although in some cases both the interviewee and the researcher spoke “Englikaans” (Afrikaans and English mixed) because some interviewees felt comfortable expressing themselves in this way. I allowed this because it is a common dialect of the so called coloured community in Cape Town, also keeping in mind, that one of the advantages of semi-structured interviews is that interviewees may provide their responses in a language of their choice or how they feel comfortable (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

### **3.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

#### *3.6.1. Document analysis*

As mentioned earlier, national policies were sourced online on the website of DHET and I obtained institutional policy documents from The Community College.

I first read the documents to develop a sense of its relevance to my research. Once I had an overview of what the document was about I looked for more specific information that relates to the themes outlined above (see 3.5.1.2. Selection and analysis of documents). For example, when I analyzed the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013), I first tried to gain an overview of what government’s vision is for developing a post-school sector. I then focused more specifically on information related to community colleges and curriculum matters within these colleges. I made notes using the themes derived from the research questions and literature review. These themes include the role of community colleges and whether the curriculum prepares young

adults for the world of work and takes into account that young adults have varied needs that are not solely limited to the need to enhance their employability. It also included gaining an understanding of what kinds of knowledge and skills the curriculum aims to develop. My analysis of the policy documents is presented in Chapter 4 (Analysis of Policy Documents).

### *3.6.2. Analysis of Interview Data*

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to give a full record of interviewees' responses. I transcribed all interviews myself. Data gathered from interviews were organized under themes derived from the interview questions which, in turn, were based on themes derived from the research questions and literature review. These themes include the expectations students had of the ABET Level 4 programme, whether the programme prepared them for the world of work, whether the programme met or focused on their wellbeing and their hopes and aspirations.

Organizing interviewees' responses under these headings made it easy to view the data in preparation for analyzing and interpreting the data. I identified similarities and differences in participants' responses and highlighted issues that appeared frequently or comments which I considered to be particularly striking. Interview data has been presented in Chapter 5 (Analysis of Interview Data).

Thereafter I compared the data gathered through interviews with the analysis of policy documents and formulated preliminary findings which were then discussed in relation to the themes and arguments emerging from the literature. The preliminary findings were then revised to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study which are presented in Chapter 6.

## **3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As an insider I took special care to observe ethical principles of research in this study as discussed below.

### *3.7.1. Informed Consent*

A basic ethical issue was to ensure that participants give informed consent. This was ensured by giving each participant an information letter, consent form and interview schedule before the actual interview. At the start of the interview, I read the information sheet and consent letter in English and translated it into Afrikaans to ensure that the Afrikaans-speaking participants understood the contents. This was done even though some participants said they have read and understood the content.

I explained that participation is voluntary, highlighted their rights such as the right to anonymity and confidentiality, that hard copies of the data will be stored in a filing cabinet and locked with a key which will be in my possession and that electronic copies of the data will be kept on my laptop computer and password protected. I also explained that they could withdraw from the research at any time with no consequences to themselves. I explained how data collected from participants will be stored and secured or safeguarded. Hard copies are locked in a cabinet with a key that is in my possession only. Electronic copies and backup copies are password protected and locked in the same cabinet.

I gave participants an opportunity to ask questions. Not many questions were asked since participants said that they have understood the information provided before the interview. Some



interviewees asked about the duration of interviews, how many interviews will be necessary and where the interviews will take place. One participant inquired why the audio-recording of the interviews is necessary. After I responded to the questions, participants voluntarily decided to participate in the study and signed the consent forms.

### *3.7.2. Confidentiality*

Pseudonyms are used throughout this research paper to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Some participants verbally consented that their identities be revealed because they were happy to contribute towards possible changes in the curriculum. However, I chose to protect their identities to ensure complete confidentiality.

The name of The Community College is also omitted as agreed when I applied for ethics clearance from the university research committee and when I sought permission from The Community College to conduct the research. I used a general term "The Community College" throughout the research paper. Confirmation that permission has been granted was given in a letter on the letterhead of The Community College and is available but not attached to protect the identity of The Community College as agreed.

### *3.7.3. Power relations and conflict of interest*

I was aware that there may be a power imbalance between students and myself, given my position as a lecturer at The Community College. To ensure that students would feel safe to express themselves freely, I selected interviewees very carefully. I am involved in teaching students who are registered at Level 1. I am not involved in teaching or assessing Level 4 students including those who were interviewed for this research. I had no direct power to influence interviewees or their results. They had no reason to feel inhibited or pressured to respond in a certain way to please me or to fear negative repercussions.

I further explained, as highlighted in the information sheet, that apart from being a lecturer, I am also a student at the University and I am required to conduct research for academic purposes only i.e in fulfillment of the requirement of a Master's degree. There is therefore a distinction between my role as a lecturer at The Community College and as a researcher or university student. I emphasized that I have a responsibility to uphold ethical principles of the University's research policy. I also explained that I have no economic or financial interest in this research and I will not gain promotion or any other rewards for conducting this research. I completed this research as part of the requirements for completion of my Master's degree.

## **3.8. CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the research approach and research methods used in this study. It included comments about how data was collected through analysis of policy and institutional documents and semi-structured interviews. The next chapter presents the analysis of policy documents.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF POLICY DOCUMENTS

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present my comments on national and institutional policy documents. I analyzed national policies such as the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013). A key theme was to explore how the policies define the role of community colleges - is their role to prepare young adults for the labour market or do the policies recognize that young adults have varied needs that are not limited to the need for improving their employability and extend to other areas of their lives.

I analyzed the national curriculum for ABET Level 4 to understand what kinds of knowledge and skills the curriculum aims to develop through the combination of academic subjects and vocational specializations offered at this level.

I also looked at institutional policies such as the Code of Conduct which regulate the conduct of students and aim to create a safe environment for learning. I also drew on my knowledge as an insider to comment on extra-curricular activities which are not part of the formal curriculum at The Community College and how they contribute to developing skills and knowledge to support young people's participation in the world of work and other areas of their lives.

The comments are presented under the following headings:

- 4.2. National Policies
  - 4.2.1. White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)
  - 4.2.2. The ABET Level 4 qualification
- 4.3. Institutional Policies
  - 4.3.1. The Code of Conduct at The Community College
  - 4.3.2. Extra-mural activities
- 4.4. Responsiveness to policy objectives
- 4.5. Conclusion

### 4.2. NATIONAL POLICIES

#### 4.2.1. *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)*

##### 4.2.1.1. *Background*

South Africa has a history of apartheid and unfair discrimination, based *inter alia* on race, gender and geography, which resulted in an unequal education system. Since 1994 the education and training system had to respond to transformational goals to meet the needs of a democratic society, overcome discrimination and expand access to education and training. In spite of the efforts of government to improve the right to access education, some adults and young people continue to be disadvantaged:

*Despite these achievements, the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training noted that "the system continues to produce and reproduce gender, class, racial and other inequalities with regard to access to educational opportunities and success." Two disadvantaged groups are adults and young people who are outside the formal economy and formal workplaces, who are not in educational institutions, who have few opportunities for access to first or second-chance learning, let alone lifelong learning (Report of the Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres, 2012, pg.15).*

Policies such as the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) were developed in response to this problem. My analysis focuses mainly on community colleges and the role envisioned for the colleges.

#### *4.2.1.2. Community colleges as part of a PSET system*

The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) signals the intention to introduce a new type of institution in the post-school education and training sector, i.e. community colleges, which will build on existing AET Centres or PALCs. In 2011 there were 3 200 PALCs (with a national enrolment headcount of 265 000) which were to be absorbed by community colleges.

PALCs have been grouped together to form community colleges which will operate as multi-campus institutions and are expected to serve the needs of local communities (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 21). As part of the transition, community colleges are being introduced in a phased approach and currently pilot projects have been introduced to assist in the further development and rolling out process throughout the country. The community college which is the site of this research is one of these pilot projects.

#### *4.2.1.3. Policy objectives for PSET institutions*

The objectives of the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) are to improve access to post-school education and training and improve the capacity of PSET institutions to contribute towards the achievement of policy objectives to:

- address poverty
- address youth unemployment
- build an equitable and non-racial South Africa
- create a co-ordinated system to facilitate access into PSET institutions
- build closer relations between educational institutions and the workplace
- respond to the needs of citizens, employers and the broader society.

The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013, pg. 7) points out that about a third of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years (32.9%)<sup>4</sup> of were not in employment, education and training. The highest unemployment rate (30.3%) was amongst those without a National Senior Certificate (matric) or an equivalent qualification. University graduates displayed a much lower unemployment rate (5.2%).

These statistics reveal the value of education because the higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood that a young person will find employment or become employable, according to the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013, pg. 9). However, the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) also highlights that many young persons will not find formal employment in the near future, even if they participate in education and training.

It is therefore not sufficient to prepare people for formal employment. Since people need to make a living, they need to find ways to create sustainable livelihoods for themselves. The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) suggests that they should be equipped or skilled to become self-employed, entrepreneurs or start non-profit initiatives to contribute to their own sustainability and the economy (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 8-9).

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics South Africa in the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Quarter 2, 2013.

#### *4.2.1.4. Target group for community colleges*

DHET envisions that community colleges should target a diverse group. Target groups include young people who dropped out of the schooling system and are in need of a second chance, adults who do not have formal education, students in the PALCs and youth and adults who participated in the Kha Ri Gude mass adult literacy initiative of the national Department of Basic Education. Many of these want a chance to get the qualifications required for entry into further studies at Technical Vocational Education (TVET) colleges or universities.

Community colleges should also accommodate individuals within local communities who want to learn skills to enter or re-enter the labour market. It should include those who lost their jobs for various reasons and who want to re-skill themselves for employment or for alternative ways of generating income (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 20).

The policy also sees a role for community colleges as a support structure to young people or adults within communities and as a provider of education and training opportunities to assist in the eradication of poverty and to meet social and cultural needs. The services that community colleges offer should be adaptable to accommodate youth and adults, particularly those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, services should respond to the needs of the community, employers and community organizations (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 9). Community colleges should therefore aim to promote personal and collective development.

#### *4.2.1.5. Programmes or educational opportunities at community colleges*

PALCs offered formal programmes, which included the GETC and Senior Certificate (matric certificate or Grade 12). Government's vision is for community colleges to extend the range of programmes that PALCs offered to include more vocational or skills specializations (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013 pg. xii).

Formal programmes offered at community colleges should align with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These include the ABET Level 4 (now named the GETC qualification) and the Senior Certificate (Grade 12) as well as occupational programmes, such as learnerships and skills programmes funded by SETAs and the NSF (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. xii).

Skills programmes offered by community colleges should be responsive to the needs or desires of the local community. This may include developing skills for employment (such as arts and crafts), community health care, caring for the aged, training to care for people affected by HIV or other diseases, how to parent or care for children (including early childhood development training), working with technology effectively to gain information for various reasons (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 19). Community colleges may enter into partnerships with community-owned or private institutions run by churches or any other education and training Centres operating within local communities to become aware of and responsive to local skills needs (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. xii).

As community colleges develop they will also have to provide a broad range of services including learner support (such as career or programme guidance and counselling), financial aid and extra-curricular activities. Others involve employment-related services, such as linking the community college with placement agencies and with government initiatives such as Public

Works Programmes to provide opportunities for gaining work experience (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 24).

Community colleges are also expected to offer the new National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA)<sup>5</sup>, widely referred to as the adult matric. The objective is to build a general educational pathway to support further study, most likely at TVET colleges. NASCA will run alongside the National Senior Certificate (NSC) or matric. These demands are being placed on already overloaded and under-resourced colleges.

The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) proposes the creation of a new structure, the South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET) to support improvements in community colleges, such as developing innovative curricula with the involvement of experts. SAIVCET is also responsible for upgrading the knowledge and teaching skills of lecturers, for initiating research and for improving student support (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. xiii). Community colleges are currently not yet receiving support from this body.

#### *4.2.1.6. Work-integrated learning or workplace experience*

While the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) highlights the need to be responsive to community and individual needs, there is strong emphasis on gaining work-integrated learning or institutional workshop-based learning (in addition to theoretical learning) to prepare students for the labour market and to produce the skills South Africa needs as a developing economy.

The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) recognizes that educational institutions and workplaces do different things and that educational institutions do not have the capacity to offer what workplaces can in terms of real-life workplace experience. Post-school institutions in general may not have up to date equipment to introduce students to the work in specific economic or industrial sectors. Furthermore it can be difficult to simulate or recreate actual work experience in some sectors.<sup>6</sup>

For students to gain work-integrated learning community colleges should form linkages with government initiatives such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), Community Works Programmes (CWPs), and programmes for Community Development Workers (CDW) and Community Health Workers (CHW) which are directed at economic and social development and may be responsive to community needs. The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) suggests that community colleges link with these initiatives to provide work-integrated learning in conjunction with the theoretical or classroom-based training and workshop-based learning. Furthermore The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) proposes that training systems and curricula at colleges should be designed in a way that enables close cooperation between

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<sup>5</sup> The NASCA is a 120 credit qualification at NQF Level 4. For students to attain the NASCA qualification they will have to complete a minimum of four learning areas or subjects of which Language and Numeracy are fundamental components. All four subjects carry 30 credits each and combined they total 120 credits. Students have a choice of completing additional subjects which will reflect on their certificate.

<sup>6</sup> The White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) cites the example of working in a bank. Practical workplace experience is needed to ensure that students are able to apply knowledge, to develop abilities to act and perform duties with self-confidence, experience working under pressure, deal with customers and to work as part of a team (White Paper, Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013, pg. 9).

educational institutions and employers particularly in vocational specializations (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 22).

#### *4.2.1.7. Fees at community colleges*

Since community colleges will accommodate mainly individuals coming from disadvantaged and poorer backgrounds, fees at community colleges will generally be minimal. In most cases youth and adults enrolled at the Centres will be fully funded either by DHET or other sources (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013, pg. 24).

#### *4.2.1.8. Comment*

On policy level there is great emphasis on increased participation in education and training to redress challenges such as unemployment and poverty. It is clear that the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) envisages a role for community education and training colleges which will be responsive to the needs of those who seek education to become more employable, as well as those who may need education for more personal, social and cultural needs.

My research explores whether the curriculum prepares young people for the world of work and to function effectively in society. In the next section I discuss the ABET Level 4 qualification, known in the SAQA system as the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training Level 4 (GETC: ABET Level 4<sup>7</sup>).

I discuss the purposes of the qualification and how it is implemented at The Community College. I also comment on the SAQA standards for this qualification and how the curriculum offered at The Community College aligns with policy objectives in the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013), particularly how the curriculum prepares young people for the world of work.

### *4.2.2. The ABET Level 4 qualification*

#### *4.2.2.1. Purpose of the ABET Level 4 qualification*

The ABET Level 4 qualification falls within the General Education and Training (GET) band. The GET band covers all qualifications on and below NQF level 1 which aim to provide general education and training as a basis for further learning. Students who wish to enrol for the ABET Level 4 qualification should have mastered literacy and numeracy skills at ABET Level 3 (SAQA, 2007).

The purpose of the ABET Level 4 qualification is to provide learners with foundational learning to further their education, such as enrolling for the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) or an occupational qualification within the specified learning areas. It aims to instill a culture of lifelong learning, to provide students with knowledge and skills to promote their career development and to access employment opportunities to make a sustainable living. The learning that students have acquired may also enable them to improve the quality of their lives, and lead to social benefits for the individual and the broader society or communities they live in. In addition it aims to promote justice and equity (SAQA, 2007). The ABET Level 4 qualification will be reviewed in 2022.

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<sup>7</sup> The ABET Level 4 qualification is registered at Level 1 of the NQF.

The aims and rationale for the qualification are consistent with the policy objectives outlined in the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) such as to combat poverty and unemployment, to respond to the needs of individuals, employers and the broader society. In this respect, the qualification responds to the need for developing employability skills and students' personal and social development. Furthermore, in laying a foundation for further learning ABET can become part of a coherent post-school education system enabling students from community colleges to progress to higher levels of learning at other educational institutions in the post-school system, such as TVET Colleges (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013).

#### 4.2.2.2. *Structure of the qualification*

The qualification as registered with SAQA specifies critical cross-field outcomes<sup>8</sup> and three categories of unit standards namely Fundamentals, Core and Electives. The Fundamentals component is compulsory and involves a language (Language, Literacy and Communication, LLC) and mathematics (either Mathematical Literacy or Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences widely referred to as pure Maths). The Core component, also compulsory, involves Life Orientation. The electives involve unit standards for academic or vocational subjects. Students may follow either an academic route or vocational route - and must choose three academic subjects or a minimum of one vocational subject.

To follow an academic route, students must choose three of the following: Human and Social Studies, Natural Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Arts and Culture, Technology or an Additional Language. To follow a vocational route students must choose one of the following: Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Science, Ancillary Health Care, Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME), Travel and Tourism, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Early Childhood Development (ECD) or Wholesale and Retail.

For each module there are unit standards which unit standards are smaller units of a module or subject that carry credits. For example, the module, Language Literacy and Communication carries 23 credits. This is sub-divided into four unit standards, each carrying between 5 and 6 credits. Combined the four unit standards make up the 23 credits, as illustrated in the table below. For each module there are unit standards which are smaller units of a module.

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<sup>8</sup> SAQA's critical cross-field outcomes state that learners must be able to:

- Identify and solve problems
- Work effectively with others in teams
- Organize themselves effectively
- Collect, analyse, organize and evaluate information
- Communicate well orally or in writing
- Use science and technology responsibly
- Understand that the world is a set of related systems
- Explore strategies to learn more effectively
- Participate as responsible citizens in community life
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive
- Explore education and career opportunities
- Become entrepreneurial

<b>Unit standard title</b>	<b>Unit standard ID</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Engage in a range of speaking / signing and listening interactions for a variety of purposes	119635	6
Explore and use a variety of strategies to learn	119631	5
Read / view and respond to a range of text types	119640	6
Write /sign for a variety of different purposes	119636	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>

Table 1: Example of unit standards and credits for Language, Literacy and Communication.

For students to complete the full ABET Level 4 qualification, they must be found competent in all the prescribed unit standards totaling 120 credits. Some subjects carry more credits than others. How this works in practice is discussed below in the section on how the curriculum is implemented at The Community College.

Each unit standard lists critical cross-field outcomes, specific outcomes and assessment criteria. Specific outcomes refer to learning outcomes that a student should have achieved after having completed a particular unit standard. Assessment criteria refer to the criteria a student should be assessed against to demonstrate competence.

In the example of LLC above, the unit standard on “Read/view and respond to a range of text types” gives the following guidelines:

<b>Unit Standard Title:</b>	<b>Specific Outcome (SO)</b>	<b>Outcome Range (relating to the specific outcome)</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria (AC)</b>
Read / view and respond to a range of text types <sup>9</sup>	SO 1: Use reading / viewing strategies appropriately and effectively.	Reading strategies include skimming, scanning, previewing, predicting, summarizing, reading / viewing for detail, etc.	AC 1: Main message of text is extracted.  AC 2: Reading strategies appropriate to the text and task are chosen and used.

Table 2: Example of LLC unit standard, specific outcomes and assessment criteria.

These statements should be referred to when the department or a lecturer draws up learning and assessment activities, including examinations for students. Questions in the assessment tasks should be posed to determine the competence of students in the specific outcome. A student’s completed assessments or examination activities and results serve as evidence to show whether competencies and unit standards have or have not yet been achieved. The same principle applies to other unit standards.

<sup>9</sup> As set out in SAQA US ID 119640



Critical cross-field learning outcomes are embedded in most of the unit standards. For example, “Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organization or community” is embedded in the unit standards for Language, Literacy and Communication Similarly in Life Orientation (In the Core category) five of the eight unit standards have the “working effectively as a team” concept embedded. This means that a lecturer is expected to create learning opportunities for students to experience working with others as a member of a team so that they can ultimately participate within a team, group, organization or community. The same principle applies to the other critical cross-field learning outcomes listed in the qualification.

SAQA uses the term critical cross-field outcomes across all unit standards. These outcomes have also been referred to as generic outcomes. However the term “generic skills” is often used to refer to skills required for employability (as discussed in Chapter 2). The use of the term critical cross-field outcomes may signal a less narrow focus and relate to the multiple objectives of the ABET Level 4 qualification which include developing skills and knowledge for further learning, for employability and social usefulness in response to the objectives of promoting equality and social justice. In other words the objectives respond to the need for developing employability skills but are not limited to this.

In the next section I discuss the ABET Level 4 qualification as it is offered at The Community College.

#### *4.2.3. ABET Level 4 at The Community College*

##### *4.2.3.1. Transition from PALC to Community College*

The Community College which is the site of this research used to be a Public Adult Learning Centre (PALC). Students were mature adults who were employed or who had some work experience. Their priority was to further their education for reasons such as personal development or promotion at work or to seek employment elsewhere.

With the transition to The Community College, the target group changed to mostly younger students between the ages of 16 and 21. Most of these students have very little formal work experience. In response to the need to improve the employability of this new group of students, there is greater emphasis on vocational specializations such as Travel and Tourism, SMME and Ancillary Health in the curriculum as it is implemented at The Community College.

The Community College offers the ABET Level 4 and matric (Grade 12) classes on a part-time basis in the evening for adults and youth who are already employed but have a desire to further their education. It also offers ABET Levels 1, 2 and 3 on a full-time basis during the day for mainly young students who dropped out of school.

The same programmes were offered full-time and part-time when The Community College operated as a PALC and the curriculum was guided by the SAQA qualifications or unit standards and students completed internal and external assessments or examinations as they do now. The qualifications were offered in English and Afrikaans as they are now.

All students at The Community College are on a vocational track. Some of my interviewees had two vocational specializations such as both Travel and Tourism and SMME. They took these modules because that was what The Community College offered, even though it was not their choice. Currently community colleges face financial constraints. For example, students will be able to choose a specialization if there are at least 15 students who wish to follow that

specialization. However the class may proceed if there was a drop in the number of students after it started at the beginning of the year with the required number of students. This highlights that in the absence of the required number of students, a minority of students will be compelled to choose a subject even though it may not serve their individual needs. This constraint in offering a learning area poses an institutional barrier which restricts students' choices and limits the capacity of The Community College to respond fully to the needs of students and the broader community.

Some students registered for a vocational module only, to acquire skills and knowledge for personal development or to become more employable in a particular field. For example, some women enrolled for ECD because they intended to seek employment as child-minders or open a crèche as a means of earning a living. Others enrolled for Ancillary Health modules because they intended to use the skills and knowledge either to care for the sick in their families or as a way of earning a living. This is in line with policy objectives for community colleges that education and training at community colleges should respond to the needs of those who may seek education for more personal and social needs and those who wish to become more employable or access alternative sources of income to sustain themselves and their families and through this reduce poverty.

This view of the role of community colleges responds to some extent to community needs education; however it does not embrace the transformative role envisaged in early conceptions of community colleges associated with popular education perspectives which were discussed in Chapter 2.

#### *4.2.3.2. The curriculum at The Community College for ABET Level 4*

The ABET Level 4 curriculum, like the curriculum at other ABET Levels at The Community College, is guided by the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and critical cross-field outcomes specified in the relevant unit standards. The SAQA qualification and its related unit standards do not specify what the curriculum or learning activities should be. Lecturers are at liberty to decide on learning activities, learning strategies or resources.

For example the LLC unit standard on Read / view and respond to a range of text types, specifies that a student should be able to extract the main meaning of a text (specific outcome 1) and that the student must be able to use appropriate reading strategies for the chosen text (assessment criteria 1 and 2)<sup>10</sup>.

Guided by these specific outcomes, one lecturer may use a story out of a magazine or newspaper and set up questions based on that story to determine reading skills of students. Another lecturer may use a scripture or story from the bible or a textbook.

In addition to the SAQA prescribed unit standards lecturers at The Community College use work schedules provided by the education department. The unit standards and work schedules serve as a guide for drawing up lesson plans and teaching activities to ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills specified in the unit standards in preparation for examinations and assessments. The unit standards also help lecturers at The Community College to set up (internal) assessments or examinations to prepare students for the external assessments or examinations set up by DHET.

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to section 2.2.2 table 2.

These practices may change if the curricula are revised. According to the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013), SAIVCET is responsible for designing new curricula for community colleges, but in practice this has not happened as yet at The Community College.

#### *4.2.3.3. Language of Learning*

The ABET Level 4 qualification as registered with SAQA does not specify what the language of instruction should be.

The Community College offers English and Afrikaans as subjects. Subjects such as Life Orientation, Tourism and SMME are taught in the medium of English and Afrikaans. Students who speak Xhosa as a home language also have to complete their subjects in English or Afrikaans.

Most satellite Centres also offer subjects in either English or Afrikaans. Some Centres are located in areas where the majority of students are Xhosa-speaking and offer Xhosa only as a subject or learning area i.e. as Language, Literacy and Communication. However many students prefer to register at the main campus either because it is closer to where they live or because transport options are easier. Generally, at The Community College, Xhosa speaking students demonstrate proficiency in English and seem to cope with the learning activities.

#### *4.2.3.4. Computer Literacy*

Most of the students at The Community College, particularly the younger ones have smartphones and are keen to use computer technologies. By contrast many adult learners seem to be intimidated or rather anxious when faced with new technologies. However, both adult and younger students recognize the importance of learning to use computers and new technologies.

Sending and responding to emails and searching for information on the internet is an example of a necessary or essential skill for personal communications and for an entrepreneur within a small business such as Travel and Tourism who liaises with people interested in such travel and tourism activities. Many students therefore desire to become computer literate or to advance their information skills.

The need for computer literacy has been highlighted in the literature as one of the generic skills which is sought by employers (Jackson, 2015, pg. 38). Offering computer skills courses may therefore increase the employability of students. It may also respond to personal and social needs such as communication with family, friends and members of the communities in which they participate.

The Community College intends to offer computer literacy and has a computer lab although the computers are not functional. The computer lab is currently used for meetings or workshops due to space constraints and this presents the challenge of making the computer lab fully available for computer classes. These challenges should hopefully be eliminated as DHET intends to renovate the current space within which The Community College operates to enable the college to expand its services and curricular offerings.

### **4.3. INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES**

#### *4.3.1. The Code of Conduct at The Community College*

##### *4.3.1.1. Background*

The Community College is situated in an area associated with high crime rates and young people are particularly vulnerable to or involved in gang violence and drug-related activities. The profile of students includes youth at risk, such as those who are awaiting trial, school dropouts, those who are addicted to drugs and others who display behavioural challenges. These students are often disruptive in class.

The profile of students therefore requires that the college should also develop strategies to respond to these challenges and not only focus on the formal curriculum. One of these strategies is the development of a Code of Conduct to regulate and guide conduct of students and provide guidelines for action to be taken in cases of misconduct.

The Code of Conduct of The Community College aims to protect the constitutional rights of all stakeholders such as students, lecturers, management and support staff. The Code of Conduct asserts that all stakeholders have certain rights – including the right not to be discriminated against, respect for the dignity of each person, the right to feel secure and the right to be free from any form of violent acts. It aims to maintain and promote a good environment where quality education can be enjoyed by all students.

The Code of Conduct is viewed as part of the policy of the institution and provides a framework of interventions that will take place when a student has transgressed the rules on campus grounds.

##### *4.3.1.2. Aims of the Code of Conduct*

The Code of Conduct, by regulating acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, aims to instil certain standards of conduct. These standards include to:

- make choices, decisions or judgements that will later on develop a sense of self-discipline
- practice etiquette
- treat all fellow students equally
- be mindful of maintaining a safe learning environment free of physical injuries.

The Code of Conduct also aims to prepare students to become self-aware and responsible individuals. The intention is that they should be well-balanced in that they will aspire not only to make a difference in their own lives but also to co-operate with others and strive to make a difference in the lives of others.

##### *4.3.1.3. Responsibilities of students*

Responsibilities of students include behaving in a manner that reflects the mission of The Community College and not to discredit the college whether on or off campus. Students should show respect to all stakeholders and respect their rights. They should refrain from misconduct and acknowledge that the Code of Conduct serves as a basis for order and discipline at The Community College. They have to accept that when in transgression, disciplinary action will be taken.

At the start of each year students attend orientation sessions where the Centre Manager or lecturers explain the Code of Conduct in depth and highlight the possible types of

transgressions and disciplinary actions applicable. A document accompanying the Code of Conduct, (which outlines the various types of misconduct) is given to students and parents or caregivers at enrolment or when students start classes.

Each student, parent or guardian (if the student is below the age of 18) agrees to the Code of Conduct by signing it, which sets a level of accountability and responsibility on their part. If the student has transgressed or breached the Code of Conduct, he or she may be subject to disciplinary action.

#### 4.3.1.4. *Types of transgressions and disciplinary action*

Misconduct ranges from less serious to extremely serious offences which are divided into four categories - with type 1 being less serious and type 4 extremely serious. The table below lists some examples of the different types of misconduct and possible disciplinary action for each category.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Transgression</b>	<b>Disciplinary Action</b>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking or being disruptive during lesson periods</li> <li>Arriving late for classes without a valid reason</li> <li>Deliberately not signing the attendance register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After three misdemeanours – two hours of community work on campus grounds</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of foul language and or bullying fellow students during lesson periods on campus grounds</li> <li>Bunking of lesson periods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All misdemeanours in this category receive at least three hours of community work on campus and parents or guardians will immediately be advised</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vandalism – Damaging / destroying or graffiti on the property of the College</li> <li>Cheating or fraudulent conduct of assignments or during tests</li> <li>Failure to arrive for community work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The students' parents will be asked to pay for the damages and the student will be suspended for a period (between one and 5 days)</li> <li>Four hours of community work on campus</li> <li>A zero mark for tests and written notice to the students / parent / guardian if fraud was committed</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repetition of transgressions type 3 misdemeanours, displaying reluctance to accept disciplinary action</li> <li>Demonstrate behaviour that harm or threaten the safety and rights of fellow students, College staff or visitors</li> <li>Acts of racism, sexual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permanent expulsion and if any South African Criminal Law was transgressed the incident will be reported to the South African Police Services</li> </ul>

	harassment, criminal behaviour, attitude, possession of or use of alcohol or illegal drugs on campus grounds	
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(Extracted from the Code of Conduct of The Community College)

*4.3.1.5. How staff members deal with misconduct*

Generally lecturers deal with type 1 and type 2 transgressions. When the misconduct has come to the lecturer's attention, the lecturer/s completes an intervention form. It stipulates the transgression and disciplinary measures or action based on the type of transgression. The lecturer, the student and a witness sign the form. In cases of less serious offences the lecturers arrange with the maintenance staff for the student to do community work such as cleaning the campus grounds.

In type 3 and 4 scenarios, which are regarded as more serious, cases are referred to the secretary or Centre Manager who then intervenes by following the procedure stipulated in the Code of Conduct.

In a general sense, without it being explicitly verbalized in the formal curriculum students learn that every fellow learner has the right to learn and complete tasks in an environment that is free of bullying, harassment, racism, criminal or threatening behaviour. They learn that misconduct will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences for misconduct.

Disciplinary action is not always punitive but also rehabilitative. When students are tested positive for the use of drugs, they are sometimes expelled; but in many cases they are allowed to return to class on condition that they provide proof that they are attending counselling sessions with a social worker or that they are attending drug rehabilitation sessions at an appropriate organization. This is not stated explicitly in the Code of Conduct but forms part of the practice at The Community College.

The Community College liaises with or refers students to social development organizations or NGOs in the community. Considering the number of challenges that The Community College faces with students (which include misbehavior or misconduct, drug addiction and exposure to domestic abuse) it is necessary to connect with professionals as these challenges often fall outside lecturers' field of expertise.

Services at social development organizations or NGOs include assessment or ongoing support for students who are addicted to drugs. During 2018 one of the community organizations visited the college once a week as part of a rehabilitation programme for those students who are addicted to drugs. In some cases this organization runs the programme over a year to educate students on the effects of drug abuse and to encourage them to make use of support structures and services such as counseling as part of their rehabilitation process. This programme will hopefully continue in 2019 and be extended to more students.

#### 4.3.2. *Extra-curricular activities*<sup>11</sup>

There are many negative stereotypes and assumptions about youth such as that youth are lazy, cannot think ahead or are too young to make responsible decisions. At The Community College these negative stereotypes have been challenged in different ways.

The Community College attempts to create an environment where students can experience a culture of learning and engage with the idea that education is a powerful weapon to change their lives. Many of the young adults enrolled at The Community College because they want to improve their lives through education and regard The Community College as the last resort often because their applications at schools were unsuccessful.

Given the profile of students as outlined above it is often necessary to inspire and encourage them to understand that, despite difficult circumstances, there is hope and that it is possible to reach their goals.

Extra-curricular activities are organized that may increase students' levels of confidence and motivation and include:

- Inviting speakers to present motivational talks to students
- Creating awareness around special or public holidays (for example, Valentine's Day and Heritage Day) and,
- Excursions linked to music and drama activities

Motivational talks are seen as beneficial because many speakers come from similar backgrounds as the students in that they have either experienced similar challenges, such as economic disadvantage, poor academic performance, drug and alcohol abuse and involvement in rehabilitation programmes. In some cases speakers are also survivors of abuse or early teen pregnancy. The speakers are therefore in a position to relate to circumstances that students have faced or are still faced with and students can relate to these speakers.

For example, one of the motivational speakers is a woman who was addicted to drugs and became a vagrant. Later in her life she was rehabilitated. Today she runs a project where she takes in homeless people, motivating them to experience the change which she did.

Similarly, a group of young people spoke about their experiences at home - their parents were on drugs and they had not been given the necessary love and support as young children or young adults. They were victims of emotional or sexual abuse and ended up as drug and alcohol users. Later in their lives they were rehabilitated and decided to encourage and motivate other children or young adults in the hope that they can experience positive change too.

The aim of these talks is to have a positive impact on students and to motivate them to help themselves. By focusing on their studies they may acquire the knowledge and skills that will put them in a position to ultimately reach their goals - such as furthering their education for personal development, finding employment to sustain themselves and their families or to participate in

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<sup>11</sup> The discussion in this section is based on extra-curricular activities and practices at The Community College which I am aware of as an insider. I drew on my own knowledge and understandings which relates to these activities.

community or organizational activities. These motivational talks also aim to build or enhance self-belief in students and to help them understand and accept that through their actions they may be able to change their lives or the lives of others around them.

Similarly through excursions linked to music or drama activities, students become actively involved in activities and learning may be enhanced. On one weekend excursion, for example students spent time away from home and were involved in role-plays or activities to express themselves through music, dance and drama. Students enjoyed the different environment and the activities to the extent that some did not want to return home.

These activities give students the opportunity to develop their teamwork and problem-solving skills, share ideas and express creativity. Students learn to be tolerant with one another because each person has a role to play. They express themselves naturally through performing arts such as dance or drama, which requires that they express themselves in front of audiences. These activities build their confidence, improve their self-esteem and help them to recognize that they can make a contribution and that their contributions have an impact on the audience.

In activities which involve competition or where students have to work together as a team to compete against another team, they learn important life lessons. For example, they may learn that each team has to work together and members in a team should not compete against one another as that will compromise the performance of the team. It also teaches students that the team works towards a common goal and to experience a positive outcome, that they need to be tolerant with one another and if necessary, to put aside any differences that they may have amongst themselves. They also learn that a team either wins or loses and that the outcome will have an effect on everyone else in the team.

The skills that students acquire through the extra-curricular activities (such as teamwork, problem solving, creativity, communication, confidence and communication) are relevant and are valuable not only in the workplace but also for personal development. Students may also develop the understanding that as young adults they do possess the capabilities to achieve their goals and to make a meaningful contribution in the lives of others or in communities where they live.

#### **4.4. RESPONSIVENESS TO POLICY OBJECTIVES**

In terms of the formal curriculum, The Community College responds to the diverse needs of individuals by offering a range of programmes during the day and at night. These programmes include ABET Level 4, ABET Levels 1, 2 and 3, learnerships and matric classes. In the near future these services will expand with more emphasis on skills development and inclusion of the NASCA qualification.

Apart from offering the formal ABET programmes, learnerships and matric classes, the White Paper on PSET (2013) outlines a range of activities and programmes that should be offered at community colleges in response to community needs. These include offering extra-curricular activities, learner support such as career guidance and counseling, skills programmes for employability, partnerships with NGO's or private institutions to gain an understanding of the broader needs within the community and linking the community with placement agencies or work-related initiatives to gain work experience.



This is an extensive and demanding mandate. Currently the human resources and the infrastructure to offer the NASCA in addition to existing programmes remain a challenge. This initiative requires lecturers in the different learning areas as well as classroom space - which do not seem to be available at this stage. Expansion of staff and physical infrastructure will be needed for The Community College to offer the NASCA in addition to its current programme offerings.

Vocational subjects offered at The Community College currently do not have a work or practical component in the curriculum. There is currently also no provision for internships as in the curricula in TVET colleges or universities. Opportunities for partnering with SETAs are limited. This is under discussion at The Community College with a view to partner or co-operate with organizations in the local community who could offer practical or work-integrated experience to students. For example, crèches in the local community can be approached to establish partnerships with The Community College to provide work-integrated experience to students participating in the ECD courses. These partnerships may give students the opportunity to learn practical skills and work-integrated experience.

#### **4.5. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the national and institutional policy documents has given me some understanding of the policy objectives and how the objectives are being addressed at The Community College through the formal curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

I also needed to understand how the policies, particularly those relating to the curriculum are experienced by the students themselves and those who are involved in curriculum matters, such as the Centre Manager at The Community College as well as external stakeholders such as industry / sector representatives. Therefore the document analysis was supplemented by semi-structured interviews with these key-role players. The next chapter presents an analysis of data gathered through these interviews.

## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the participants' perspectives and experiences of the ABET Level 4 curriculum based on data gathered through semi-structured interviews (as discussed in Chapter 3, Interviews 3.5.2.6). Current students and graduates of the ABET Level 4 programme commented on their expectations when they started the programme and what the curriculum offers. Both groups of students reflected on whether the programme prepared them for the world of work and whether the curriculum developed their capabilities to function effectively in society.

The current Centre Manager who was previously the Curriculum Coordinator commented on changes in the profile of students and curriculum changes after the AET Centre transitioned to a community college. The Centre Manager also commented on how the curriculum responds to the needs of young adults who are the main target group for community colleges. Industry/sector representatives gave their views on knowledge and skills employers consider necessary in the sectors of Travel and Tourism and SMME.

The interview data is presented under the following headings:

- 5.2. Current students
  - 5.2.1. Profile of interviewees
  - 5.2.2. Expectations of the programme
  - 5.2.3. Preparation for the world of work
  - 5.2.4. Limitations in the curriculum and suggested improvements
  - 5.2.5. Hopes and aspirations of young adults/students
- 5.3. Graduates
  - 5.3.1. Profile of interviewees
  - 5.3.2. Expectations of the programme
  - 5.3.3. Preparation for the world of work
  - 5.3.4. Limitations in the curriculum and suggested improvements
  - 5.3.5. Hopes and aspirations of young adults/graduates
- 5.4. Centre Manager
  - 5.4.1. Profile of learners before and after the transition from an AET Centre to a community college
  - 5.4.2. The objectives of the ABET Level 4 Curriculum
  - 5.4.3. The curriculum prior and after the transition from AET Centre to community college
  - 5.4.4. Responsiveness - Meeting the needs of young adults
- 5.5. Sector representatives
  - 5.5.1. Profiles of sector representatives
  - 5.5.2. Knowledge and skills needed in the sectors of Travel and Tourism and SMME
- 5.6. Conclusion

## **5.2. CURRENT STUDENTS**

### *5.2.1. Profile of student interviewees*

The students currently enrolled in the programme are, Allister, Kyle, Jack and Michelle<sup>12</sup> - 3 males and 1 female. They left school without completing matric, unlike many of their age group who are currently in matric or have completed matric.

The students all live with a single parent or extended family. Kyle lives with his grandmother, aunt and uncle. Allister lives with his mother, stepdad and two younger sisters. Michelle lives with her mother who is a single parent. Similarly Jack lives with his mother who is a single parent.

The students all live in circumstances which are common amongst young people at this college. They live in sub-economic areas associated with high unemployment, crime, and gangsterism which leave them concerned about their safety and the safety of their families.

Allister, for example, commented that people in his area are often robbed or beaten by gangsters and that the violence in the area contributed to his leaving school. Walking to school was risky as he had to walk past gangsters every day.

Michelle is concerned about the safety of her two-year old child particularly when she has to take her child to crèche. Michelle is working part-time as a cashier at a retail store. She appreciates this weekend job and said the weekly income, although minimal, helps with her subsistence and her child's needs. Michelle described herself as a very shy person but said once people get to know her they will find that she is very talkative. Michelle said she spends time with her two-year old child when she is not working or attending classes.

Allister, Kyle and Jack are unemployed and had a common interest in playing soccer. Allister perceives himself as someone with very good self-esteem and added that he is very good at drawing. Kyle and Jack said they listen to music in their free time. Jack said that, in addition to soccer and music, he also enjoys watching films and has a particular interest in science on issues to do with the history of the earth. Jack regards himself as someone who is very quiet but recognizes that he has a temper and gets angry very quickly. He said he does not cope well with many people around him. When he enters a new environment, he will not easily converse with others as he prefers to be alone. Despite this, he sees himself as someone who likes helping others.

Allister and Jack expressed appreciation for the role of their families in their lives. Allister said he admires his stepfather and wants to be just like him. He described his stepfather as a good person because, even though there is no biological relationship, his stepfather treats him well and does everything possible to support the family, including Allister. Jack said he admires his mother and described her as someone who supported him well throughout his life. Jack explained that at some point in his life he was involved in gangsterism. His mother was not happy about it, to the extent that their relationship suffered. He eventually withdrew from gang-related activities to regain his mother's trust.

### *5.2.2. Expectations of the programme*

These interviewees were younger (between 17 and 20 years old) and all wanted to continue their education. They had left school without completing matric for various reasons - because

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<sup>12</sup> Pseudonym names are used to protect the identity of interviewees.

the family or parents could not afford school fees, because they felt unsafe walking to school and in some cases, because they were excluded from school due to misconduct. They enrolled for the ABET Level 4 programme because they wanted to proceed to matric or continue to higher education so that they would be in a better position when applying for jobs.

Jack left school in Grade 10. He decided to return to complete Grade 10 and applied at several schools. However, the schools did not accept him because he had a record of transgressions and misbehaviors while he was at school. He then applied to a TVET college but was told that his grades are too low. Eventually, Jack was referred to The Community College where he wrote a placement test which placed him on ABET Level 4.

Jack said that he selected SMME as a subject but was worried that he would not cope. However, he found the lecturer's presentations interesting and developed an understanding of the content of the subject and feels that he is learning.

Allister and Kyle both left school in Grade 9. They applied to return to school but the schools regarded them as too old for Grade 9 and referred them to The Community College.

Allister said after he left school he realized that it would not help him to stay at home because it is difficult to find a job without a matric certificate. He added that he wanted to escape the gangsterism which is rife in the area by working towards specific goals, starting with achieving a matric certificate. However his family could not afford to pay for school fees. No fees are charged at The Community College and this was another contributing factor for enrolling at The Community College. Allister said he hopes that the ABET Level 4 qualification will put him in a position to further his studies at a TVET college. He wants to play soccer and his future plans include travelling overseas. Allister felt that it is very important for him to complete his ABET Level 4 qualification successfully to strengthen his chances of achieving his goals.

Kyle also applied at The Community College because he was not accepted for Grade 9 at school. Like all applicants at The Community College, Kyle wrote a placement test which is used to determine the ABET Level they will be placed on. Kyle said the college staff told him that he did very well in the test and showed potential:

Toe sien hulle my potentiaal dat ek nog kan my brein gebruik.  
*(Then they saw that I still have the potential to use my brain).*

Before Kyle enrolled at The Community College he was uncertain about what career to follow in future. Choosing his subjects involved much thought and at the start of the programme he consulted different people about what would be a good subject combination. He had some interest in becoming a tour guide and selected Travel and Tourism modules. He developed an interest in becoming a businessman as he progressed through the ABET Level 4 programme and came to the conclusion that combining Travel and Tourism with SMME would enable him to open his own business in future, possibly in the travel and tourism sector. Kyle said he enjoys working with people and felt that his career decision aligns with his attributes as a person.

Michelle said she left school years before when she was in Grade 6. Her mother, a single parent, took her and her three brothers out of school because, she thinks, her mother could not afford the school fees after her father passed away. Her mother home-schooled them, but Michelle said they did not learn much. Michelle's cousin became worried that they may not complete their schooling and referred them to The Community College. Michelle and her younger brother enrolled at The Community College and are supported by the cousin, who pays

for stationery and related costs. They are both in the same class and she said that she did not mind being in the same class with a younger sibling.

Michelle said she coped well with the work in the ABET Level 4 programme although she had left school many years before. She had the impression that some lecturers at The Community College were surprised when she achieved “passing marks” in all her subjects. She herself was optimistic about her chances of completing the programme.

It is clear that interviewees intended to complete the ABET Level 4 qualification as a step along the path towards achieving their goals. After completing the ABET Level 4 qualification, they intended to proceed to matric and then pursue further studies at a TVET college.

### *5.2.3. Preparation for the world of work: positive comments*

All students said that they found the ABET Level 4 programme useful and interesting and that it prepares them for the world of work to some extent.

According to Allister, he learnt how to start a business and how it can be of benefit to himself as well as to people in his community. He said in some communities there are few businesses and in such areas starting a business can create employment opportunities particularly for those who are less privileged. He hoped that through this the community can work together.

He learnt that starting a new business requires thorough research. This involves speaking to people in the community and enquiring which products they think are best to sell. Allister said not doing research or having inaccurate information can cause a business to fail:

As jy 'n besigheid begin juffrou dan moet jy navorsing en soe doen juffrou en as jou navorsing nie reg is nie juffrou en as jy oekie navorsing doen nie juffrou kan die besigheid mos flop juffrou.

*(When you start a business Miss then you must do research and so on Miss and if your research is wrong Miss and if you don't do research Miss then the business can fail Miss).*

He learnt that a tour guide has to be knowledgeable about issues or places which are of interest to tourists, for example the scenery, wildlife, plants and vegetation in different areas. He also learnt about legal requirements that apply when travelling or becoming a tour guide.

Allister said that people in his immediate environment do not travel and do not see themselves as tourists. He would like to expose them to different experiences and motivate them to visit places, such as the world-famous Table Mountain, wildlife farms and other places which tourists often visit but local residents seldom go to. Allister expressed an interest in working with youth in prisons who cannot visit places but may enjoy watching videos. In this way prisoners can view or indirectly experience things which they may never have seen or experienced otherwise.

Kyle said when he started the programme he knew very little about South Africa and now knows more. He finds Travel and Tourism very interesting and said that it enhanced his knowledge and prepared him to work as a tour guide and to train people in future.

Kyle said the SMME modules helped him to gain an understanding about what they may encounter in future:

Dit wys eintlik vi os wat vi os voo lê in die lewe.  
*(It actually shows us what lies ahead in our lives).*

He learnt about what they may come across in the workplace - such as the rights of employees, for example in relation to working hours and what is acceptable and unacceptable conduct on the part of employers. He said he also learnt about requirements for registering a business (including forms which have to be completed) and about budgeting and managing finances. An added benefit, in Kyle's view, is that this knowledge is useful for managing his everyday finances, because he can make calculations for his own budget and work better with his money.

Jack said he learnt a lot in the SMME module. He learnt about registration of a public and private business, how a business plan should be written, how marketing research should be done and how a business should be managed. He also learnt about procedures to follow when applying for a loan at the bank. In his view the curriculum content of SMME provides good guidance for those who want to open their own businesses.

Jack also said that he learnt many things in the Travel and Tourism module – for example that tourists, both foreign and local, travel for a range of different reasons, such as business, leisure and cultural experiences. He learnt that as a tourist guide you work with different people and that communication is important. Jack said he learnt how to communicate appropriately if he should meet tourists from other countries:

Die vak leer eintlik 'n mens hoe om saam met daardie mense te kommunikeer en in watter maniere so as ek dalk buitelanders kry dan sal ek weet hoe om saam met hulle te gesels.

*(The subject actually teaches one how to communicate with those people and in which manner so maybe if I meet foreigners then I will know how to converse with them).*

Michelle feels that she wants to be informed so that she can make informed decisions in life. Michelle said she learnt many more and very interesting things which not only prepare her for the world or work but are also useful in her personal life. She became aware of job opportunities in the Travel and Tourism field and found this to be useful. She also learnt many practical skills. She gave the example of learning how to give directions and commented that in her personal capacity this enables her to be more helpful in directing people she meets at work or where she lives.

In the SMME module Michelle gained insight into legal and regulatory issues in the world of work - such as the unemployment insurance fund (UIF), pay as you earn (PAYE), working hours and the importance of reading terms specified in a contract. She also learnt that she has rights as an employee.

She said she learnt that it is important to work hard and to study. Although Michelle describes herself as a person who is shy she said she participates actively at work and in classes. She said:

I always ask a lot of questions concerning the work line and after school and studying.

She commented that there is a lot of information to absorb in class but she always refers to her books and reads notes which they received in class.

Jack agreed that the curriculum content in the different modules was useful. However he felt that the activities in Travel and Tourism lacked variety, which he found boring. In his view, some ideas were explained but others were not except when a student asked for an explanation. According to Jack his experiences in other subjects such as SMME and Afrikaans were different

as lecturers regularly gave explanations, supported learners and did not simply leave them to cope on their own.

The current students felt that the content of the curriculum is useful. They gained knowledge and skills relevant to work and to other areas of their lives. Aspects relevant to preparation for the world of work included the importance of communication skills, finding information, legal and regulatory issues which affect employees' rights in the workplace and managing finances. More sector-specific learning was about having a greater appreciation for South Africa as a tourist destination, starting a small business and assisting in creating employment opportunities in their communities (SMME). They also acquired skills which could be useful in the world of work as well as in their personal lives – such as giving directions, planning, budgeting and other skills.

More broadly, as discussed below, they felt that what they learnt in the ABET Level 4 programme is important in their own development such as knowing yourself, having self-confidence, developing the ability to express their views more clearly and expanding the horizons of at-risk young adults such as those in prisons.

#### *5.2.4. Limitations in the curriculum and suggested improvements*

Interviewees commented on what they think could be included in the curriculum to prepare them better for the world of work or other areas of their lives. They also made suggestions about improving teaching and delivery of the curriculum and meeting requirements for entry into higher education programmes.

Some interviewees felt strongly that two languages should be offered in the curriculum. Allister said he was keen to learn English as a language:

Ek sal graag oek uhm Engels oek wil geherrit.  
(*I really uhm wanted English too*).

Allister is Afrikaans-speaking but felt that as someone who intends to travel and work with prisoners he may meet people who are English-speaking and may have to communicate in English.

Similarly Michelle's opinion is that the curriculum should have included two languages. Michelle is fluent in English but she said as an office administrator or a receptionist, she interacts with many people or customers who speak Afrikaans and it may affect the business negatively if she cannot communicate with them in Afrikaans. Currently they are doing five subjects and adding another subject as a learning area will not overload the curriculum, in her view:

I think they should rather make it six subjects with English and Afrikaans so we can be learning both languages. It's not actually a lot cause in the normal schools you actually get seven subjects and here you like only get 5 subjects, so I think they should add English and Afrikaans together.

Michelle explained that when her friend applied for further studies at a TVET college, she was asked why she did not have two languages in the ABET Level 4 certificate. Michelle was concerned that having one language in her qualification will limit her chances of being accepted when she applies for further studies.

Jack also felt that another language should be included in the curriculum. He was in a class where the language of learning was Afrikaans. He said some classroom activities involved speaking another language, but these activities were minimal and did not help to develop proficiency in that language. Jack thinks that as a soccer player or tour guide, he will meet people from different countries and feels that it is important to learn other languages such as Dutch, French and Japanese. He expressed particular interest in learning Spanish which is one of the most widely-spoken languages in Europe:

Ek gaan mos baie mense met verskillende kulture ontmoet en Spaans is mos een van die gewilde tale juffrou in Europa.

*(I am going to meet many people from different cultures and Spanish is a popular language Miss in Europe).*

Kyle commented that it would have been more interesting if information about other countries and their cultures were included in Travel and Tourism. He said when visiting another country, it is necessary to know more about that specific country. Kyle said he might have a family one day and felt that this information will become useful to him as a father as he may want to share with his children his insights about other countries and alternative ways of travelling to places.

He commented that it would be useful if the curriculum in the SMME modules included visits and placements in a business to learn how that particular business started, the steps taken to get the business where it is and to view its business plan. He felt this experience and knowledge will give him some confidence when initiating or setting up his own business.

Jack felt that there are positive aspects in the ABET Level 4 curriculum which should remain, such as learning about procedures to follow to start a business and communicating effectively particularly with different types of tourists. However he felt that teaching methods could be varied to help learners understand the content of the curriculum better. He said lecturers should be flexible and present the content in an interesting manner so that students will look forward to classes:

Die manier hoe hulle skool gee ... om dit meer interessant vir die student te leer dat hulle oek interessant en uit sien om meer van dit te leer.

*(The way they teach....to make it more interesting so that students will become interested and look forward to learn more about it).*

Jack felt that this will instill in students a desire to learn more. He said that students cannot understand the work if they are simply given hand-outs:

Verduidelik die werk, as jy miskien 'n blaai gie ons kan nie net almal uit deel en verwag word as ons klaar is ons moet almal net in gee, ons verstaan mos nie die werk nie juffrou.

*(Explain the work, if you maybe give a hand-out and expect us to give it in when we have completed the work; we just don't understand the work, Miss).*

Jack said as students, they expected that the lecturer should explain the work carefully and give examples. He added that the lecturer should also call on students to answer questions or complete tasks to check whether they understand and explain again if necessary:

Verduidelik die werk deuglik met die leerders, gee 'n paar voorbeelde, hy sit miskien nou 'n sommetjie daar op die bord, sit miskien 'n vragie op die bord en roep een van die kinders uit. As die persoon nie weet nie dan verduidelik.



*(Explain the work thoroughly to students, give a few examples, put a sum on the board or a question and call on one of the children [to answer]. If the person does not understand then explain).*

Jack further explained that teaching in the classroom environment is accepted as the norm, but lecturers should look beyond the classroom to make things more interesting. He suggested that excursions could be arranged for example to a park to promote greater interaction between students and to generate ideas about the topic under discussion:

Gaan op 'n parkie miskien...nou praat almal, die student almal gee idees, nou probeer ons ook om te kyk hoe dit is om 'n besigheid te begin juffrou...die klaskamer is mos algemeen juffrou.

*(Perhaps go to a park ... now everyone talks, all the students try to give ideas how to start a business Miss... the classroom is the usual thing Miss).*

Jack said after such an activity and engagement, a task can be given to stimulate a follow-up discussion on what they have learnt from the activity.

Jack felt that internships can also be added to the curriculum for students to experience how things are done in the workplace:

Soes 'n internship oek, vat 'n paar leerders, ek ken miskien nou klomp besighede, nou sal ek vir hulle sê aanvaar net die leerders vir twee weke of soe dat hulle net sien hoe word dinge gedoen.

*(Like an internship too, take a few learners, approach some businesses you know and ask them to accept a few learners for about two weeks so that they can see how things are done).*

Jack suggested that after the internship, students can be given a task and assignments to reflect on what they have learnt during their internship.

The interview data shows that students appreciated aspects of the curriculum which they thought could help to prepare them for the world of work. In addition interviewees made suggestions for improving the curriculum by including work experience, such as internships, placements and other forms of work-integrated learning. Furthermore, one student suggested that their learning and participation in the classroom could be enhanced if diversified teaching methods are employed such as excursions and not assume that the classroom is the norm.

Almost all of them felt that both English and Afrikaans should be included in the curriculum to further develop their language capabilities in preparation for the world of work. Some expressed interest in languages which they may encounter in future as tourist guides, such as, Japanese, Dutch and French or, in one case as a soccer player who may need to learn Spanish. One student suggested that including two languages in the curriculum would not only be beneficial in the world of work but would also improve their chances of meeting entry requirements at TVET colleges.

Another student suggested that the curriculum should also prepare them for adulthood or their role as parents and this could be done by including knowledge about the world and the diversity of cultures which could enable them to pass on this knowledge to their children in future.

### 5.2.5. *Hopes and aspirations of young adults/students*

The interviewees all had hopes and aspirations for their personal lives and future careers.

Allister wants to finish his college education, become a responsible adult, build a family and a better future for the children he hopes to have in future. He felt strongly that he does not want his children to experience the hardships which he has experienced and wants to prepare them for life by sharing with them how to act responsibly:

Lat ek oek eendag vir my kinnes kan sê juffrou hoe dit is om verantwoordelik te wies, soes ek willie hê hulle moen dieselle dinge deurgaen wat ek deurgegaan het nie.

*(One day I also want to talk to my children Miss about being a responsible person, I do not want them to go through the same experiences as I did).*

Allister is determined to complete the ABET Level 4 programme at The Community College as it will put him in a position to continue to matric and then to further studies at a TVET College or university. He added that he will do whatever is necessary to achieve something in life. He was passionate about giving back to his community especially by educating prisoners and helping them to turn their lives around.

Jack, like Allister, said his hope is to have a family in future and to provide for his family. He hopes to become a professional soccer player and to be part of an English soccer team. He said if it is not possible to play abroad, he will be content playing locally. Jack wants to apply for further studies at a college that will enable him to pursue a career either as a soccer player or a businessman.

Jack commented that soccer players often retire at a relatively young age and need to plan for a career thereafter. He hopes to start his own business in future if he is too old to continue as a soccer player. He said there were opportunities to explore ideas about opening a business while pursuing a career as a professional soccer player, to interact with other players or people in other countries to gather ideas and information which would help him to start his own business later in life.

Jack expressed a similar view to Allister about his responsibility to give back to the community where he lives once he has established his own business. He said that he understands and knows the needs of young people in the area as he has the advantage of being part of the community. Jack gave the example of his friend who is two years younger and with whom he grew up. He said his friend made a small mistake - "hy het 'n klein fout gemaak" - which had negative consequences for his future. He had lost contact with his friend and when they met recently his friend was surprised to see that Jack is furthering his education. Jack said there are many young men and women whose circumstances and experiences are similar to those of his friend and that he wants to help young people like these to get another chance in life.

Jack said there are winter schools for young people but he feels it does not help much because it offers the same activities every year which is "boring" for young people. He said he wants to offer activities which must be interesting and different every year so that young people would look forward to participating.

He commented that there are many opportunities and resources for young people overseas which are not available to them locally. He gave the example of technological devices such as remote-controlled airplanes and play stations which locally people may have seen but have

never worked with. Jack hopes to introduce a programme for young people about technology and devices such as these when he is financially able to do so.

Jack added that he would like to have a conversation with people who have had similar experiences as he had but have achieved their dreams in life. Jack said he will regard such a person as a role model.

Kyle said when he enrolled at The Community College he did not have preferences about a future career. It was only whilst being in the programme that he developed an interest in business studies. Since he was thinking of becoming a hotel manager, he thought that enrolling for hospitality studies will give him the knowledge and understanding he would need. However hospitality is not offered as a subject or learning area at The Community College and he therefore chose SMME and Travel and Tourism.

Michelle by contrast knew at an early age what she wanted to do. She said she wanted to become an equestrian, which required a medical examination and many years of studying to become an expert horse rider. However she had to give up that dream when she fell pregnant. She decided to become an office administrator so that she could have an office job which would be less demanding.

Michelle said although she would like to study further at a TVET college, she cannot afford it at present and does not know where she can access a bursary. Her priority is finding employment:

Right now the only thing I can think of is getting a job so that I can support my child but wanna go study also like office administration.

She chose office administration because, as she said, she “had to look for something simple”. Although many people told her studying office administration is a big responsibility, she felt that she could meet the challenge. She realized that she would have to develop her computer skills if she wants to become an office administrator and completed a basic computer literacy course with an NGO which offers computer skills training to unemployed young people in the area.

It is clear from the interview data that all interviewees had hopes and dreams for their future. A common view was that enrolling for this programme at The Community College is a step towards achieving their personal and career goals. Some students intend to continue to matric which will enable them to study further at a TVET College or university. Some students intend to start their own families and to become responsible and supportive fathers. They see starting a business as a way of sustaining themselves and their families. They clearly hope to improve their lives and the circumstances in which they work and live.

It was interesting to find that they were looking beyond their immediate horizons and dream of less conventional careers and experiences, such as becoming an international soccer player and travelling as tourists themselves. They all want to find some way of giving back to the community by helping youth to explore second chances in life - for example to educate prisoners so that they can turn their lives around. They all expressed strong feelings about wanting to help young people not to be trapped because of their mistakes and to escape from becoming victims of their circumstances.

### 5.3. GRADUATES

#### 5.3.1. Profile of graduate interviewees

The interviewees who completed the ABET Level 4 are Rashieda, Sandy and Samantha<sup>13</sup>, all females. They are more mature than the current students who were interviewed and whose responses were discussed earlier (5.2.1. – 5.2.5.). Sandy is 40 years old, Rashieda is 30 and Samantha is 51. All these interviewees left school at a young age - Samantha was about 12 or 13 years old, Sandy was 14 years old and Rashieda was 16 years old.

The ABET Level 4 graduates, like the current students live in sub-economic areas associated with crime, gangsterism and high unemployment rates. They too are concerned about their safety and the safety of their families.

Sandy, for example emphasized how fearful she was when she walked on campus grounds or around the area where The Community College is situated. She said that it took courage to move to and from the campus every day. She feared for her life especially at times when they were in class and heard shootings in the area. Sandy terminated her evening matric classes at The Community College because she felt she could not compromise her safety.

Sandy is currently enrolled for matric classes in the area where she moved to, but in her view, the area is not much different from the crime-infested area where The Community College is situated. Sandy said the only difference is that she is closer to her home and in a position to get home more quickly if a shooting breaks loose.

Sandy has worked at a crèche since October 2017 as a part-time employee. In February 2018 she was appointed as a full-time employee to work with the 3 and 4 year olds. After completing the ABET Level 4 qualification she enrolled for an Educare programme at a TVET college as well as matric classes in the area she moved to.

Sandy is married and has three children. Her eldest child is employed and her two younger children (of whom the youngest is twelve years old) are still at school. She described her husband as a very supportive man.

Sandy has a demanding routine. As a married woman, working full-time and studying part-time, Sandy knows that it will not be easy to achieve her goals. She said she is determined to make a success of her studies even if it means sacrificing the little time she has to herself. She said there was a time in her life when she felt that her chances of achieving her goals were remote, particularly when she stopped her matric classes at The Community College. Her view changed when she re-registered for matric in the area she moved to. Sandy is optimistic that she will achieve her dreams and said:

When things happen in life, it happens at the appointed time.

Samantha completed ABET Level 4 in 2014 at the age of 48. She is unemployed and her husband is the only breadwinner in the household. She has three children, two still at school. Her eldest daughter has a young baby and lives with Samantha.

Samantha left school when she was in standard 4 (Grade 6). She worked at two different companies as a machinist. At her last job she said the company decided to invest in automated machines and expected employees to work different shifts. Many older employees were not willing or not in a position to work nightshifts. The company also required that all its

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<sup>13</sup>Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of interviewees.

employees should have a matric certificate. Those who had matric had to apply for a position. The company subsequently employed mostly younger people who had a matric qualification. Those with no matric- mostly older people- were retrenched, including Samantha.

Older employees like Samantha were left with no choice but to take the retrenchment packages that were offered to them and left the company. Samantha expressed some dissatisfaction that when she left the company about five years ago her employment record reflected that she had worked as a packer. In fact she said she had worked primarily as a machinist and occasionally performed other duties such as packing.

Samantha wants to support her husband by contributing financially to their household and wants to help children who, she feels are at risk. She feels that she is still young enough to work and in 2014 she started job hunting. She was unsuccessful partly because she did not have a matric qualification. For this reason she approached The Community College hoping to continue her education up to matric level.

Rashieda grew up in Bonteheuwel and described herself as “a great achiever” in school. She was part of “a big family” as both her father’s and mother’s family also lived in Bonteheuwel. Her parents divorced when she was in Grade 6 and when her father moved away, she had less contact with both her father’s and mother’s family. Rashieda said that although she was still living with her mother, she felt disconnected at this point in her life, not only from her mother and father but also from people around her and she failed some exams.

When she was in Grade 7 she moved to Delft with her mother where she said “things were different”. Her parents got back together. She started to do better at school and progressed to a high school in Delft. She said she had more friends in Delft compared to Bonteheuwel and received a lot more attention from them. Rashieda said she was fascinated with the things they did - such as smoking cigarettes and “other stuff”. She wanted to join in these activities too and, she said it caused her to go “off the wrong path”. She lost interest in her school work and failed Grade 8. She said her parents were disappointed in her results as she usually received awards for good results at the end of a grade year. They enrolled her at a different school where she passed Grade 8; but she felt that things did not improve because she was not focused on her future any more.

Rashieda is currently working as a receptionist. After she completed Grade 8 at the age of 16, Rashieda moved between jobs such as waitressing, working as an office assistant and doing voluntary work at a hospital where she reads stories to sick children. She realized that she was drifting from one low income and insecure job to another. She realized that with a low level of education she would always be trapped in these kinds of jobs and would not be able to achieve her desire to travel or to study further. She reassured herself that she would return to school but continued working year after year with her “dreams of college, everything slipping away”.

In 2013 she became despondent about not getting any further on an educational level until a friend referred her to The Community College. Rashieda said that she was excited to see what The Community College had to offer. On her first visit to The Community College she discovered that she was too late to register. She said:

I was very emotional at first about the fact that I could not start my brand new love immediately uhm but I kept on checking in and finding out like when is the next available dates and I think I got in in 2014.

After she completed ABET Level 4 at the end of 2014, Rashieda enrolled for matric. She was not happy with her matric results and feels that she can do better. Rashieda said she intends to repeat or re-write one or two of her subjects to improve her marks because she wants to strengthen her chances of going to university to complete a teaching qualification. She wants to support students in a similar way and therefore decided on becoming a teacher at a school. She sees this as her way of giving back to youth and the community.

All the graduates interviewed were motivated to further their studies. After completing ABET Level 4, they all registered for matric. They are all currently registered as part-time students. They all have work experience. Two are working, one at a crèche and the other as a receptionist. The third interviewee has many years of work experience in a factory, but is unemployed and is actively looking for work.

They persevered with their studies despite demanding routines and concerns about safety in the areas where they live or where The Community College is situated. They needed the ABET Level 4 qualification to work towards their personal and career goals (such as studying towards a teaching or social work qualification) or to find employment to support their families.

### *5.3.2. Expectations of the programme*

These interviewees all intended to enrol for matric when they applied at The Community College and were surprised to hear that they had been placed on ABET Level 4 based on the results of their placement tests. They were nevertheless eager to complete ABET Level 4 and later enrol for matric at The Community College or for further studies at a TVET college to improve their employment prospects.

Sandy said she went to The Community College one morning to inquire about matric classes. However she had not completed Grade 9 at school and could not register for the Grade 12 or matric level programme. She wrote a placement test on the same day. Later that day, she was informed that she had been placed in the ABET Level 4 programme on the basis of the placement test results. She was disappointed that she could not be placed in a matric class, but decided to register for the ABET Level 4 programme:

Ek het eintlik nie graad 9 gehad om by matriek in te kom so dus die rede hoekom ek die program gedoen het.

*(I actually did not have Grade 9 to get in for matric and that's why I did this [ABET Level 4] programme).*

Sandy started classes on the very same day with a class full of young students. She felt intimidated because she thought the younger students would work and process information faster and that she would not be able to keep up. She was happy when she completed ABET Level 4 and enrolled for matric. She also enrolled for an Educare qualification at a TVET college.

Rashieda, now 30 years old, said she had a yearning to further her education since she left school at the age of 16. She said:

I wanted to be educated and I didn't get an opportunity like that.

She inquired at various schools about enrolling for matric but was unsuccessful. To her surprise, at The Community College, she was given the option to complete ABET Level 4 which she

needed to enrol for matric which, in turn, would allow her to access further studies at a TVET College or university.

When Rashieda started the programme, she wanted to become a hotel manager. She hoped to gain communication skills and other skills and knowledge that would equip her to interact with guests or clients in the workplace as well as people that she may meet in different social environments.

In the course of the programme she was impressed with the support from lecturers and that convinced her to become a teacher as a long term goal. She explained that ABET Level 4 provided her with a foundation and basic understanding of certain learning areas which has helped her in matric. She is determined to enrol for a teaching qualification after completing matric.

Rashieda has clearly overcome the anxiety she felt about studying again after so many years. She is impressed with the support she has received from lecturers at The Community College which she did not experience when she was at school. She said lecturers and the Centre Manager at The Community College were very friendly and supportive and “eased” her into the curriculum. Rashieda felt that she became aware of wider possibilities for her life. She said:

I had options. I saw a world of opportunity here.

Samantha finished Standard 4 many years ago and realized the importance of a matric certificate as it seemed to be a requirement at almost all workplaces where she applied for jobs. Samantha said previously one could find employment without a matric certificate but she recognized that times have changed. She wants to complete matric to improve her chances of finding employment which will enable her to make a financial contribution to her household.

Samantha also spoke positively about the lecturers’ approach at The Community College. She said that she initially doubted her ability to succeed as she had left school many years ago and had not studied for many years. The lecturers encouraged her to persist with her studies. To her surprise, she completed ABET Level 4 with very good grades, particularly in Travel and Tourism. She subsequently enrolled for matric at The Community College. She did not complete her matric successfully. She said she had registered for six subjects in one year and feels that it was too much to cope with considering all her responsibilities as a wife, mother and grandmother. She now intends to choose only three subjects in each year, hoping that it will be more manageable and will enable her to complete the matric. She remains motivated to complete matric. Samantha’s long term goal is to work with vulnerable youth.

These interviewees enrolled for the programme because they want to further their studies, achieve their career goals and change their personal lives. Their immediate priority is to earn a living, but what they really want to do is to find work which they see as meaningful and useful in the community – for example social work, teaching or working with at risk youth.

They approached The Community College thinking that they could register for matric and were slightly disappointed that they had been placed in the ABET Level 4 programme on the basis of their results in the placement test. They decided to continue, nonetheless. They have all registered for matric and one student has enrolled for an Educare programme at a TVET College. All were highly appreciative of the support and encouragement they received from lecturers at The Community College which motivated them to complete the ABET Level 4 programme successfully.

### 5.3.3. *Preparation for the world of work*

All graduates interviewed said they found the ABET Level 4 programme useful and that they had gained new knowledge and skills which were relevant to their work and future career plans.

Rashieda said that she learnt in the Travel and Tourism modules about responding to clients' needs such as choosing appropriate and best-rated travel accommodation. She found telephone etiquette useful because it emphasises the importance of speaking clearly and professionally, since you do not only represent yourself but also the company who you work for. Listening and communication skills helped her particularly when she interacts with clients or customers in her current job as receptionist. Rashieda felt that the Travel and Tourism programme broadened her knowledge and awareness of places in South Africa - she learnt about places in South Africa that she did not know exists and realized that South Africa has many interesting and beautiful places. This helped her to develop a greater appreciation for Cape Town and South Africa and stimulated a desire to tour around Cape Town and South Africa as a whole.

Sandy said she gained useful knowledge - in Life Orientation for example, she learnt about labour relations, which improved her understanding of the role and function of trade unions. In ECD classes they learnt to take a holistic view of child development and to take into consideration the role of physical, educational and nutritional factors. She could apply this knowledge immediately in the crèche where she was working. Similarly they had the opportunity to engage in first aid activities such as Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) which she could apply both in the crèche where she was working currently and outside the workplace.

Sandy reflected on her lack of confidence and how withdrawn she used to be. She feels the programme boosted her self-confidence as she now expresses her feelings and views more easily. Her good results and ability to perform well in her studies also gave her the confidence that she can do things which she had thought she could not do.

Similarly Samantha commented that she had low self-esteem and was anxious about her chances of succeeding in her studies. She received encouragement from lecturers which motivated her to continue with the programme. The programme contributed to building her confidence. Samantha felt that the ABET Level 4 programme helped her to register for a matric which she needed to improve her chances of finding employment.

While Rashieda and Sandy both commented on what they had learnt and how it linked to their current jobs, Samantha's comments were more general, not linked to gaining knowledge and skills for a particular sector. As a former factory worker who had been retrenched, her concern was to complete matric to improve her chances of finding employment which would enable her to assist her husband with supporting the household.

Nevertheless she found the Travel and Tourism modules useful. Samantha's long term goal is to work with vulnerable youth. She thought Travel and Tourism would be useful, for young people who may want to work as tour guides. Samantha commented that she gained useful knowledge from the Travel and Tourism modules which she could pass on to youth. She learnt that tourism is beneficial to the economy of South Africa, that there are advantages as well as disadvantages to tourism and that tourists have different attitudes when visiting South Africa. Some tourists do not care for the environment or value the different cultures in South Africa, for



example. She learnt about practical arrangements involving dealing with tourists, for example that it is necessary to book a place beforehand for people go on a tour.

These interviewees all had work experience and did not need preparation for the world of work in the same way as the younger interviewees who had no formal work experience. Nevertheless, they said they had gained knowledge and skills linked to specific sectors of employment such as Travel and Tourism and Educare and a broader understanding of the world of work. They learnt about the usefulness of listening and communication skills as well as telephone etiquette when dealing particularly with clients in the workplace. Furthermore they gained knowledge and skills which they can apply in their personal lives such as CPR, approaching child development holistically (ECD) and developing a better understanding of labour relations and the role of trade unions. They also felt that the programme boosted their confidence levels and contributed to their personal growth.

#### *5.3.4. Limitations of the curriculum and suggested improvements*

Interviewees commented that what they have learnt in the ABET Level 4 programme is not only useful in the world of work, but also in their personal lives as individuals and as members of the community.

Samantha has concerns primarily for the youth and feels that there are inadequate resources available to youth to pursue their aspirations. She said she is less concerned with older people like herself but rather with younger students, who she feels, should be accommodated by The Community College or government.

She commented that The Community College should include excursions in the curriculum for young students to experience some of the places that they are learning about. Samantha feels that young students may want to become tour guides but they have limited experience and due to their backgrounds, they may not have experienced or seen the kinds of places in Cape Town which tourists visit such as Waterfront, Robben Island, and Cape Town Gardens or may not have experienced mountain hiking. Samantha felt strongly that government should support initiatives for disadvantaged youth to assist them to pursue tourism-related careers by including activities such as tours or outings in the curriculum for young people to experience tourism related activities that will give them greater insight into a career such as Travel and Tourism.

Sandy had hoped that the ABET Level 4 certificate would facilitate access to programmes at a higher level at one of the TVET colleges. Sandy was under the impression that the credits she had for completing ECD modules in ABET Level 4 would be recognized and that she could be exempted from some modules in Level 1 of the Educare qualification for which she applied at a TVET college. She was hoping that it would accelerate her progress towards Levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Educare qualification. This was however not the case because of differences in the content and level of the ECD modules at TVET college. Sandy was unhappy that she could not get credits for the ABET Level 4 vocational subjects and accelerate her progress through the Educare qualification. This information was not given to her when she enrolled at The Community College; she found out about it only when she enrolled at the TVET college.

Sandy also felt that The Community College should include two languages in the ABET Level 4 curriculum. Afrikaans was the language of teaching and learning and was included in the curriculum as a subject. Sandy felt that English should be included as a subject too. She would have preferred to complete all subjects in English, but was disappointed to learn that the English class was full. Sandy felt that English is important in the workplace and is the most widely-spoken language in the world. She said in her workplace some children are English-speaking

and parents expect that educators communicate with their children in their first language which she sometimes found a bit challenging. Sandy said humorously:

Hier moet ek Engels praat juffrou en Afrikaans is my eerste Taal en die ouers soek dat jy regte Engels praat. As die Engels op raak juffrou dan is dit asem in en asem uit.  
*(Here I have to speak English Miss and Afrikaans is my first language and the parents expect you to speak English. And when I struggle to find words in English Miss then I have to breathe in and out).*

Her opinion is that The Community College should include both languages (English and Afrikaans) in the curriculum and that students should not be categorized as an English group or an Afrikaans group. In her view both languages are important, particularly in workplaces, such as hers, where employees are expected to be fluent in both languages. To help with her fluency in English, Sandy registered for matric in an English medium class and for English and Afrikaans as matric subjects after she completed the ABET Level 4 qualification at The Community College.

Sandy felt that lecturers at The Community College play a role in supporting students' learning that goes beyond their duties and should be commended for playing this role. Her experience was that students were given several chances even though they had misbehaved and acted disrespectfully in the classroom and towards lecturers. The same students who transgressed were given another chance to return to classes and continue their studies. Despite the challenging circumstances, teaching and learning would continue. She said she has great respect and admiration for lecturers.

Rashieda was satisfied with what the curriculum offered and said she could not think of anything else that should be included in the curriculum to prepare her for the workplace or other areas of her life.

These interviewees felt that the ABET Level 4 programme responded well to the needs of students. Despite the challenges with younger students' behavior, lecturers were understanding and sympathetic and gave them second chances. They thought that some curriculum changes were needed to improve access to further studies and to ensure that students could gain language skills needed at work. They were however concerned that the curriculum at The Community College offered only one language in the curriculum and that it is restricting them from performing their jobs. They recommended two languages in the curriculum. One interviewee was satisfied with the ABET Level 4 programme but expressed disappointment that her vocational subject (ECD) was not recognized for advanced standing when she moved on to TVET college and that this information was not communicated to her at community college level at the time of her enrolment.

#### *5.3.5. Hopes and aspirations of young adults / graduates*

All graduates had hopes and aspirations for their future careers and personal lives.

Sandy said her dream is to achieve a degree in education or social work. In the short term she is able to earn a living by working at a crèche but in the long term she really wants to become a teacher or social worker. Although she does not see this transpiring in the near future, she envisions pursuing further studies after completing her matric and achieving the Educare qualification at the TVET College.

Although Samantha's priority is to find formal employment to assist her household financially, she also dreams of getting involved in community work with particular emphasis on working with youth at risk. She said that whenever she and her family plan outings, they often include children who live close by who do not have the opportunity to go on outings or excursions.

Rashieda said when she started the programme she had a "very small dream" and "something basic", which was to become a hotel manager. However, after being in the programme, she developed a "big dream" and to become a teacher herself. She also said whilst completing the ABET Level 4 programme she became aware of her desire to tour around Cape Town because she realized that Cape Town has so many natural and beautiful places which she has not seen or visited.

These interviewees have to prioritize finding employment or remaining in their current employment to support themselves or families and children. Nevertheless they have identified dreams and goals which relate to what they really want to do if they had a free choice – such as teaching, social work, travelling or working with vulnerable youth. This is one of the differences between the younger students and the more mature students.

#### **5.4. CENTRE MANAGER / CURRICULUM COORDINATOR**

The Centre Manager, Mrs Samuels has worked at The Community College for approximately nine years. She held the position of lecturer and Curriculum Coordinator at the AET Centre until 2017 when she assumed the role of Centre Manager. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Teachers Diploma and is now 60 years old.

The interview with the Centre Manager yielded useful insights about the profile of learners and the ABET Level 4 curriculum before and after the transition from an AET Centre to a community college.

##### *5.4.1. Profile of learners before and after the transition from an AET Centre to a Community College*

According to the Centre Manager most of the students at the AET Centre were mature adults who enrolled for different reasons. Most of these students had work experience as factory workers or shop assistants. Many lost their jobs as a result of restructuring and introduction of new technologies at their workplaces. A matric qualification became a requirement for employment; however many of these students did not have matric.

Many of these workers wanted to strengthen their chances of retaining their current employment, gaining promotion or improving their prospects of gaining employment elsewhere. They started at ABET Level 4 intending to continue to matric and then gain access into further studies. Through pursuing further studies they hoped to improve their chances of following a different career path. Some of those who were unemployed were motivated to further their learning so that they could make a difference in the lives of their children or families. Other students enrolled at the AET Centre because they wanted to improve their literacy skills, sometimes for personal reasons, such as to read the Bible. They started at ABET Level 1 and many progressed to ABET Level 4.

According to Mrs Samuels, there are more male students than females across the different ABET Levels as when it was an AET Centre. However the age profile of students has changed dramatically since the AET Centre transitioned to a community college. There has been an

influx of high school 'drop-outs' at The Community College and students are younger - many are only 16 or 17 years old.

Mrs Samuels explained that The Community College faces great challenges because of the large number of vulnerable youth who have registered. Many of the young school leavers are involved in substance abuse or left school due to teenage pregnancies. Some students told lecturers that they were left behind in the school system because they were too slow or could not cope with the learning activities. Others could not deal with the peer pressure and left school. They felt rejected or stigmatized within their communities. Many come from poor families and in some cases parents, caregivers or guardians insisted that the youth should register at a school or college to secure the child grant on which the families depended.

Mrs Samuels said that many youth saw the opportunity to continue their studies at The Community College as a second chance in life:

So daar is gevalle waar die hoofstroom die kinders gefaal het en jy kan sien daai kinders gebruik die tweede kans as 'n uitkoms.  
*(There are cases where the mainstream failed the children and you can see those children use this opportunity as a chance to escape).*

Mrs Samuels said when the young learners leave school they often stay at home for two or three years and then realize that they need to further their education to achieve their goals. This realization motivates some youth to enrol at The Community College.

Some youth enrolled at The Community College due to a perception that ABET Level 4 will be easier than Grade 9 at school. Mrs Samuels regards this as a misconception - at The Community College students may repeat an ABET Level until they show competence to be promoted. By contrast the norm in schools is that learners progress to the next grade even if they failed certain learning areas. In other words they can progress faster in the school system. Mrs Samuels therefore found it difficult to understand why some students feel that they stood a better chance of completing ABET Level 4 at the college rather than in school. She found it interesting when a student once commented that it is actually not as easy to complete ABET Level 4 at the college as they thought.

Mrs Samuels added that those youth who left school while in Grade 9, performed fairly well in the placement test at The Community College. They were usually placed in ABET Level 4 on the assumption that they have developed thinking and reasoning skills and have the ability to work independently. According to Mrs Samuels, the reality is that many youth lack these skills and are not geared towards working independently; many make excuses and shift the blame to others for not having completed assessments. In addition, many do not take the time to go over the work demonstrated in class or do not complete homework to help their own learning. Mrs Samuels said when students display these traits it impacts negatively on their learning and in some cases results in a tendency to drop-out from The Community College.

She highlighted the fact that mature adults are still accommodated at The Community College despite the dramatic increase in the numbers of young students. Most of the mature adults attend classes at night as they have family responsibilities or work commitments.

According to Mrs Samuels, the mature adults seem to be more committed and dedicated to make a success of their learning, compared to the younger students who often tend to be more playful and less serious about their education. The mature students have more life experience and exposure to risks in the workplace. They therefore have a good understanding of the skills,

knowledge and level of education that they need for promotion in their current jobs or for better employment opportunities elsewhere. She said the mature adults experience hardships in providing for their families and have a conviction that education will help them to improve the circumstances their families live in and to escape from these difficult circumstances.

Mrs Samuels said that mature students are intrinsically motivated to attend class and try to succeed in their studies, compared to the younger students who in many cases enrolled because they were forced to by parents and caregivers. She commented that the younger students usually have no work commitments and no responsibility to care for others. These may be the reasons that they are less serious about their learning. She said in some cases the mature students share their life experiences and reasons for studying at this late stage in their lives, with the hope that their stories will encourage the younger students to be more serious about their learning. Mrs Samuels commented that the level of commitment and maturity that the older students display is evident in their results because they are the ones who achieve high grades and awards at the end of each year. She said they generally outperform the younger students who are the ones who need the knowledge and skills to equip them for employment and for other areas of their lives.

The Centre Manager's comments suggest that since the transition from an AET Centre to a community college, there has been a dramatic change in the profile of students. The AET Centre accommodated mainly mature adults who needed the education for personal development and to secure their positions in the workplace or to be promoted at work.

Currently The Community College serves mainly youth who have dropped out of high school, but continues to accommodate adults. The profiles of these youth suggest that they are youth at risk – some have no or little formal work experience, many use / abuse substances, many are young mothers and many feel stigmatized or rejected within their communities.

Their reasons for enrolling vary - some see the opportunity of learning as a second chance to better their lives or to achieve their goals in life; others have a misconception that ABET Level 4 will be easier to complete at a community college rather than Grade 9 in school; and others registered under pressure from parents and caregivers who want to secure the child grant which some families receive. The mature adults tend to be more serious and committed to their learning compared to the young school leavers who perform well in placement tests but are not able to work independently and need more support than initially assumed.

#### *5.4.2. The objectives of the ABET Level 4 Curriculum*

Mrs Samuels explained that South Africa's history of apartheid left individuals neglected and disadvantaged educationally and that Adult Basic Education became an integral part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to redress educational inequalities. By converting AET Centres into Community Colleges the Department of Education has expanded the mandate of the AET Centres to focus on the educational needs of out-of-school youth in addition to mature adults.

She added that within the Department of Education there is strong emphasis on the need for students to complete the ABET Level 4 qualification (GET Certificate) which could be used to enrol for matric or for further studies at a TVET college. In her view, the GET Certificate will enable students to achieve their goals related to further studies or their chosen careers.

Ons wil nou hê jy moet daai GET certificate kry sodat jy met daai GET certificate dit kan gebruik om jou 'n 'n 'n TVET, ons sê mos nou TVET college toe te kan gaan sodat

hy kan verder gaan. Ons voel op die stage ons se GETC is vir hom 'n exit sodat hy kan iets anders doen ...as daar 'n behoefte by hom is om iets daarmee te maak.

*We want you to achieve the GET certificate to use it for further studies at a TVET college. We feel at this stage that the GETC is an exit qualification which will equip him to do something else ... if he feels the need to do something with it.*

At The Community College, students can use the ABET Level 4 qualification to achieve their goals such as pursuing studies at a TVET college or continuing to matric and then university. They hope that they will be able pursue their goals related to career development or to do something different with their lives. In addition, The Community College anticipates improving the skills of adults and youth through skills development programmes for income generation or to develop entrepreneurial skills to sustain themselves as well as creating employment opportunities for others within their communities:

Die een entrepreneur kan nog 'n mens in diens neem, so kan dan, kan ek by poverty alleviation uit kom.

*(The one entrepreneur can employ another person and through this alleviate poverty).*

The objectives of the ABET Level 4 curriculum at The Community College are consistent with the objectives of the SAQA-registered ABET Level 4 qualification and the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013), which includes but is not limited to, providing education and training for further learning, promoting career development, accessing employment opportunities to make a sustainable living as well as benefitting individuals within the broader communities.

#### *5.4.3. The curriculum prior and after the transition from AET Centre to community college*

Mrs Samuels commented that previously when it was an AET Centre the curriculum included both academic and vocational subjects. There was greater focus on academic electives which included Human and Social Studies, Economic and Management Sciences and Arts and Culture. Vocational electives included SMME, Travel and Tourism and Ancillary Health Care. Academic subjects carried fewer credits and students therefore had to complete up to eight subjects to make up the 120 credits for the ABET Level 4 qualification.

Mrs Samuels commented that, although the adult learners were attending part-time classes at night, many were able to complete the curriculum (with eight subjects) in one year because of their maturity, commitment and dedication.

With the transition to a community college more vocational subjects were included in the curriculum, according to Mrs Samuels. Currently a vocational pathway allows students to choose five subjects instead of eight to achieve the required 120 credits as vocational subjects carry more credits. Language (English and Afrikaans), Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation remain part of the curriculum as core subjects and the same vocational electives are offered at The Community College with ECD as an additional elective. However academic electives are not offered.

Mrs Samuels also explained the rationale for assigning fewer credits to some modules within the vocational pathway. The SMME module, for example carries fewer credits than the other vocational subjects. According to Mrs Samuels, this is to ensure that SMME would be combined with another vocational or supporting subject such as Travel and Tourism to create the opportunity for students to become entrepreneurs in a specific field such as tourism. She also highlighted areas of overlap between the curriculum of SMME and Travel and Tourism, for

example entrepreneurship and marketing. This content overlap in the two learning areas is meant to prepare students for self-employment in a particular field of work.

ECD is a new vocational module and was introduced because The Community College recognised the need for people in the community to be equipped with skills and knowledge related to childcare and to broaden their employment opportunities. At The Community College ECD is usually selected by young students who became mothers in their early teens and who intend to use the learning to raise their own children better or to expand their opportunities for generating income either as child-minders or to run a crèche as an informal business. These are some of the reasons why ECD was introduced as a new vocational module.

Mrs Samuels pointed out that academic electives still form part of the ABET Level 4 curriculum, although they are not currently offered at The Community College. However, she felt that the students miss out on a more holistic educational experience as a result. In her view students could benefit from academic subjects such as Human and Social Sciences and Arts and Culture which give students broader knowledge and understanding. She mentioned that Arts and Culture, for example, encouraged students' creativity and assisted students who desired to start their own businesses. The modules gave students the opportunity to produce an item for income-generation purposes. As part of activities within Arts and Culture, students also acquired carpentry and painting skills. Another example is Technology, a subject which develops learners' computer skills, which in her view, is essential for students' learning in this technological age. However, Technology, Human and Social Sciences and Arts and Culture are not offered at The Community College at present.

The implication is that the curriculum would have to include more modules and more staff would have to be employed. She acknowledged that currently The Community College does not employ the staff needed to offer a bigger range of electives. Employing more lecturers is dependent on available funds from DHET and this limits what can be offered at The Community College.

Mrs Samuels explained that although the curriculum is vocationally inclined there is no practical workplace experience integrated into the curriculum and activities are currently limited to the classroom setting. She said a lecturer may ask students to perform role-plays to vary classroom activities and to give students an opportunity to apply their learning. For example, students may perform a role-play to demonstrate how to improve communication between a tour guide and a tourist. However she commented that students were keen to gain experience outside the classroom environment and wanted to participate in more authentic practical activities.

#### *5.4.4. Responsiveness - Meeting the needs of youth / young adults*

Mrs Samuels commented on needs that students have over and above preparation for the world of work. These needs include that they should learn to think critically and independently, to act responsibly and to show more commitment towards their learning so that progress in their learning can be observed as is the case with the mature students.

Mrs Samuels said many young students come from schools where they were dependent on teachers, were more passive and did not learn how to work independently. The curriculum at The Community College encourages students to work independently, reason and to draw inferences themselves:

Jy moet onafhanklik wees, jy moet self kan dink, jy moet self kan redeneer, jy moet, jy moet self afleidings kan maak, en hier kom hy uit die sisteem uit wat hom heeltemal

gevoer het, vir hom dit gegee het en hy het niks gedoen nie, hy het net geabsorbeer. *(You must be independent, you must think yourself, you must have the ability to reason, you must, you must draw conclusions yourself, and here he comes from a system [referring to the school system] which spoonfed him, handed everything to him and he did nothing, he just absorbed).*

At The Community College, lecturers provide learning material such as hand-outs and explain the content; but the students have to draw from these “sources” to complete tasks and assignments themselves. Lecturers will not provide the answers. In this way, lecturers encourage students to act independently and responsibly towards their learning. However, Mrs Samuels says the reality is that many of the young students do not make the commitment needed which results in them dropping out at an early stage:

Hy begin al uit te drop hier van die eerste, tweede maand, en dan kan hy nie die pyp rook nie. *(He starts dropping out from the first, second month, because he cannot meet the challenge).*

She commented that students drop out early in the year often because they struggle to cope with the demands of the ABET Level 4 curriculum. They do have the ability to cope with the work but tend to struggle, merely because they have not acquired the level of responsibility and maturity to focus on their learning and are caught in a pattern of misconduct.

According to Ms Samuels, another factor contributing to early drop out among young students in the ABET Level 4 programme is that they find maths to be a challenging subject. This relates particularly to those students who did not acquire a solid foundation in maths at school, particularly in algebra. Currently all ABET Level 4 students at The Community College do Mathematical Literacy which is less challenging than Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences (commonly known as pure maths). Students have the option of choosing either Mathematical Literacy or pure maths Mrs Samuels considers maths to be an important part of the curriculum which teaches skills that young students need to function effectively in the workplace. She said that the older students usually completed pure maths successfully which she attributed to their maturity and responsibility towards their studies. However the younger students displayed little interest in their learning and did not revise their work at home and are often unable to cope.

Mrs Samuels also highlighted the vital role of lecturers in supporting the learning and development of students at The Community College. As mentioned earlier, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of vulnerable youth at The Community College who sometimes display behavioural challenges and abuse substances. Lecturers at The Community College are expected to guide and support these young students over and above the usual roles of being experts in their subjects and teaching. Mrs Samuels said these demands sometimes reduced teaching and learning time and drained lecturers emotionally. Despite these pressures, lecturers at The Community College strive to cover the curriculum content and provide guidance and support as necessary and go beyond the role and duties expected of them.

She said within DHET emphasis is placed on teaching students a skill so that they can become entrepreneurs; but the background of students cannot be ignored. Some students do not enrol by choice but rather because caregivers insisted that they enrol, in some cases to receive the child grant and in other cases to keep them out of gang-related activities at home. She is worried that these students are therefore not positively orientated towards their learning. There are other students who are concerned about generating income and may want to start a small business; but do not focus on applying what they have learnt to meet that goal:



Die fokus is nou die heel tyd op geld, geld, geld maar die geld gaan nie kom nie as my mind nie reg is nie...daarvoor moet 'n mens se mind reg wees en sien hoe my community kan change met education dat ek my community kan empower.  
*(The focus is all the time on money, money, money but the money will not come if my mind-set is not oriented in that direction ... therefore a person's mind must be directed in that way and see how education can be used to empower those within the community).*

She added that the objectives of a vocational elective such as SMME can only be achieved if the “mind-sets” of students change. They must have the desire to start a business, be innovative and display the ability to work independently. Mrs Samuels commented that although students gain the necessary knowledge and skills in the SMME modules, hardly any students come up with business ideas or an initiative to start a business. She could not identify any student who applied their knowledge and skills in starting a business.

Mrs Samuels felt that government should also respond to the challenge to equip students with the knowledge and skills to become employable or to start their own businesses. Further guidance and support is needed about how to access government funds or where to present funding proposals for starting a business.

Mrs Samuels also commented that students are disadvantaged because the ABET Level 4 curriculum does not require a student to take two languages although it is a requirement for further studies at TVET colleges. Students complete the ABET Level 4 with only one language as a learning area at The Community College:

Ons het mos nou op die oomblik net een taal en dit is jou moedertaal, jy hoef nie al die tale te doen om sy krediete te kry nie maar die nagmerrie is as hy verder gaan studeer dan is hy geforseer om nog 'n taal te het.  
*(We offer only one language which is your mother tongue, it is not a requirement for you to complete all the languages to achieve the credits; but the nightmare begins if he intends to study further - then he is expected to have done another language).*

Mrs Samuels said currently the other option for students is to complete matric with two languages as learning areas after completing ABET Level 4 and then enrol at a TVET college for further studies. However, this is a much longer route, which many young people cannot afford.

There are some success stories of students gaining access to a TVET college, according to Mrs Samuels. Some students who took Ancillary Health Care as a module, enrolled for a bridging course to gain access into a career such as nursing or home-based care. Outside of these examples, meeting entry requirements and gaining access at a TVET college can be challenging for students from community colleges.

## **5.5. SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES**

I interviewed two sector representatives – one from the Travel and Tourism sector (Ms Daly) and one from the SMME sector (Mr Kock). The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of their perspectives on skills and knowledge employers consider necessary in these two sectors. Each interview focused on generic skills needed in the world of work as well as specialized skills relevant to work in each sector including knowledge and skills that student need to become an entrepreneur. The interviews also focused on the role that colleges need to

play to ensure students are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to improve their employability.

### 5.5.1. Profiles of sector representatives

#### 5.5.1.1. Travel and Tourism

Ms Daly is 45 years old and works as a freelance tour guide within the Western Cape region. She has worked in the Travel and Tourism sector for five years. She said she loves travelling and enjoys tourist activities such as visiting various places inside and outside South Africa. She commented that South Africa has many attractions and has much to offer to tourists or travellers.

Before she became a tour guide, she interacted with various role-players within the tourism sector to understand what the requirements are to work within the field. She completed tourist guide training and subsequently volunteered her services to gain experience within the tourism sector. Ms Daly said she has a mentor who guided her to improve her abilities and skills as a tour guide.

#### 5.5.1.2. SMME

Mr Kock is 62 years old and has worked as a welder for over 42 years. Mr Kock is a qualified welder and is the owner of a small engineering company through which he provides training services to trainees from several larger companies. Mr Kock teaches welding skills to trainees while his wife sees to the administration of the business and managing the finances. His business is located in an area close to where The Community College is situated.

Mr Kock started work at a company in Epping as a general worker in the 1970's and was restricted from working as a welder, a trade reserved for those classified as "White", because of job reservation under apartheid,. However since 1978 he secretly taught himself how to weld (during his lunch times) - he commented that in those years if you were a "boy" and the boss caught you welding, you could lose your job. He now welds almost any material such as stainless steel, aluminum, copper, duplex and fiber. He said he was passionate about what he wanted to do and therefore had to make sacrifices to acquire the skill that he wanted.

In 1979 he went to work at different sites in Namibia where he developed his welding skills further. He said if you left school in Standard 8 as in his case, it was difficult to get an apprenticeship. He however managed to get an opportunity to do practical welding jobs in Namibia at the company where he worked and was regarded as semi-skilled, not a qualified welder. In Namibia he went for a trade test and got a certificate in welding. Mr Kock said it took him a few years to get to the point of achieving his trade certificate and he does not regret persevering and putting in the necessary effort to achieve his goal:

Ek is nie spyt nie, ek het aangehou om te kom daar waar ek wil wies.  
(*I have no regrets, I persevered to get where I wanted to be.*)

Mr Kock said he is well-known in the industry and secures welding jobs or contracts for on-job training because people who know him often recommend his company. Mr Kock provides training for employees within companies to become welders. He has taught at TVET colleges such as West Coast College and Pentech where he taught students welding skills. He said most students in South Africa were complete beginners and had no knowledge of welding. He has also taught in different countries such as Congo, Nigeria and Angola.

He said that he networks with others when he visits various work sites which helps him to secure contracts from companies:

Wanneer jy op sites kom is daar ander ouens wat oek op die sites is wat vir jou vra “kan ek jou nommer gee?” Ek word altyd ingelig u sien, ons praat en so kry jy werk.  
*(When you get to work sites there other guys who are also on the sites who ask you “can I give your number?” I always get information, you see, we talk and that is how you get work).*

He is also on the database of agencies who contact him if training jobs at companies are available. Mr Kock said that currently the market is down and there is a drop in welding jobs.

Both sector representatives identified generic skills and specialized skills that young people need to become employable.

#### *5.5.2. Knowledge and skills needed in the sectors of Travel and Tourism and SMME*

Both sector representatives identified generic skills and specialized skills that young people need to become employable in the labour market.

An interesting comment from Ms Daly was that young people who enter the tourism sector often demonstrate some of the knowledge and skills required in the sector even though they do not have much formal work experience. Some young people are able to communicate confidently with diverse groups of people, they are energetic and generally they are comfortable with the use of technology. However, she said these skills are not enough to secure employment.

Both Ms Daly and Mr Kock identified general attitudes which young people need in the workplace including the ability to listen, receive and follow instructions. These are part of communication skills and are needed to ensure that messages are understood in the workplace and mistakes can be avoided.

Ms Daly emphasized that young people should not be arrogant or over-confident but rather show the ability or willingness to learn from others irrespective of age. This is an on-going process which will allow young people to be flexible in the workplace and to broaden their horizons.

Similarly Mr Kock said that young people have to demonstrate a willingness to work additional or long hours. The ability to adapt to changes in working hours is necessary because of constant changes in the workplace which inevitably create the need to work overtime.

They also highlighted the need for professional behavior which Mr Kock referred to as “work etiquette”. This includes punctuality in the workplace, willingness to receive and follow instructions and ability to observe safety precautions to avoid losses or injuries in the work environment. It also includes learning to manage or organize oneself as well as professional conduct. This will allow young people not only to gain employment but also to maintain their positions and possibly find new positions.

Mr Kock expressed concern that neither parents and families nor schools were developing these qualities in the young people. Instead, Mr Kock felt that families had failed young people and commented that roles are reversed within the family: “Parents act as the children and children act as the parents”. He said as a result many young people lack some of the qualities needed in the world of work. However he commented that children cannot be held responsible

for the lack of discipline; schools or colleges should rather consider how students can be assisted to grow into responsible individuals.

#### 5.5.2.1. *Specialization*

Comments from sector representatives suggest that there are specific knowledge and skills needed to work in a particular sector.

Ms Daly said that young people who want to work in the tourism sector need language and communication skills for interacting with tourists, knowledge of places tourists visit (i.e. history, geography and culture) and knowledge of the laws that regulate the tourism sector.

Mr Kock said trainee welders have to learn the practical skills of welding and related knowledge which will be assessed theoretically and practically. Mr Kock explained that a welding certificate will be needed for employment as a welder, but having a welding trade certificate on its own does not guarantee employment.

He said in his case when he worked for companies they required applicants to perform a practical welding job to test their welding skills. An inspector checks whether applicants have the required welding skills for welding the type of material that the company specializes in. He explained that companies test applicants' skill regardless of whether they have a welding trade certificate, a SETA certificate or any other welding certificate, as all welders do not have the ability to weld any or all types of material. In short, talking about abilities or qualifications is not considered, as companies look for evidence or a practical demonstration of what applicants can do:

Ongeag of jy 'n qualification het van die SETA dit sê niks; ek moet 'n toets gaan doen. By elke werk is verskillende clients, verskillende weldings, so jy doen nie elke keer dieselfde welding nie. Die toets is onsite, daar is inspectors. Hulle check, hulle kyk of jy 100% verstaan wat jy doen.

*(Even if you have a SETA qualification, that says nothing; I must do a test. At each work site there are different clients, different weldings, so you don't do the same welding each time. The test is onsite, there are inspectors. They check, they see if you understand 100% what you are doing).*

Mr Kock saw knowledge of Maths as an advantage for trainees in the field of welding and Engineering, although not a prerequisite for recruitment. He said Engineering can be a difficult discipline but if students had done mathematics, they would be able to learn more easily:

Daar is baie dinge in engineering wat mense nie verstaan nie maar as jy darem ten minste net 'n bietjie Maths het dan vang jy gouer as enige ander persoon.

*(There are many things in engineering which people do not understand but if you at least had even a little Maths you can pick up quicker than any other person).*

Some trainees arrived for training with prior mathematical skills and knowledge which was an advantage because they already know about measuring or identifying and solving a measurement problem for example. According to Mr Kock problem solving may require one to think in abstract form, critically and creatively which may arise when operating a machine or working with cables in the welding environment for example. They would have to make decisions on a daily basis. In Mr Kock's view, Mathematics develops these kinds of thinking and problem-solving skills, which are of great help in the workplace.

#### 5.5.2.2. SMME / entrepreneurship

Both sector representatives identified specific skills and knowledge needed to set up and manage a business.

Ms Daly identified subjects such as Mathematics and Business Skills which will equip students to run their own businesses and to manage the finances of the business:

Mathematics and Business Skills which include management, marketing and financial aspects are essential knowledge and skills needed to set up your own business.

Mr Kock highlighted the skills and knowledge needed in the SMME sector by referring to some of his own experiences of establishing and running a small private training organization. These included business skills such as marketing, planning, budgeting, financial management as well as skills related to the specific nature of the business i.e. training and assessment.

He also commented that safety is an important aspect in the workplace that cannot be compromised and as a business owner you have to ensure that you have safety equipment and clothing including safety boots, all of which can be quite costly.

Mr Kock added that he needed training skills and qualifications in addition to his specialized welding skills and qualifications. He went for an assessor course which has helped him to conduct practical and theoretical assessments.

Mr Kock's view is that SMME can serve multiple purposes. On the one hand it can serve as an opportunity for income-generation; on the other hand it can respond to community needs. Mr Kock is particularly interested in teaching young adults who have dropped out of school and who did not get to Standard 10 or matric. He said in many cases students become drop outs because they are not academically inclined; however they are often "very good with their hands" and have the ability to produce a quality product. He encourages parents, particularly in the community where he lives, to send their children to him for training because he knows that college fees, which can amount to thousands of rands, are unaffordable. Mr Kock sees his work in transferring welding skills to these young adults as a way of equipping them with skills which can help them to make progress in their lives.

By my is dit net as ek iemand anders wil vorentoe vat. Ek sal jou oplei sodat ek iets van jou kan maak. Nou so maak ek ander ook welders.

*(I am concerned with helping someone move forward. I will train you to make something of you. This is how I make others welders too).*

He added that sometimes young people have to find work in factories to get this type of training but may not have the funds to travel to and from work or the training site. Mr Kock said it is only when the young people go to college that they have the advantage of receiving a stipend, which covers their cost of transport to and from the college. This is generally a great help. Mr Kock said his business is not yet at the level where he can support young people in this manner.

Mr Kock's responses are based on his awareness of the disadvantaged backgrounds of the young people he is interacting with. He sees training of young people in his area or neighboring areas as something that can benefit the broader community. It does not involve making much profit but he is doing it out of concern for the wellbeing of young South Africans. He was

disturbed by seeing how foreigners get jobs but local citizens struggle to find work. In his view his small organization could contribute to skilling young people to make a living for themselves and their families.

### *5.5.3. Role of the colleges and lecturers*

Both Ms Daly and Mr Kock suggested that colleges and lecturers have an important role in developing young people's knowledge and skills to improve their employability.

In addition, Ms Daly felt that lecturers should be experts in their fields who can teach "from a personal perspective" based on their experience within the tourism sector. In addition she suggested that colleges can partner with established tourism companies to arrange for placements through which students can gain practical experience and learn from experienced tour guides.

Mr Kock felt that greater responsibilities are placed on lecturers to ensure that young people acquire the necessary discipline and skills to ultimately prepare them for the workplace. He said colleges particularly can play a role in developing "work etiquette" needed in the workplace. He also emphasized the importance of gaining practical experience for students to become more employable. Mr Kock feels that if you want a change in learners' attitude then it will depend on how these situations are dealt with. When students are guilty of late coming for example, intervention should happen at college to teach learners acceptable and unacceptable conduct. When they fail to follow rules then they should bear consequences. He commented that by helping to change the attitudes of young people and learn about consequences will help them to grow into responsible and accountable individuals, which is to their advantage.

## **5.6. CONCLUSION**

The interview data gave me an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of those who are directly affected by the curriculum. These include current students and graduates of the ABET Level 4 programme, the Centre Manager of The Community College and sector representatives in Travel and Tourism and SMME.

The next chapter presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from the research.

## **CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

The main objective of this research is to analyse critically how the curriculum at a community college in the Western Cape prepares young adults for the world of work and develops their capabilities to become functioning members in society.

The research site, referred to as The Community College, is a community college for youth and adults, many of who are unemployed. This learning site was an Adult Education and Training (AET) Centre, or Public Adult Learning Centre (PALC). It is now one of DHET's community college pilot projects.

Data was gathered through interviews and analysis of national and institutional policy documents. I analysed the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013) and the ABET Level 4 curriculum at The Community College, its orientation to the world of work and responsiveness to personal and social needs of young adults. I also discussed activities which are not part of the formal curriculum drawing on institutional policy documents and my own knowledge and understanding of these policies and activities as a lecturer at the college.

In addition I needed to understand how the curriculum is experienced by those directly involved particularly the students themselves whose voices are often absent in discussions about the curriculum. I therefore conducted semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perspectives and experiences of the curriculum.

I used the following headings to present the research findings:

- 6.2. Preparation for the world of work
- 6.3. Further studies
- 6.4. Functioning effectively in society
- 6.5. Conclusion

### **6.2. PREPARATION FOR WORLD OF WORK**

The aims and rationale of the ABET Level 4 qualification are consistent with policy objectives referred to in the White Paper for PSET (2013). The qualification registered at NQF1 by SAQA requires a balance between academic and vocational modules. This qualification has multiple objectives which include equipping students with foundational learning to further their education, access employment and career development opportunities, and lead to social benefits for the individual and the broader society (SAQA, 2007). Based on these objectives it is clear that the qualification, as registered with SAQA, is orientated towards improving the employability of young people but it also has a focus on broader personal and social development.

The qualification remains the same and will be reviewed in 2022. It guided the development of The ABET Level 4 curriculum before the transition to a community college. The module outlines developed as part of this curriculum are still being used by lecturers at The Community College to guide their teaching. The curriculum was designed for more mature adults and was based on the assumption that adults already have work experience and need to strengthen their general educational levels.

My analysis shows that the ABET Level 4 curriculum has become more vocationally orientated with the transition to a community college. While fundamental and core subjects are still offered at The Community College, there is a stronger focus on vocational electives because, it is argued, the curriculum also has to respond to the needs of young adults and out of school youth who have limited formal work experience compared to the adult learners who were the main target group previously (the curriculum has been discussed in Chapter 4).

The argument is based on the assumption that the curriculum should equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to improve their employability and prepare them for the world of work. The stronger vocational focus was also introduced in the light of high levels of unemployment. It is assumed that preparation for the world of work is not only for formal employment, but increasingly for young people to become entrepreneurs who will open their own small businesses.

If this logic is accepted it can be seen as a strength that the curriculum has been modified in response to changing needs given shifts in the demographic profile of learners at The Community College. The increase in vocational modules offered and different subject combinations are designed to achieve the objectives of developing skills for employability and/or encouraging entrepreneurship within a sector (for example by combining Travel and Tourism with SMME). However, these are flawed assumptions as discussed below.

The mature students are between 30 and 51 years old and their immediate priority is to earn a living. They all had several years of formal work experience. For the younger students who are between 17 and 20 years old employment is not an immediate concern as they are currently being supported by parents or family members. This does not apply to one of the younger students (Michelle) who is a single parent and is currently studying and working part-time. It is unclear how many young people are in a similar situation.

Furthermore young students are often uncertain about the career directions they want to follow. The qualification as registered with SAQA makes provision for a combination of academic/general and vocational modules but, as indicated earlier in practice more vocational electives are offered at this college. So many students completed modules based on what was offered rather than their choice. Similarly the more mature adults had limited choice about which modules to follow. While this can be seen as a limitation arising out of staffing and resourcing constraints it highlights a concern expressed by some interviewees and in the literature about the limiting effect of a strong vocational focus in the curriculum (Young, 1999; Powell, 2012). A more holistic approach is needed for the curriculum to respond to the dual objectives of preparing young people for the world of work as well as developing their capabilities to function effectively in society. Reducing the number of academic electives in the ABET Level 4 curriculum is inconsistent with this approach. Students' capabilities to pursue further education and broader developmental opportunities may be limited if they are streamed too early in a vocational direction.

Even preparation for the world of work requires a general education foundation and not only vocational skills according to sector representatives I interviewed. Subjects such as History and Geography for example lay a foundation for students who intend to work as tour guides or follow other careers in the Travel and Tourism sector. Mathematics lays a foundation for those entering the field of Engineering. The Centre Manager similarly was concerned that academic electives, such as Human and Social Sciences and Arts and Culture are not offered at The Community College and that this would have the effect of limiting the academic and personal development of students.



One of the limitations in the curriculum is that there was no provision for practical experience or work-integrated learning in the curriculum. There is currently no provision for internships as there is in the curricula in TVET colleges and universities and opportunities for partnering with SETAs are limited. The ABET Level 4 qualification as registered on the NQF does not require students to do work integrated learning although it is one of the objectives of the White Paper for PSET (2013). There is an expectation that community colleges will link with government initiatives such as the Public Works Programme to provide opportunities for work experience and socially useful employment (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013). How this is to be implemented is unclear.

Students have shown interest in gaining practical experience within the respective vocational specializations as they hoped that it would improve their employability, as discussed in section 5.2.4. of Chapter 5. Over and above practical experience students also need exposure to a wider range of activities and experiences. Many students at The Community College have never been to Table Mountain or experienced the cable car in Cape Town, for example. Such limited exposure may negatively impact students who intend to pursue careers as tour guides or other careers in Travel and Tourism. It is important that the curriculum should include activities which give a wider exposure to students.

Despite these limitations the students who I interviewed felt that the curriculum was useful and that they had many positive experiences. They gained knowledge and skills relevant to work such as communication and information skills for dealing with clients in the workplace as well as knowledge about legal and regulatory issues and the rights of employees in the workplace. They made favourable comments about sector-specific learning – about child development or about starting a small business as a means to support their families and creating employment opportunities in their communities (SMME). They learnt about careers which they did not know of before they enrolled for the ABET Level 4 programme – they learnt about careers other than that of tour guide in the field of Travel and Tourism for example. They also developed a sense of wider possibilities for their own development.

Some students decided to complete a vocational module only to become more employable in a particular field or for personal development. Some women enrolled for Ancillary Health modules because they intended to use the skills and knowledge to care for the sick in their families or as a way of earning a living as home-based care workers. Others took ECD because they intended to seek employment or open a crèche as a means of earning a living. In this study only one student found work in a crèche.

Emphasis on offering modules such as SMME in combination with vocational modules such as childcare is based on the assumption that graduates of The Community College will start their own businesses. This assumption needs to be interrogated. In this study no one opened their own crèche and none of the graduates interviewed had opened their own businesses. The reasons are unclear and this may be an area for further research.

This reinforces the argument that education is necessary and desirable, but not enough to overcome the structural barriers encountered by students in the labour market (see section 6.4. below).

### **6.3. FURTHER STUDIES**

Many students expressed an interest in studying further. Some younger students enrolled at The Community College because it gave them a second chance to complete matric and

possibly proceed to further studies at a TVET College as a step towards achieving their goals and dreams for their future. Similarly some mature students continued to matric after completing ABET Level 4. Many of the mature students intended to pursue further studies at a college or university in the hope of securing their jobs, being promoted or finding jobs elsewhere. Some enrolled at The Community College because employers were retrenching workers who did not have matric. For both groups, enrolling at The Community College was an attempt to change their lives for the better.

Some students experienced difficulties when they applied for further studies. One of the prerequisites for entry into programmes at TVET colleges is a Grade 9 qualification with two languages. The ABET Level 4 qualification is equivalent to Grade 9, but currently only one language is offered at The Community College although the SAQA qualification makes provision for students to choose an additional language as an academic elective. This suggests either that the SAQA requirements should be amended so that at least two languages are made compulsory in the qualification. However the qualification is due to be reviewed only in 2022. Meanwhile the curriculum as it is offered at The Community College could include two languages within the current SAQA requirements.

Students became aware of these requirements only when they applied for studies at TVET colleges. This suggests that information should be provided for students about these institutional barriers prior to or at registration at community college level so that they can make informed decisions.

In addition, one of the students was disappointed that her prior learning was not recognized when she applied for further studies at a TVET college. She had completed ECD as a vocational elective in her ABET Level 4 and applied for an ECD programme at a TVET college. She expected to gain credits or recognition for her ECD module at ABET Level 4 but this was not the case because of differences in the content and level of the ECD modules at the TVET college. These differences are sometimes not easily understood by students and should be explained when they enrol at The Community College.

Students who completed the ABET Level 4 qualification and who continued to matric encountered some difficulties due to the gap between the ABET Level 4 and matric curriculum which has a stronger academic/general education focus. The ABET Level 4 curriculum does not prepare students for this given its vocational orientation. Many younger students also have a misconception that it will be easier to complete ABET Level 4 than Grade 9 in school because there are fewer subjects in the ABET Level 4 curriculum. They are surprised when they find out that this is not the case.

This challenge may be resolved when the NASCA is introduced assuming that there is good articulation between the ABET Level 4 and the NASCA. However, the barriers encountered by students wishing to study further reinforces the argument that integration of general and vocational education is needed in the curriculum as discussed in Chapter 2 (Young, 1999). These are both issues for further research.

These difficulties encountered by students reinforce the argument for a stronger general education focus in the curriculum which can include additional languages and academic electives. In this way the curriculum can respond to the need to lay a foundation for further studies. Similarly the pedagogies employed in the ABET Level 4 programme have to respond to this need. Students made suggestions for more interactive and participatory teaching methods as discussed in Chapter 5 (5.2.4.). Other interviewees commented on the need for teaching and

learning strategies which respond specifically to the needs of younger learners. Their view was that younger learners need greater support for learning and to address dispositional barriers such as lack of focus and concentration, behavioural challenges often linked to drug addiction, etc.

The profile of students at The Community College includes some who are awaiting trial, some who dropped out from school and some who are addicted to drugs. They often feel rejected or stigmatized in their families and communities and some show little interest in their learning. Focusing on these aspects of the student profile feeds negative stereotypes about youth such as that they are lazy, cannot think ahead and are irresponsible.

At The Community College, these negative stereotypes have been challenged through a combination of activities. From an educational perspective the state of mind or attitude of students towards their learning can be seen as dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981) which often arise from depression, stressful situations, a lack of confidence or a negative attitude towards life.

The Community College responded to these needs by providing additional academic support and extra-curricular activities to support their learning and build students' confidence and their ability to look beyond their immediate circumstances (as discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.3.2.).

Students expressed great appreciation for the extra efforts lecturers made and said it inspired them to consider becoming lecturers themselves.

#### **6.4. FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY IN SOCIETY**

In addition to the formal curriculum The Community College has a variety of extra-curricular activities such as motivational talks, creating awareness around special or public holidays (for example, Valentine's Day and Heritage Day) and excursions linked to music and drama activities. Many speakers come from similar backgrounds as the students and have experienced similar challenges, such as economic disadvantage, poor academic performance, drug and alcohol abuse and involvement in rehabilitation programmes. In some cases speakers are also survivors of abuse or early teen pregnancy. The speakers are in a position to relate to circumstances that students face and are seen as role models (discussed in 4.3.2. in Chapter 4). In many cases The Community College runs these activities with donations either from lecturers themselves or from community members and with the services of volunteers.

The Community College aims to create a safe environment for learning through its policy and Code of Conduct which regulates acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (discussed in 4.3.1. in Chapter 4). Students learn that they should not only have respect for themselves but also respect for others and treat everyone with dignity. They also learn that there are consequences for misconduct.

An important lesson from this experience at The Community College is that disciplinary action is rehabilitative and not simply punitive - in recognition of the dispositional and situational barriers students face. Although not stipulated in the Code of Conduct, when students are tested positive for the use of drugs, they are in many cases allowed to return to class on condition that they provide proof that they are attending counselling sessions with a social worker or that they are attending drug rehabilitation sessions at an appropriate organization.

This is an example of the need for The Community College to draw on the services of social development organizations or NGOs in the community. Services are needed which fall outside the field of expertise of lecturers and the college has to draw on the services of professionals who are trained to deal with challenges arising from circumstances such as exposure to domestic abuse, drug addiction, etc.

My research suggests that the combination of the formal curriculum and extra-curricular activities in the ABET Level 4 programme was of benefit to students and that students learn important life lessons and values through these experiences and activities. They commented that the programme helped them to develop knowledge and skills which could be useful in the world of work as well as in their personal lives – such as giving directions, planning, budgeting, and managing their personal finances and other skills.

There were also less tangible gains which were important in their own development such as improved self-knowledge and self-confidence, the ability to express their views more clearly and interact differently with their friends some of who were seen as at-risk youth. They have overcome many of their anxieties and insecurities about what they can and cannot do and have some hope that they can turn their lives around and make a difference in their communities.

The inclusion of extra-curricular activities at The Community College is in line with policy expectations. The national policy envisages that as community colleges develop, they will offer learner support such as extra-curricular activities to young people or adults to promote personal and social development needs particularly for those coming from disadvantaged communities (White Paper for PSET, DHET, 2013). Lecturers at The Community College try to respond to the needs of students over and above their lecturing roles even though it amounts to additional pressure on them. Some students saw lecturers at The Community College as role models who were supportive and responsive to the needs of young students in particular and said they were inspired to become lecturers themselves or to play a similar role in the lives of others around them.

If these activities are to be sustained and extended greater support and resourcing is needed; they cannot be fully effective if they depend on donations from lecturers or members of the community or on the services of volunteers and over-extended lecturers.

These experiences at The Community College provide important insights about the need for more holistic approaches so that the curriculum can respond to the dual objectives of preparing young people for the world of work as well as developing their capabilities to function effectively in their lives and in society. These insights should be explored further at the level of the college and, importantly, at the level of national policy.

These insights also underscore arguments about the need to recognise structural barriers students encounter in the world of work, in the communities in which they live and in society more broadly as highlighted in the next section.

## **6.5. CONCLUSION**

It has to be recognized that there are structural constraints and barriers that students are facing. These constraints cannot be overcome by students or by the college itself through efforts to broaden and enrich the curriculum.

Many students were not able to find jobs. Possibilities for students to pursue career options as tour guides are limited due to the large numbers of people who are seeking work as tour guides. They are pursuing their educational goals in a context where the world of work has changed dramatically in ways that affect both young and older adults (as discussed in Chapter 2). In the contexts where the students of The Community College find themselves matric has become a requirement even for entry level jobs in factories, call centres and retail stores. To work as tour guides or in middle level jobs qualifications such as a degree or diploma are needed. Even with qualifications it is not easy to find employment as suggested by the high levels of unemployment among young people in SA said to be 30.3% in the White Paper for PSET (DHET, 2013, pg. 7).

As indicated earlier, the emphasis on offering modules such as SMME in combination with vocational modules such as childcare is based on the assumption that graduates of The Community College will start their own businesses. This assumption needs to be interrogated. In this study no one opened their own crèche and none of the graduates interviewed had opened their own businesses. The reasons are unclear and this may be an area for further research.

This reinforces the argument that education is necessary and desirable, but not enough to overcome the structural barriers encountered by students in the labour market (*Motala and Pampallis, 2007*). It also reinforces the argument that developing employability cannot be seen as the responsibility of individuals or the education providers and that broader factors in the labour market and the economy should be considered (*McQuaid and Lindsay, 2004*).

Transformation of conditions or overcoming barriers that young people are facing is urgent. The idea that these conditions can be overcome through education and training is a flawed assumption:

*...the expectation that educational interventions through policy reform can (on their own) resolve the legacy of apartheid is both misleading and short-sighted. For instance, formal and increased access to PSET does not always translate into effective equity outcomes. This means that the commitment to social justice in education requires both broader reforms in social and economic policy including the redistribution of resources as well as a careful consideration of the historical conditions that produce inequalities. Therefore, while important proposals are made in the White Paper, the extent to which these will transform education and society will depend on a number of factors, including the broader historical and political context in which the White Paper is located, the conditions which continue to reproduce inequality and the external determinants that limit the ability of the nation-state to redress it (*Motala and Pampallis, 2007, in Kgobe and Baatjes, 2014, pg. 4*).*

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1



#### OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

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03 October 2017

Mrs M Daniels  
Faculty of Education

**Ethics Reference Number:** HS17/5/25

**Project Title:** The curriculum as preparation for the world of work: A critical analysis of the learner curriculum for young adults at a Community Education and Training College.

**Approval Period:** 26 September 2017 – 26 September 2018

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



*Ms Patricia Josias*  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape

**PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049**

## *Appendix 2*

### **INFORMATION NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS**

#### **REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

The **Project Title:** The curriculum as preparation for the world of work: A critical analysis of the learner curriculum for young adults at a Community Education and Training College.

You are kindly requested to participate in an interview for a research study, which I am undertaking to fulfill the requirements for completion of a Master's degree in Adult Learning and Global Change.

The primary objective of the study is to analyze critically how the curriculum at the Community College prepares young adults for the world of work in the fields of Travel and Tourism and Small Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMME). The study also intends to explore how the curriculum develops the capabilities of young people to become functioning members of society.

The purpose of interviews will be to gain insights from interviewees on their experiences and views about the curriculum and their needs and aspirations. The interview will be guided by the questions in the interview guide (attached).

#### **Risks and benefits**

In order to minimize the risk to you as participants in the interview and to me as a researcher, I will take precautions as outlined below.

- All information provided to the researcher will be treated confidentially and you have the right to remain anonymous. This means that your name will not be mentioned in the research paper or you will not be linked to any information / data provided. Through this, I will try to ensure that you will not in any way be advantaged or disadvantaged based on your decision to participate or not to participate.
- The data / information provided to me will be for my use as the researcher only. I will protect and secure gathered data during interviews by storing hard copies of interview transcripts at home in a locked filing cabinet to which no one else will have access. Similarly, I will secure electronic copies of the data by using passwords to protect data stored on my personal computer at home.
- There are no penalties if you decide to participate in this research or not. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to ask questions and raise your concerns regarding the study or to withdraw from the study at any time.
- There are no financial rewards if you decide to participate in this research. Furthermore, as a researcher, I have no economic or financial interest in this research. I hope to gain insight into the perspectives of participants and what they value within the curriculum in

order to complete this research project which forms part of the requirements to attain academic credit for the completion of my Master's degree.

- Participation in this research will allow you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences regarding skills embedded in the curriculum that prepares young adults for the world of work. You will also reflect on learning needs and capabilities that you consider necessary for young adults to become functioning members of society. By imparting these valuable insights, you will make a vital contribution and may possibly inspire new directions within the curriculum at the Community College.

In the interests of transparency and accountability my contact details are given below and contact details for my supervisor. Please feel free to call any of these numbers.

Yours sincerely,

.....  
Student: Margaret Daniels  
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*Appendix3*

**INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM**

**Full title of Project:**

The curriculum as preparation for the world of work: A critical analysis of the learner curriculum for young adults at a Community Education and Training College.

**Name, position and contact address of Researcher:**

Margaret Daniels (Student)  
Student Number: 2761036  
Tel. 073 330 2990  
Email: [2761036@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:2761036@myuwc.ac.za)

**Please Tick Box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have the opportunity to ask questions
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any-time, without giving reason
3. I agree to take part in the above study
4. I agree to the interview / consultation being audio recorded
5. I understand that my responses will be treated in a confidential manner and I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in final research paper and related publications.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Tel No.**

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

*Margaret Daniels*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE STUDENTS**

**Background information**

Name and Surname: .....

Age: .....

Male / Female: .....

Programme registered in: .....

Completed programme / still in programme: .....

Employed / Unemployed: .....

**Guiding questions for interview**

1. Tell me about yourself – your family.
2. Why did you enrol for this programme?
3. What are you hoping to gain from this programme?
4. What did you learn in the programme that was useful?
5. What in the programme was not useful?
6. What do you think should be included in the curriculum to prepare you for the workplace or other areas of your life?
7. Do you have any other questions, comments or recommendations?

*Appendix 4B*

**CENTRE MANAGER / CURRICULUM COORDINATOR**

**Background information**

Name and Surname: .....

Age: .....

Male / Female: .....

Qualifications: .....

Number of years employed at the Community College: .....

Number of years' experience as Curriculum Coordinator: .....

Roles or positions held at the Community College: .....

**Guiding questions for interview**

1. What was the profile of learners before and after the AET Centre migrated to DHET?
2. What was the curriculum for AET Level 4 learners when this was an AET Centre?
3. How did the student profile and curriculum change after it became a community college in 2015?)
4. What are the objectives of the AET Level 4 curriculum specifically for Travel and Tourism and SMME?
5. How does the curriculum respond to the needs of students as young adults, as members of families and communities and when they choose to make changes in career?
6. Do you have any other comments, questions or recommendations?

*Appendix 4 C*

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE**

**Background information**

Name and Surname: .....

Age: .....

Male / Female: .....

Qualifications: .....

Number of years employed in the sector: .....

Work experience within Travel and Tourism or SMME: .....

Roles or positions held in the sector: .....

**Guiding questions for interview**

1. What kinds of knowledge and skills do young people need for the world of work in the sector of Travel and Tourism and or SMME?
2. What kinds of knowledge and skills do young people demonstrate who entered the workplace with post-school qualifications such as ABET / AET Level 4?
3. What are the implications of these strengths and weaknesses:
  - a) For young people?
  - b) For the sector in relation to training, for example?
  - c) For the college in relation to the college curriculum, for example?
4. What factors contribute to young people remaining in the sector?
5. Do you have any other questions, comments or recommendations?