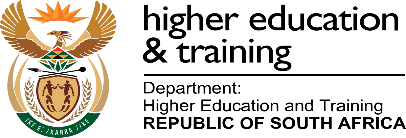
**Advanced Diploma**

**Technical and Vocational Teaching**

**Being a TVET Lecturer**

Department of Higher Education and Training





**Department of Higher Education and Training**

Advanced Diploma: Technical and Vocational Teaching

Module: Being a TVET Lecturer

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ACET | Adult and Community Education and Training |
| Adv. Dip TVT | Advanced Diploma: Technical and Vocational Teaching |
| CAPS | Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements |
| CET | Community Education and Training |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| ELRC | Education Labour Relations Council |
| FET | Further Education and Training |
| FTMIS | Further Education and Training Management Information System (data system) |
| HCT | Human Capital Theory |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HET | Higher Education and Training |
| HR | Human Resources |
| ICASS | Integrated Continuous Assessment |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technologies |
| ISAT | Integrated Summative Assessment Task |
| NATED | The Department of National Education’s Report 191 programmes |
| NCV | National Certificate (Vocational) |
| NSFAS | National Students Financial Aid Scheme |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| OECD | Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OER | Open Educational Resource |
| PLC | Professional Learning Community |
| PoA | Portfolio of Assessment |
| PoE | Portfolio of Evidence |
| PSET | Post School Education and Training Sector |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| SACE | South African Council for Educators |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications Authority |
| SETA | Sector Education and Training Authority |
| SHERQ | Safety, Health, Environment, Risk and Quality (risk management system) |
| SSS | Student Support Services |
| TPD | Teacher Professional Development |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| TVT | Technical and Vocational Teaching |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| WIL | Work Integrated Learning |

# 

# Programme introduction

The Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching (Adv. Dip TVT) programme seeks to provide a structured professional learning pathway for current and aspirant technical and vocational lecturers/teacher. The Diploma will equip them with the knowledge and competences to implement and manage teaching and learning in their TVET colleges effectively and in alignment with national goals.

This module is one of a set of modules that contribute to the Adv. Dip TVT programme. The overall purpose of the Advanced Diploma is to engage lecturers working in the TVET sector in conversations about what it means to be a quality teacher in a TVET college. Each Module in the programme explores this from a different angle, but for every module the foundational concept is about the type of teacher you want to be. We all know that the relationship between teaching and learning is interrelated. So in order to understand the type of teacher you want to be you will need to engage with what learning means in a TVET context.

We often think about vocational and technical or craft knowledge as different from theoretical knowledge. However, there is increasing recognition of the power of vocational and theoretical knowledge coming together to develop the skilled craftsperson whether it is in plumbing, baking, even mathematics and physics. This integration of theory and vocational knowledge is equally important in teaching as well. Teachers are constantly needing to make informed decisions and judgements as they make a selection of what to teach and how best to teach the specific content, concept or skill.

This leads to a question about how different forms of knowledge and skill are brought together and balanced in the curriculum and in teaching and learning.

## Approach to learning

To answer the question above in this diploma programme, a framework has been developed which is referred to as *know how*, *know it* and *know that*, or the HIT framework. This framework is introduced, referred to and deepened in different ways all the way through the programme.



**“Know How”** is *procedural knowledge*, “in our bodies” or *embodied knowledge*.

For example, following a bread recipe.

“**Know It**” is *recognition*, the knowledge of what counts as good; wisdom; technical and theoretical judgments.

For example, is this sourdough good quality bread?

**“Know That”** is *propositional knowledge* or

*theoretical knowledge*, the knowledge of how and why, *cognitive knowledge*.

For example, the science of bread baking.

**Figure 1: The HIT framework**

Think about your own craft of teaching. The kind of teacher you want to be, is one who knows how (the techniques of teaching), knows that (the science and theory behind teaching AND learning) and knows it (knowing and reflecting on what makes a quality teacher). Such a teacher enables students to actively engage with their learning and to develop their full potential.

If you are interested, click on the link provided to watch a short [video](https://youtu.be/9GD-DgNLaxw) in which Wayne Hugo discusses the “HIT model” of TVET knowledge and learning.

### 

### Relating theory to practice

In this module new concepts are often introduced by developing them from a practical situation with which you are probably familiar. This process, which moves from your experience towards a more abstract level of theory is known as inductive learning. It makes learning easier and is very different from deductive learning, which starts by presenting abstract theories and principles, then requires you to “deduce” practical conclusions and concrete examples. You are encouraged to relate the ideas you learn from the Adv. Dip programme to your own context and to try to think theoretically about your practice. In other words, to think about the rationale for your practice.

### 

### Reflective practice and the use of a learning journal

One of the Adv. Dip TVT modules is called Reflective Practice, and covers the concept of reflection in the life of a TVET lecturer. Of particular importance is unit 2, which describes various models which facilitate reflection. The simplest reflective model that is discussed in this unit, is that of Terry Borton (1970). It consists of three steps as follows:

**Figure 2: Reflective model (after Borton, 1970)**

The three questions to prompt reflection leading to action:

1. What?

**What** happened? In this step you remember or describe the situation or event you have experienced.

1. So what?

**So,** if that happened**, what** does this show you or teach me? In this step you explore what new insights or knowledge the situation gives you.

1. Now what?

**Now** that I have learnt something new by reflecting on the situation, **what** should I do about it? In this step you think about what to do with the new awareness you have gained – i.e. how to make use of it to act more effectively in future situations.

Throughout the Adv. Dip TVT programme, you are encouraged to use a model to reflect on your practices at work in the college so that you can improve how teaching and learning takes place. We have embedded reflective practice throughout the programme. The reflective activity will enable you to make the most of what you have learnt throughout the unit, as well as assisting you to apply your learning in your workplace. Throughout the Advanced Diploma modules, we encourage you to use a learning journal. Keep a file (paper-based or electronic). You will use it to write notes, reflections and complete activities. Start your learning journal at the beginning of the programme, and keep it regularly updated.

### 

### Active learning

Most learning theorists tell us that new understandings and learning depend on, and arise out of action. All the modules in the Adv. Dip TVT programme include activities. Your learning will be more fruitful if you engage systematically with the activities. If you do not do the activities, you will miss out on the most important part of the programme learning pathway.

### 

### Thinking activities

At various points in the module you are asked to *stop and think* and to take some time to reflect on a particular issue. These *thought pauses* are designed to help you consolidate your understanding of a specific point *before* tackling the next section of the module. One of the habits many of us develop through a rote kind of learning is to rush through things. Work though each module slowly and thoughtfully. Read and think. This is how we develop a depth of understanding and become able to use the ideas we learn. Try to link the issues raised in each thought pause with what you have read, with what you have already learnt about learning, with your own previous experience, and so on. Think about the questions or problems raised in the module. Jot down your ideas in your learning journal so that you can be reminded of them at a later stage.

### 

### Linkages across modules

As you work through this and other modules, you will notice that topics or issues raised in one module may cross refer to the same issue or topic in another module, possibly in more detail. So for example, while there is an entire module dedicated to the investigation of *curriculum,* key issues related to curriculum will also be highlighted and discussed in the modules dealing with pedagogy, psychology in TVET as well as in the assessment module.

### Access to readings

There are links to readings throughout the activities. We have tried as far as possible to provide links to Open Educational Resources (OER). In cases where this was not possible you will be directed in the activity to access these through your university library. The website link is shown in the reference list.

### Assessment

The activities contained in this module and the Adv. Dip TVT programme as a whole, promote a continuous and formative assessment process. This approach is intended to support your ability to relate ideas to practice and to contribute to your development as you work through the various modules of the programme.

You will also notice that each module includes a summative assessment task with the assessment criteria set out in an accompanying rubric. This summative assessment task is a model only, intended to illustrate the kind of assessment tasks that may be set by the university providing this programme.

# Module overview

This module is planned as an introductory module for the Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching (Adv. Dip TVT). However, even if you come to it a bit later in the Adv. Dip TVT programme, it will provide you with an overview of what is expected of a professional educator in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) – and more.

This course module, and the rest of the modules in the Adv. Dip TVT programme, aim to enable craftspeople qualified in particular vocations, or others without professional qualifications as educators, to develop the skills and knowledge required to successfully fill the roles necessary for vocational *educators*. It likewise aims to enable lecturers employed, or about to be employed in the TVET sector, who may be professionally qualified as *school* educators but who have not qualified to teach in the technical and vocational college sector.

The module is intended to help you to reflect critically on the specific and particular role and contribution of a TVET lecturer, to confront the challenges inherent in TVET teaching generally, and in South Africa specifically, and to reflect on the qualities required in order to meet these challenges. In addition, this module explores the questions of professionalism, life-long learning and managing a career within the TVET context, and concludes by providing guidance for students who are entering the profession, or for more experienced lecturers who are considering taking on a mentoring role in their college.

## Purpose

This module has been designed to assist you to answer with confidence a number of crucial questions about the profession of TVET lecturer that you have chosen, are contemplating, or in which you may have been serving for some years.

## Key questions that this module raises and engages

1. What exactly is meant by technical and vocational education and training? Why is the relationship between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge so important in TVET?
2. What is the difference between vocational competence and vocational excellence? What constitutes craftsmanship, and is it appropriate to try to impart this principle in TVET?
3. What constitutes the *professional role* of TVET lecturers? What are society’s expectations of a TVET lecturer? What contribution can TVET lecturers make in society? Is the occupation of being a TVET lecturer a vocation? What particular rewards and opportunities does it offer?
4. What are th*e generic* demands and challenges made of TVET lecturers? What are the *particular* demands/challenges made of TVET lecturers *in South Africa*? What are the qualities and practices needed to meet these challenges?
5. How do I learn to *become* a TVET lecturer, to grow into the role if I am new to the job? Particular challenges for beginner lecturers and how to deal with them.
6. How do I develop in my own learning and career path as a TVET lecturer?

## Outcomes

By the end of this module you should be able to demonstrate:

1. A deepened understanding of the nature of technical and vocational education and training
2. A deepened understanding of the professional role of TVET lecturers, the contribution they can render, and the rewards attached to lecturing in the TVET sector as a basis for reflecting on your own practice.
3. An understanding of the challenges facing TVET lecturers in general, as well as an awareness of the particular challenges facing TVET institutions and lecturers in South Africa, and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to meet these.
4. An awareness of the particular challenges in surviving the initial years of this career, and in structuring and managing a career in TVET.

## Structure

This module comprises four units as depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Module structure**

## Credits and learning time

This module carries six credits. It is anticipated that you will take approximately 60 hours to complete the module successfully. The 60 hours will include contact time with your higher education institution (HEI) which will accredit this qualification, reading time, research time and time required to complete activities and assignments.

# Unit 1: The nature of technical and vocational education and training

## Outcomes

By the end of this module you should be able to demonstrate a deepened critical understanding of:

1. The nature of technical and vocational education and training,
2. The crucial relationship between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge, and
3. The interrelated concepts of vocational competence, vocational excellence and craftsmanship.

## Introduction

This unit explores some key aspects of technical and vocational teaching and learning in order to provide a context for the subsequent units which are focused more specifically on TVET lecturers:

* What exactly is TVET?
* Vocational teaching and learning, including the relationship between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge
* Issues of quality: Vocational competence, vocational excellence and craftsmanship.

## What is meant by technical and vocational education and training?

Often terms that we use every day and whose meaning we take for granted turn out to be more complex than we assume. If they are central to a course of study that we are about to undertake, it is wise to “unpack” them in order to avoid later confusion. The phrase “technical and vocational education and training” is an instance of such a term, and it needs to be clearly understood.

Stop and think

Though closely related, the concepts “vocational education”, “technical education” and “training” do not mean the same thing.

Give some thought to what might be the differences between these concepts, and record your reflections in your Learning Journal.

Education can be broadly defined as a preparation for adult life, or for a phase of adult life. Since a large part of most adults’ lives is spent working for a living, *vocational education i*s that portion of their education that prepares them for this part of their lives, just as general education prepares them to develop themselves as individuals. Vocational education is not only offered in TVET colleges. Vocational subjects may be offered as part of the school curriculum, for instance in technical or agricultural secondary schools, while vocational education which requires greater depth and breadth of knowledge (higher vocational education) is offered in universities and universities of technology.

Vocational education is not the same thing as *training.* Training is essentially concerned with inculcatingor instructing *routine* activities so that they can be carried out with competence and confidence. This does not mean that they should be carried out without exercising judgement or discretion. Someone who is trained may have to perform the same type of task repeatedly; however, in doing so they may have to adapt to the particularities of each task, the context in which they are operating or the requirements of their supervisor or a customer. (On the other hand, in the case of a person who is simply required to perform a routine function over and over *without* having to think about it much, adapt to different circumstances or exercise any significant judgement, it might be more appropriate to think of any job preparation they receive as conditioning, drill, or simply the issuing of instructions, orders or rules.)

Training is, in fact, a significant part of the education of all of us, and not just part of our vocational education, to the extent that competence and confidence in certain routine and regularly performed activities are preconditions of more sophisticated forms of learning. We should not regard training as particularly vocational in character. Rather we should accept that training to carry out routine tasks is a necessary part of preparation for many kinds of practical activity other than occupations or trades. For example, training in safety precautions to be observed routinely before undertaking many different sorts of activity, from engaging in a potentially hazardous hobby to performing a surgical operation. Other examples might be training to improve one’s performance in a sport such as athletics, or training in preparation for a bid to climb a challenging mountain peak.

However, it would be wrong to think that vocational education is *nothing more* than training. This is because the function of vocational education is to prepare one for occupations that are not always and only bound by routine, but at times call for evaluation of situations and judgement. The distinction between vocational education and training is, then, of great importance, and needs to be observed carefully in the construction of TVET programmes.

Some occupations or trades require the use of techniques derived from the *systematic application of scientific principles* to practice. Preparation for these trades and occupations is referred to as *technical education,* distinguishing it from other vocational education that does *not* involve scientific knowledge.

(Source: The text in this subsection is adapted from Winch, C. (2013), pp. 90-91.)

## Vocational teaching and learning

Strengthening and expanding the public TVET colleges to the point where they become institutions of choice for a major proportion of school leavers is currently regarded by the Department of Higher Education and Training as its highest priority. There are huge challenges facing South Africa in developing the necessary skills and knowledge for social and economic development. With these challenges becoming even more critical in the wake of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The TVET college sector occupies a key position among the strategies devised for addressing these challenges, in particular youth unemployment and poverty. Government, industry and trade unions all recognize that TVET – and before it, Further Education and Training and the technical college sector – has long suffered from relative neglect and under-resourcing.

On the other hand, it may also be argued (especially by many lecturers in public TVET colleges) that in recent years TVET has been the focus of *too many* different reform initiatives in the areas of governance, institutional re-structuring, curriculum initiatives and general policy reform. As a result, the staff at many public colleges have become accustomed to regularly having to adjust to sweeping changes that they have often not experienced as being to their, or even their students’, advantage.

The Government’s renewed interest in TVET is not just a local phenomenon. There is growing recognition worldwide that the preparation of students for the workplace needs radical rethinking in modern, rapidly changing economies. Not only must young students be prepared to enter the labour market by acquiring the essential skills and knowledge for a particular job. They must also be educated more broadly, building a basis for lifelong learning and enabling them to adapt to a constantly evolving labour market, and to be as well prepared as possible for *self*-employment and self-reliance in the face of widespread *un*employment.

### Activity 1: Practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge

**Suggested time: 30 minutes**

Read the following extracts, then answer the questions below:

|  |
| --- |
| “In referring to knowledge, I make a distinction between theoretical (or context-independent– see note below) knowledge and the practical knowledge that is necessary for work and everyday life (the latter is sometimes referred to as skills).  …Vocational knowledge, unlike school or academic knowledge, always points in two directions – it has dual purposes and should always lead to “dual” qualifications. One direction is towards the academic disciplines which have been involved in transforming workplaces and occupations in the processes of industrialisation and political and social change. Initially most disciplinary knowledge in the vocational curriculum was based on mathematics and the physical sciences, and oriented to engineering. However, more recently the vocational curriculum has broadened to include the social, human and biological sciences that are involved in administration, finance, marketing, health and tourism.  The second direction that vocational knowledge points to is towards the skill and knowledge demands of specific workplaces and occupations; in other words, a form of workplace knowledge is *always* a component of vocational knowledge.  This dual character of vocational knowledge is important for the vocational curriculum for two reasons. Firstly, the workplace knowledge component provides the possibility for the student or trainee both to develop workplace or broad occupational skills and knowledge. Secondly, the disciplinary component of vocational knowledge enables the student to see *beyond* the specific workplace or occupation he or she is involved in, and can provide the basis for a student to progress to higher or professional education” (Young, 2005, pp. 4-5).  Similarly, Joy Papier builds on Barnett’s (2006) notion that lecturers need to develop a pedagogy that ‘faces both ways’, in other words, that is oriented towards both disciplinary learning and workplace needs. This creates a tension in terms of educator identity:  “Vocational teachers are … required to span these two spheres (work and education) and embrace a dual identity that combines liberal education and economic enterprise, placing them in a state of tension between ‘industry expert’ and ‘expert educator’ identities, even though they are dislocated from both traditional sites – the industrial work­place and the traditional school” (Papier, 2011:106).  **Note:** Context-independent: theoretical knowledge is for the most part expressed in abstract and generalised terms which can be applied anywhere, and are thus removed from particular contexts. Particular examples may (and in fact should) be provided, but the theory itself is expressed in more general, conceptual terms. |

**Questions**

1. Why should technical and vocational knowledge have a *dual* orientation, and what exactly *is* it orientated towards?
2. How does TVET prepare students to succeed in the workplace?
3. Think about your own area of specialised teaching in TVET. Briefly list the main practical skills that you impart to your students, and also the important underlying disciplinary knowledge that you teach them. Do you think you cover enough of each kind of knowledge in your courses?

Discussion of the activity

Young suggests that vocational knowledge has an orientation both towards academic disciplines and towards workplace knowledge and skill (“knowing how”) – it thus *always involves two different types of knowledge*. This is what makes it different to what students learn in schools – *and* what makes TVET so important in modern society.

* Firstly, it must equip its students to be competent, skilled practitioners in a particular occupation, because making sure that all jobs are done well from a technical point of view is important to the overall efficiency of the economy.
* Secondly, it must equip its students with the theoretical knowledge to understand the place of their occupation in the broader economy, to understand change and innovation in the economy and in the workplace, and to be able to adapt, so that they can be active participants in a modern and constantly evolving economy.

TVET is thus increasingly recognised as having a central part to play in modern economic life.

Unfortunately, in some parts of the world, TVET programmes have tended to be seen as low-status, designed for those learners who for one reason or another cannot make it into higher education. There are a number of reasons for this perception, one of which is that such courses have often not contained enough of both the kinds of knowledge referred to above in their curriculum. As Young puts it,

the possibility that a significant cause of the low status of vocational education among employers, students and the general public, and the low take-up of vocational courses, might be that students completing such courses lack the kind of knowledge needed in a modern economy, has until recently received little attention (ibid. p. 2).

It is not good enough for students entering the workforce to have a merely theoretical background matched by little in the way of practical know-how and skill, nor will they or the economy thrive if they lack the breadth or depth of perspective to see beyond the immediate demands of the job and adapt to changing circumstances.

The main aim of TVET colleges is to impart skills and knowledge about how to do particular kinds of jobs, to members of the next generation. Some of these jobs are extremely complex, especially in the modern world in which technology had developed so dramatically. Others are perhaps less complex, yet to train a skilled artisan in either of them requires a particular kind of learning that links the lecture room to the workplace. TVET students must become adept in both on-the-job and off-the-job learning. Some jobs rely more on practical skills while others need more theory.

Let us think for a moment about how different occupations require different levels of complexity in technical skills and in theoretical knowledge.

### Activity 2: Skills and knowledge for the job

**Suggested time: 20 minutes**

Think about the way the economy works today. Reproduce the table below in your Learning Journal and use it to brainstorm the level of skills and knowledge that you think the various occupations require.

| **Job description** | **Skills needed** | **Knowledge required** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Telephone technician |  |  |
| Machine operator |  |  |
| Interior designer |  |  |
| Sales person |  |  |
| General cleaner |  |  |
| Administration clerk |  |  |

Having completed the table, answer the following two questions:

1. Which jobs would be fairly easy to learn on-the-job, and which jobs would require a good understanding of theory?

2. Which of these people would find it most difficult to learn new skills if their job description were to change or they were forced to find new work? Why?

Discussion of the activity

Answers to these questions are not easy or straightforward. This is because, no matter what job we do, we are always simultaneously *doing* something practical and *thinking* about what we are doing. In other words, every human activity always has both some element of practice and some element of theory at work within it. However, it is obvious that, for some jobs, we need to have a detailed understanding of the system that underlies the different things we do in order to be able to do them properly. So telephone technicians need to understand how cabling networks work in order to be able to do their job. They need to understand these systems theoretically and have a high degree of practical skill in order, for example, to diagnose a fault in a telephone line.

On the other hand, cleaners do not need a complex theoretical understanding of cleaning in order to do their job. This is not to say that there is no theory at all involved in cleaning; for instance, the difference between routine cleaning and deep cleaning during an epidemic. However, cleaners do not normally need to understand why different cleaning agents work; they simply need to know what to use in order to clean something.

In answering the above questions, you will have noted that some of the jobs need a higher degree of theoretical knowledge in relation to the task, while others simply need mastery of the practical skills of the job.

People in certain occupations would find it easier to learn new skills because of what they have already had to learn in order to qualify to do their job. It is probably true that the telephone technician, having learnt certain theoretical knowledge about cabling, networking, electricity and the like, would be able to learn refrigeration maintenance more easily than a person who had been a cleaner all their life. Why do you think this is so?

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF), when it was established in South Africa in 1995, set out to recognize these different kinds and levels of knowledge and skills that people acquire in different kinds of work. It sought to provide pathways towards further education and training for people who had acquired the technical skills and disciplinary knowledge for particular vocational contexts. In theory, the NQF allows people to transfer their knowledge and skills horizontally, that is, from one kind of job to another that entails similar skills and knowledge. It was also aimed at allowing people to gain access to *higher* forms of knowledge, skills and qualifications, and thus to more demanding and probably better-paying employment.

One of the most important aims of the NQF was to act as a mechanism of change that would integrate levels of knowledge, skills and qualifications across the school, TVET and higher education environment, and provide a structure that would facilitate greater mobility and articulation in the world of work. It was also hoped by some that this would raise the status of TVET qualifications.

The idea is that once a qualification is placed on a specific level, it will be clear that it is in some substantive sense equivalent to other qualifications at that level. However, simply having levels does not remove contestation about which qualification belongs at which level, nor does it automatically ensure that qualifications at the same level are really valued or believed to be equivalent in any meaningful way (Allais, 2019, p. 461).

There are still ongoing debates about the extent to which it is successful in achieving this and other intended functions, in particular around the efficacy of the recognition of prior learning (RPL), credit transfer in gaining access to institutions of higher education, and the weighting of systematic theoretical knowledge in a system which tends to emphasise the comparability of skills, competencies and learning outcomes.

Internationally there is limited evidence of the success of national qualification frameworks, although there is evidence of fairly strong support for them (Allais, 2019, p. 460). Nevertheless, the NQF structure in South Africa has brought about a measure of order, comparability regarding existing provision, improved communication and social justice into the world of qualifications which was both chaotic and discriminatory under apartheid.

## Issues of quality: Vocational competence, vocational excellence and craftsmanship.

Quality

It is appropriate in the first unit of this module to discuss the important issue of the *quality* of the education and training that students receive in TVET. This does not refer to the quality of the *qualifications* with which they may graduate, nor to the quality of the *teaching* they receive, but rather to the quality of the actual knowledge, skills and attitudes with which the students exit the TVET system – the so-called “attained” curriculum. Clearly these need to integrate both appropriate theoretical knowledge and practical skill, and to equip the students with a level of preparedness for work that makes what they have invested in their studies worthwhile.

But if as pointed out above, the students are to make a key contribution not only to supporting themselves and their families but also to building and maintaining the economy and society, it is important to comprehend the *quality* of what they have gained through their years of post-school education and training.

From the point of view of Government and employers, it is important to understand this output in a generic sense – what can be expected of the cohorts of graduates seeking employment in the different occupations? Will they be up to the job or will they need a significant amount of further training “on the job”? Will they be able to fill labour market gaps, perhaps even adding value to the economy in terms of supplying freshly-learnt and up-to-date skills, knowledge, perceptions and attitudes? From another point of view, that of individual graduating students, will they find themselves equipped to penetrate a job market that at the time of writing many young people find to be almost impermeable, or will they struggle to find employment even when there are skills shortages in at least some occupational fields? If the latter occurs, will they have gained the resilience, know-how and attitudes to initiate and sustain a mode of self-employment, possibly in the informal sector?

Competence and excellence

To all of these questions the answers will not be the same for all college-leavers, since not all students manage to attain the same level of excellence, or even competence, during their years of post-school education and training. Competence or excellence – to what extent do these concepts provide reasonably valid, reliable or sufficient indications of what individual qualified TVET students bring to the world of work?

The mainstay of vocational education and training (VET), in terms of teaching, learning and assessment, has for some decades been a variety of competence-based approaches, the form varying from one country to another. It is thus vitally important to identify the *degree* or *level* of competence that students achieve in their vocational education and training. The terms “competence” and “excellence” are sometimes used interchangeably, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that there is a need to clarify the *degree* of competence that learners achieve, going beyond a simple competent/not yet competent response to the question of what the learner has actually achieved. This module takes the (probably more common) view that “excellence is a step further and at a higher level than competence” (Suvedi and Ghimire, 2019, p. 1194). In competence-based education, summative and continuous assessment tend to measure success by determining whether the relevant *standards* have been met, but this fails to discriminate between those who have merely met the minimum standard and those who have excelled (Barrick, 2019, p. 1164).

Indeed, competence approaches present other challenges to the development of excellence. Firstly, there are many versions and understandings of competence (Mulder, 2019), which therefore offers no highly comparable or universally acceptable ways of measuring degrees of excellence. There is also the competence-related recognition of prior learning (RPL). An important idea behind the competence-based philosophy is that, as in mastery learning, once competencies are acquired, no further education or training is needed (Mulder, 2019, p. 1181). Although the in-many-ways-laudable RPL system has not achieved notable success in assisting many workers to progress more rapidly, the principle of RPL encourages a tendency to think of one’s studies in terms of the step-by-step completion of discrete competencies towards a qualification, and doing so as rapidly as possible and with a minimum of effort and expense. This unfortunately militates against the cultivation of excellence and even more, against the cultivation of craftsmanship. A third limitation of many competence approaches, especially the outcomes-based approach, is that the constant emphasis on demonstrable (which is often taken to mean “visible”) outcomes has a tendency to downplay the importance of systematic or disciplinary *knowledge* as an integral component of competence (Gamble, 2013, p. 213).

However, from a synthesis of competence theory and research, Mulder (2017, cited in Barrick, 2019, p. 1157) concludes that competence mastery is not in fact limited by standards, but that competence can be achieved at various levels, including excellence and even brilliance. Presumably, a key requirement for identifying excellence is the design and use of sufficiently sophisticated assessment tasks and rubrics. The questions remain, though, of what might be thought of as constituting vocational excellence (rather than merely competence), and how vocational *competence* development can *lead toward* excellence.

Indicators of excellence

Being competent means having acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with a particular vocational discipline. Vocational excellence means having all these attributes of competence, and more. Zimmerman (2002) argues that individuals with vocational excellence should also be *mentally strong* and be able to *self-regulate* to perform and *stand out* from most of their peers. They value social engagement, maintain networks of peers, experts in their industry and customers (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and demonstrate social responsibility, believing that their services should have benefits for their customers, clients, communities or society at large. They are *adaptive and flexible*, adapting quickly to new situations as they arise. They proceed calmly under pressure, and are apt at making adjustments to the work in progress when work conditions and circumstances change (Suvedi and Ghimire, 2019, p. 1196).

Individuals with vocational excellence accept and *manage challenges and risks* as learning opportunities; they tend to be *resilient and resourceful*, not giving up in difficult situations, and are committed to finishing tasks with thoroughness. They are dedicated to their professions, *proud of their own work* and able to succeed on their own initiative. Finally, they tend to be *lifelong learners*, learning from the people around them and from their own actions, critically evaluating these and correcting them as needed. They establish *collaborative relationships with industries*, and make an effort to keep up-to-date with developments in their professions (ibid., p. 1197-8).

Skills more broadly aimed at employment in today’s world

An altogether different dimension of vocational excellence that has achieved recognition in recent years is the broadening of the vocational education curriculum to include a range of non-technical skills aimed at enabling students to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving world of work. Increasingly, TVET institutions, government departments and non-government organisations are beginning to address issues around the development of skills and competence to meet the needs of twenty-first-century business and industry. While technical skills will clearly remain central to vocational training and development, other “softer” skills continue to grow in importance.

These skills, sometimes referred to as *twenty-first century skills*, encompass all the non-technical attributes desired in the modern worker (Barrick, 2019, p. 1163). Many of these are key to worker adaptability as jobs change and new technical skills become essential, and to career readiness in a global society. They include critical thinking and problem-solving, creative thinking and innovation, collaboration and teamwork, skill in complex communication, digital and quantitative literacy, adaptability and flexibility, cross-cultural understanding, the ability to think globally, self-direction and ethical intelligence.

### Activity 3: Vocational excellence

**Suggested time: 30 minutes**

1. Reflect on whether you agree that vocational excellence is “*a step further and at a higher level than competence*”, then write your reflections in your Learning Journal.
2. Carefully read the two paragraphs in the subsection “*Indicators of excellence*” above, and draw up a three-column table like the one below in your Learning Journal (you will use the last two columns in Activity 4). In the left-hand column, briefly list the key indicators of excellence that you find mentioned in these two paragraphs. Just quote key phrases; not lengthy quotations – the first one is done for you.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators of vocational excellence** |  |  |
| Mentally strong and able to self-regulate |  |  |
| etc. |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
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1. Are there any indicators of excellence that you do not agree with? Can you think of any other indicators of excellence that are not mentioned in this account? Add these to your table (simply add further rows).

Discussion of the activity

Although competence standards generally provide workable and realistic targets for lecturers and students alike to aim at, the fact remains that they are pitched at a level of ability that should be attainable by all students – somewhat short of standards that reflect recognizable excellence, significant or extraordinary talent or brilliance, or other forms of superlative performance. Surely such qualities should be recognised and even rewarded as a motivation, not only to the students who exhibit them, but to the other students as well? Colleges and lecturers who fail, or choose not to do so, are in effect encouraging mediocrity, which deprives students of an ongoing source of satisfaction and pride throughout their careers, and deprives the economy of one of its most important resources – a workforce committed to quality, disinclined to take short cuts.

Although the indicators of vocational excellence outlined are thought-provoking and quite broad, it is not exhaustive. For instance, you might have brought Bloom’s hierarchy of cognitive activity into the picture (Blooms hierarchy is discussed in detail in both the curriculum and the vocational pedagogy modules). Bloom argued that individuals with vocational excellence are able not only to recall, comprehend and apply knowledge, but also to analyse, synthesise, evaluate and think creatively about challenges (i.e. use *higher order thinking*). You may also have thought of vocationally excellent artisans as having *work-process management skills* – the ability to visualise output, plan work accordingly and diagnose work problems. Or as people who *value time*, and strive to accomplish tasks on time.

On a different tack altogether, you may have identified *career consciousness* as a characteristic of people who exhibit vocational excellence; they tend to know what employers are looking for in employees, and to be guided by this awareness. Yet another quality may be that they *share their expertise*, for example helping their clients to understand the problems they are working with.

## Issues of quality: Vocational competence, vocational excellence and craftsmanship(continued)

Craftsmanship

Yet another dimension of vocational excellence is encompassed by the term craftsmanship. (A discussion of the gendered nature of this term is to be found in Lucas and Spencer, 2016, pp. 29-30. This module follows the same argument and uses the term in preference to terms like “craftspersonship” or “artisanship” which carry no weight of meaning like that attached to “craftsmanship”.)

Craftsmanship shares some of the attributes that are mentioned above as indicators of vocational excellence. It is certainly narrower in scope than vocational excellence, yet it is a powerful concept that strongly links passion, personal identity and dedication to the pursuit of excellence, and has in recent years attracted an upsurge of interest.

A number of technological and cultural shifts over the last century have contributed to a general devaluing of craftsmanship in today’s “throwaway” society. However, there is still a huge, mainly elite global market for prestige goods, from hand-crafted cars to handcrafted watches and shoes, in which fine craftsmanship is clearly evident, even if it is appreciated more often for its status value than for its own sake.

“Craftsmanship goes beyond technical proficiency. It denotes a certain attitude towards work.

Novices can – and should – be trained to think and perform with ‘craftsmanlike’ dispositions” (Lucas and Spencer, 2016, p. 6). Craftsmanship as a concept has roots in the technology of the Middle Ages, and continued to be the central principle of manufacture until it began to be displaced from this position with the rise in mass production following the industrial revolution. It has survived industrialisation and remains particularly relevant where it has historical precedents in craft guilds, such as in construction and manufacturing (*ibid*., p. 8).

Craftsmanship is seen in the artistry that goes beyond technical proficiency and speedy delivery, and brings together skills, tools, patience, pride in doing a “good job”, a pre-vision of the finished product or task, and other elements of a trade in a way that that produces a durable and well-proportioned result. Ron Berger, in *An Ethic of Excellence* (2003, p. 1), writes:

In carpentry there is no higher compliment builders give to each other than this: *That guy is a craftsman*. This one word says it all. It connotes someone who has integrity and knowledge, who is dedicated to his work and who is proud of what he does and who he is. Someone who thinks carefully and does things well.

I want a class of craftsmen. I want students whose work is strong and accurate and beautiful. Students who are proud of what they do, proud of how they respect both themselves and others.

Most view a craftsman as someone who is “passionate about what they do”. This passion leads to immersion and complete absorption in the task, to noticing the finer details, and to the setting of demanding goals for oneself (Lucas and Spencer, 2016, p. 10) – a reluctance to abandon a task until it is properly finished to the satisfaction of the self-critical craftsman.

Newport on the other hand distinguishes between a “*passion mindset*: an approach to your working life in which you focus on the value your job is offering *you*” (2013, p. 232), and a “*craftsman mindset*: an approach to your working life in which you focus on the value of what you are offering to the *world*”.

What can lecturers do to cultivate this craftsman mindset, to develop a class of craftsmen and women?

Among the *habits* that Lucas and Spencer put forward for lecturers and instructors to encourage actively and nurture are (2016, pp. 13-14):

* Learning to develop *focus* or other mental states conducive to working and persevering at tasks
* Learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed
* Imagining possible next steps
* Questioning and explaining: learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one’s work or working process
* Evaluating: learning to judge one’s own work and working process, and the work of others in relation to standards of the field
* Stretching oneself: learning to reach *beyond* one’s own capacities and practice the *difficult* skills
* Exploring playfully without a preconceived plan (taking a risk)
* Embracing the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents
* Understanding the industry: learning to interact within the community of practitioners
* Technique: learning to use tools and materials; learning the conventions of the craft
* Learning to care for tools, materials and space.

As a vocational teacher, what other elements should you pay attention to if you want to instil a disposition of craftsmanship in your students?

* Strive to be a role model, encouraging your students to make their work part of themselves and their identity, in other words, to see it as a vocation or calling.
* Try to inspire learners to begin to recognise the extent of their own potential and “get a sense of what they can do” (*ibid*., p. 17). Use positive peer pressure to develop a student culture built around pride in ‘beautiful work’, and by pairing more advanced students with those just embarking on their learning (Berger, 2003).
* Talk to students in ways that develop their disposition to question, think and explain for themselves; they will come to “engage” with problems more precisely if they have learnt to be comfortable using the appropriate language with some precision. Much of the knowledge held by craftsmen is *tacit* – in other words, it is difficult to explain to another person. The teacher’s job is somehow to make the tacit explicit (*ibid*., pp. 17, 21).
* Instead of always making definitive statements about ‘what is’, make an effort to use more tentative “what if” language that sends signals to students that they are allowed to adopt a questioning mindset, take charge of their own investigations, “envision” potential solutions, and follow the lines of thinking that their questioning sparks off (*ibid*., p. 17).
* Persuade students that when they find things going wrong they should not assume that they will always do so; that they need to take charge of what is within their control and always ask themselves what they can learn from problems (*ibid*., p. 18). They need to understand that wherever craftsmanship is important, there has to be an element of risk: “at any moment … the workman is liable to ruin the job” (*ibid*., p. 27).
* “Craftsmanship gets ignored if it is not seen as a priority” (*ibid*., p. 21). “(College) leaders must signal unequivocally to everyone that they value craftsmanship. This means they need truly to accept nothing but the best from themselves, their colleagues and their students. A culture of craftsmanship needs to permeate all they do and say” (*ibid*., p. 23).
* Provide opportunities for students to discover the importance of *self-control*, the value of *persisting in the face of difficulty* and deliberate practice – practising the “hard parts”

(*ibid*., p. 19).

* Self-esteem grows from “accomplishments, not compliments”. “Students need to know from the outset that quality means rethinking, reworking, and polishing. They need to feel that they will be celebrated, not ridiculed, for going back to the drawing board” (Berger, 2003, p. 90).
* Can practical wisdom (what the ancient Greeks called *phronesis*) be taught? *Phronesis* referred to a type of wisdom or intelligence relevant to practical (but thoughtful) action, as distinct from *sophia*, which referred to a more metaphysical wisdom relating to the deeper questions of life. *Phronesis* implied both *sound practical judgement* and excellence of habits. An example of poor practical judgment would be pushing ahead with a standard procedure one has learnt in class when in fact the actual situation requires a quite different form of action.

While some argue that this sort of practical wisdom can be learnt only from experience, a number of writers have pointed out that lecturers can aid its development by often introducing narratives such as brief storied case studies and instructive anecdotes, coupled with discussion, into their teaching. For a start, this helps to expand students’repertoires of situationally relevant actions and responses (Tyson, 2019).

The following are some of the *constraints on teaching* for craftsmanship that are listed by Lucas and Spencer (3016, p. 12):

* The rigidity of college timetables; a lack of opportunities for extended work and storage of work in-progress
* The brevity of training courses and the volume of material covered
* The limited availability of teachers with current, relevant, industry standard experience (and an appreciation of craftsmanship themselves)
* The unavailability of resources and the cost of re-working tasks
* Tutors who may be less concerned with quality; students who know they will be returning to employers who are less concerned with quality
* Assessment processes that value other skills over craftsmanship
* The self-consciousness of learners not wanting it to appear that they need practice.

Some of these constraints can be addressed simply by becoming conscious of them and acting on that awareness; others are sadly more intractable, but could in some cases be made the focus of institutional change if taken up by college leadership. As Berger points out in, *An Ethic of Excellence*, the key to excellence is this: it is born from a culture. When young learners enter a family culture, a community culture, or a college culture that demands and supports excellence, they work to fit into that culture… If we want citizens who value integrity, respect, responsibility and hard work, we need to build college cultures that model those attributes and expect them without exception (2003, pp. 6,7 – loosely adapted).

Skills competitions

In recent years, more and more global and national competitions such as World Skills have been introduced, explicitly to encourage the pursuit of excellence. Some of the key attributes that contribute to success, and are nurtured, in such competitions are a high degree of motivation (including some competitiveness among participants), an awareness of high standards, group communication and teamwork skills, resilience when problems are encountered, and the ability to work under pressure (Barrick, 2019, p. 1161).

However, further research is needed on the efficacy of competitions in promoting excellence in a sustained way for entire cohorts of students. It appears that achieving this overall goal requires an institutional culture and all-round curriculum (including the implicit curriculum) that consistently promotes and expects excellence from all students in vocational learning (Berger, 2003).

### Activity 4: Craftsmanship

**Suggested time: 30 minutes**

1. Study and reflect on the sub-section on *Craftsmanship*, above.
2. Identify as many of the key attributes of craftsmanship as you can, and write them (in a brief phrase or two) in the third column of the table you drew up in Activity 3 (and which is exemplified below).
3. Consider which of the indicators and attributes refer to pretty much the same thing, and tick those which do (you will need to re-arrange the rows or draw lines to connect points that are similar). Two examples have been supplied to give you the idea.

| **Indicators of vocational excellence** | **Tick if common to both** | **Attributes of craftsmanship** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mentally strong and able to self-regulate | **🗸** | Self-control, persisting in the face of difficulty |
|  |  | More about attitudes and artistry |
|  |  | etc. |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**What you will do:**

Once you have completed the table, stop and think about the following two questions and make some brief notes in your Learning Journal to keep a record of your thoughts.

* Do you think that craftsmanship is a worthwhile principle to aim at in your teaching and your discipline? (Even if your discipline is not one traditionally associated with craftsmanship, such as mathematics, accounting or beauty therapy, Lucas and Spencer point out that many of the key qualities of craftsmanship are still applicable.)
* What is your view of the value of skills competitions (local, national or international)?

Discussion of the activity

Since this activity is not about right or wrong answers, the “discussion” this time simply takes the form of a few additional questions for you to reflect on:

* How many of the attributes of craftsmanship that you found matched, or were similar to, indicators of vocational excellence, and how many were of a different nature?
* How would you characterise (describe in words) the essential difference between a focus on craftsmanship and a focus on vocational excellence?
* Do you think that skills competitions deliver on their promises? Do you think they promote excellence in a sustained way for entire cohorts of students, or for the few? If the latter is the case, do you think is it a problem?

In Unit 2 you will turn your attention to the professional role of TVET lecturers.

# Unit 2: The professional role of TVET lecturers

## Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to demonstrate a good grasp of:

1. the role of TVET lecturers in society
2. the Government’s shift in focus from educators’ roles to professional competence
3. TVET lecturing as a profession, and the meaning of professionalism, and
4. professional accountability.

## Introduction

This unit explores the shift in South Africa from a concern with educators’ roles to professional competence. It then examines the professional role of TVET lecturers, the meaning of professionalism, and the significance of professional accountability, including the role of the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

## The role of TVET lecturer

The concept “role” is widely used without giving much attention to its precise meaning. It is commonly used in the broad sense of the *function* generally associated with a particular position or institution, usually relative to a system that is larger than the individual or institution, and thus encompasses the latter. Thus when we speak of the *role* of parent or president, teacher or treasurer, or the role of a quality council such as the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, we are usually referring to their respective functions within the family, organisation, society, nation or education and training system.

But as a concept which is essentially sociological, “role” also conveys the notion of *what “society”* (in a very general sense of the word) *expects* of a person or institution occupying a certain position or fulfilling a certain function in society. Thus we speak of certain actions as being “outside the role” of treasurer (i.e. not what we would expect treasurers to do or be responsible for); of certain behaviour being “contrary to the role” of parent or president, or by extension, of someone who displays exemplary qualities as a “role model”. These two closely associated meanings – of *function* and of *society’s expectations* – need to be borne in mind when we think about the role of TVET lecturers and the role of TVET colleges.

1. The primary role of TVET colleges and lecturers is to support young people in making the transition from education and training to work. In South Africa the title “lecturer” is used in TVET colleges; however, many other countries use the term “vocational teacher”, which, it may be argued, more accurately describes the role. As a vocational *teacher*, your role is to ensure student *learning*, not merely to lecture.
2. As you have seen, in carrying out this role, the TVET lecturer faces a dual challenge. That is, to ensure that young students have a sound base of theoretical knowledge that can (among other things) prepare them for higher levels of specialisation, but within an overall curriculum that prepares them with the workplace-based knowledge and practical skills for immediate access to the workplace, encouraging and providing maximum opportunities for them to put what they have learned into practice.

*Socialisation* in the workplace is largely concerned with how the students’ identities, aspirations, work habits and motivations are formed. But this process should begin in the college classroom and workshop. Students’ emerging identities as students and as artisans impact on their success in their chosen career paths, and on the role that they will play in the economy and in society.

1. As workplace conditions continue to change with remarkable rapidity, the need to remain employable, or to become entrepreneurial, requires students to be flexible, adaptable and up to date, and to develop competence in a range of what are often called “soft skills” which are in most cases quite different from the skills involved in their chosen vocational discipline. TVET colleges and lecturers therefore need to be constantly finding innovative ways to expose students to the changing realities of the world of work.
2. Also on account of the fast-evolving workplace technological requirements, an additional and important role of lecturers is to prepare young people for further, and indeed lifelong, learning and development in their chosen discipline (Gustavsson and Thunqvist, 2019; Bialobrzeska and Allais, 2005).

### Not only is supporting young people in making the transition from education and training to employability and work the primary role of TVET lecturers; an extremely large body of research indicates that educators are among the most powerful influences in learning. In John Hattie’s immense international synthesis of over 800 other meta-analyses of research (each of them drawing on a number of research studies) on factors that have an impact on student learning and determine whether the students develop or not, he found that the systemic factor that turns out to be the most influential is the educator.

On a very much smaller scale, more than one South African study has focused on factors that tend to improve the retention of students in TVET programmes. One of these is Gaffoor and van der Bijl’s case study which provides a modest but telling glimpse of the part lecturers can play in sustaining students’ interest in a vocational programme:

### Activity 5: The importance of the lecturer in students’ completion of a programme

### **Suggested time: 45 minutes**

1. Read the abridged extract from Gaffoor and Van der Bijl’s 2019 article, *The Importance of Teacher Development in the Completion of Business Programmes in South African Vocational Education.*
2. Then identify ways in which TVET lecturers can support student success. Record these in your Learning Journal.

|  |
| --- |
| **The importance of teacher development in the completion of business programmes in South African vocational education**  The research reported on here was conducted on two NC(V) business studies programmes at a TVET college in Cape Town, South Africa.  Because participation in post-school education is not compulsory, and therefore voluntary, many students enter a college programme but do not successfully complete it. The decision making of students is influenced by an array of interdependent internal and external factors. At most, education institutions can only influence factors within their direct control.  One such factor is the influence of teachers, their teaching quality and teacher-student relationships, which promote student success and programme completion. (…)  (…) Clearly, a teacher holds a primary and greater influence with regard to student support and programme completion, when compared to alternative external support structures, such as parents or friends.  The (research) questionnaire required participants to rank eight variables in order of importance that influenced their programme completion, namely bursary, teaching quality, friendly teachers, family support, friends, college support, job certainty and social interaction. Analysing all responses, the four highest-ranking elements that had influenced participants’ decision to stay and complete their (NC(V) programme were, in order of importance:   * Teaching quality, * Friendly teachers, * Social interaction, and * Friends.   Based on their rankings, participants were required to explain their reason for ranking their first variable and how it had influenced them for the duration of the programme. One participant (A25) indicated:  “Teaching quality helps one understand the work better. The work is transferred in a way I can relate and it is relevant to daily activities, as opposed to examples which are not relevant to us as youth.”  Another participant (B6) indicated:  “Teaching quality, as each lesson comes with a positive message, making it memorable and easier to understand, and assist you if you do not understand first time.”  Participant B24 indicated:  “Friendly teachers, because when someone is friendly you feel accepted and welcomed, and you will return for that friendliness. Friendly people come across as knowing their job and would assist you at any time and not get frustrated, and that made me return and enjoy my programme completion.”  Clearly, positive teacher attitudes and actions positively influence the students’ acceptance of programme, student success, retention and programme completion. Participants in this study hail from, in South African terms, “previously disadvantaged” backgrounds and poor socio-economic conditions. However, successful completion was predominately and greatly influenced by positive teacher-student relationships as opposed to the negative influence of socio-economic conditions or background.  Participant’s perception of their teachers as being good, caring and believing in student success encouraged their retention despite academic challenges. Adopting a student-centred approach and teaching style encouraged a deeper learning experience and engagement by students. Genuine care and interest expressed by teachers toward student success fostered a positive teacher-student relationship.  Participants were appreciative of teachers who mentored through modelling, provided support mechanisms, and went above and beyond their required duties as teachers. The manner in which lessons were presented and related to practical real-life examples made the programme easier to accept and complete.  Some participants had experienced certain teachers as being unpredictable with “mood swings” and emotional outbursts, which had marred their college experience, but this indicated that negative emotions were being experienced by teachers. (…)  Teacher support, performance and well-being are partially the responsibility of the educational institution (Maharaj 2008:13). Teachers can ensure a welcoming classroom environment, but TVET colleges also have a responsibility to ensure that teachers are well equipped and supported in doing their duty, to promote quality teaching and positive learning environments. (…)  The classroom is the primary environment in which social and academic interaction occurs between teacher-student and among students. Adopting a student-centred approach together with genuine care and belief in student success, the teacher-student, student programme and student-college relationship can be enhanced. This enhanced relationship further influences a positive acceptance of the college and programme (…)  It may be argued that the teachers, who manage to motivate successful students to complete their programme, are (…) the same teachers of unsuccessful students who have dropped out of college. Although teachers are the primary factor of influence, students need to be developed in a similar manner to be accepting of their programme and *receptive* to a positive teacher-student relationship.  Source: Excerpt from A. Gaffoor and A. van der Bijl 2018. pp. 677-694.  The entire article can be accessed [here](http://digitalknowledge.cput.ac.za/bitstream/11189/7083/1/Gaffoor%2C%20A.%20%26%20van%20der%20Bijl%2C%20A._Edu_2018.pdf) |

The article from which the excerpt was taken was produced some years after the introduction of the NC(V) programmes in 2006. By the time of the research study on which the article was based, these programmes had been experiencing low levels of student retention and programme completion for almost a decade.

Gaffoor and van der Bijl provide evidence of the pivotal importance of the TVET lecturer in student success. This reading will help you to appreciate the difference that you, as a lecturer, can make to the lives of TVET students, and how you can positively contribute towards their success.

### Discussion of the activity

The teaching approaches identified in the extract are not dramatically innovative or radical. Indeed, many lecturers might respond that these amount to the normal teaching style that they employ every day. There is nothing surprising in this. There are many TVET lecturers who, with or without professional qualifications, have evolved teaching approaches that are friendly, welcoming, caring and relevant – often with a dash of humour to spice the classroom recipe. And with the majority of students these are usually successful.

Other modules in this programme – *TVET Pedagogy*, *From Curriculum to Lesson Plan* and *Collaboration in TVET* among them – provide a number of varied and stimulating *teaching methods*. Here we simply focus more on lecturer/student relationships, on classroom culture, and on the sort of everyday sound teaching that helps to keep students in college till their studies are completed. These are not teaching methods or techniques; they are more to do with helping students to feel that they “belong” and that their humanity is respected in your classroom – that they are seen by you as individuals, not as numbers of transient students. The authors make the point that the same lecturers who manage to motivate students to complete their programme will also have students who drop out. The approaches described by Gaffoor and van der Bijl are not magic bullets that *guarantee* success. But they can and do make an immense difference in many lives.

The qualities that these students (many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds) are looking for include:

* A positive, friendly, welcoming atmosphere and positive relationships
* Real-life relevance – to daily activities and concerns in the students’ lives and to their future work
* A student-centred approach aimed not at keeping students happy but at encouraging deeper and more engaged learning
* Genuinely caring lecturers for whom students are people, not numbers or mere receivers of information
* A culture of mentoring students, modelling good practice and coaching them to succeed – “going the extra mile”
* Some stability rather than unpredictable extremes of temperament on the part of lecturers, which often confuses young learners and distracts them from the learning in hand.

## The shift from educators’ roles to professional competence

Until the *Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training* was published in 2013, TVET lecturers were still expected to fulfil the functions set out in the seven *Collective Roles of Teachers* document which formed part of the 2000 *Norms and Standards for Educators* policy:

* Specialist in a phase, subject discipline or practice
* Learning mediator (this chiefly refers to accommodating student diversity)
* Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
* Leader, administrator and manager
* Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
* Assessor
* A community, citizenship and pastoral role

Although the policy stated that individual educators would only be expected to carry out the roles “as appropriate to their specific position”, and would seldom have to carry them out “completely, in all their detail, or all of the time”, the roles were nevertheless expressed rather like job descriptions (they all began with the words “The educator *will*…”). Partly for this reason the “seven roles” had a limited impact on most lecturers.

When the *Policy on Professional Qualifications for TVET Lecturers* waspublishedin 2013, the Seven Roles appendix was dropped, its place taken by the document *Basic competences for professionally qualified TVET lecturers*.

### Activity 6: Roles versus Professional Competences

**Suggested time: 45 minutes**

Both the ten *Basic Competences* *for Professionally Qualified TVET Lecturers* document and the seven *Collective Roles of Teachers* document that it replaced reflect expectations, i.e. what is expected of educators, including *lecturers*. When the *Policy on Professional Qualifications for TVET Lecturers was* published in2013, the *Seven Roles* appendix was dropped, its place taken by the document *Basic Competences for Professionally Qualified TVET Lecturers*.

1. Carefully read the *Basic Competences for Professionally Qualified TVET Lecturers* (below).
2. The seven *Collective Roles of Teachers* document has also been provided for you to consult, but as it is no longer in force, just scan it quickly rather than taking too much time to read it carefully.
3. Then write your responses to the questions below in your Learning Journal.

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| ***Basic Competences for Professionally Qualified TVET Lecturers***  The following is the minimum set of competences required of newly qualified lecturers:  1. Professionally qualified lecturers *must have a sound knowledge base in terms of their own subject specialisation*. They *must know how to teach the subject*, how to select, sequence and pace content in accordance with both subject and learner needs, and how to integrate teaching of knowledge, practice and affective attributes.  2. Professionally qualified lecturers *must have a sound understanding of the TVET context in South Africa*, including the policy environment and contextual realities, and must be able to adjust their practice to take this into account.  3. Professionally qualified lecturers *must know who their learners are, including understanding their diversity* in terms of socio-economic background, age, culture, life and work experience, learning styles and aspirations, and special education needs, and they must use this knowledge to adjust teaching and learning approaches to accommodate learner diversity.  4. Professionally qualified lecturers *must possess advanced speaking, reading and writing skills* in order to be able to communicate effectively in the language of learning and teaching.  5. Professionally qualified lecturers *must be able to manage teaching and learning environments* effectively to enhance learning.  6. Professionally qualified lecturers *must be able to assess learners in varied and reliable ways, and to use the results of assessment* both to improve learners’ learning through a variety of types of feedback, and to improve their own practice.  7. Professionally qualified lecturers *must be ICT literate*. This means being personally competent users of ICTs, as well as being able to integrate ICTs in an effective manner in teaching and learning.  8. Professionally qualified lecturers *must be knowledgeable about the demands that will be made on their learners in the workplace*, and able to use the subject they are teaching to help equip their learners to meet these demands.  9. Professionally qualified lecturers *must have a positive work ethic, display appropriate values* and conduct themselves in a manner that befits, enhances and develops the vocational teaching profession.  10. Professionally qualified lecturers *must be able to reflect critically, in theoretically informed ways* and in conjunction with their professional community of colleagues, on their own practice, in order constantly to improve it and adapt it to evolving circumstances.  Source: Appendix 1 in *Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training*. DHET. 2013. |

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| ***Collective Roles of Teachers***  These roles should be understood as everyday functions of the collective of all educators at a school. They seldom have to be carried out completely, in all their detail, or all of the time by individual educators. However, individual teachers will carry out the roles appropriate to their specific position in the school. All classroom teachers will develop in the seven roles as appropriate to their practice…  The roles of teachers are:  ***Specialist in a phase, subject discipline or practice***  The educator will be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods and procedures relevant to the phase, subject, discipline or practice. The educator will know about different approaches to teaching and learning (and, where appropriate, research and management), and how these may be used in ways which are appropriate for the learners and the context. The educator will have a well-developed understanding of the knowledge appropriate to the specialisation.  ***Learning mediator***  The educator will mediate learning in a manner which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners (including those with barriers to learning), construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational and communicate effectively, showing recognition of, and respect for the differences among learners. In addition, an educator will demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context.  ***Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials***  The educator will understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning. The educator will also select the sequence and pace of the learning in a manner sensitive to the differing needs of both the subject and the learners.  ***Leader, administrator and manager***  The educator will make decisions appropriate to his/her level, manage learning in the classroom, carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently and participate in school decision-making structures. These competences will be performed in ways which are democratic, which support learners and colleagues and which demonstrate responsiveness to changing circumstances and needs.  ***Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner***  The educator will achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth, through pursuing reflective study and research in their chosen field, in broader professional and educational matters and in other related fields.  ***Assessor***  The educator will understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process and know how to integrate it into this process. The educator will have an understanding of the purposes, methods and effects of assessment and be able to provide helpful feedback to learners. The educator will design and manage both formative and summative assessments in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. The educator will keep detailed and diagnostic records of assessment results. The educator will understand how to interpret and use assessment results to feed into processes for the improvement of learning programmes.  ***Community, citizenship and pastoral role***  The educator will practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. The educator will uphold the Constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. Within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner, and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow-educators. Furthermore, the educator will develop supportive relationships with parents and other key persons and organisations, based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues. One critical dimension of this role is HIV/AIDS education.  Source: From the policy *Norms and Standards for Educators*, (DBE, 2000) |

**Questions**

1. The expectations reflected in some (though not all) of the “old” seven roles are subsumed in the new competences. What expectations have been dropped in the process, and do you feel that the competences are an improvement? If so, in what way?
2. After a careful reading of the competences, do you think the situation at your college will allow or enable you to make adequate use of all ten competences (which, after all, you are working to acquire in completing your Advanced Diploma TVT)? If not, what do you think can be done to improve the situation?

Discussion of the activity

**Question 1:** For a start, the new competences are specifically designed for TVET lecturers rather than (primarily) for school teachers. They are also probably more *realistic* than the earlier seven roles in that they simply reflect a set of *professional* competences that can be expected of lecturers *as educators* – in other wordsas a result of having completed one of the officially approved *professional* qualifications sanctioned in the policy (one of these being the Advanced Diploma TVT, of which this module forms a part).

The fact that seven roles have been replaced by ten competences does not signify that *more responsibilities* are expected of lecturers. Whereas each of the roles was expressed somewhat like a job description in its own right, the competences are after all qualities that lecturers are expected to have, or acquired abilities that they can be expected to demonstrate.

The expectations attached to four of the roles – subject specialist, learning mediator, (classroom) manager and assessor – have all been subsumed in the new competences, but there is little explicit sign of those expectations which comprise the other three roles. Perhaps when the policy is revised (as it may be with the official introduction of the Learning and Practice Standards that are being developed), mention may be made of the lecturer as a lifelong learner, and as a programme and/or materials designer – competences that are after all well aligned with what is required of today’s TVET lecturers.

The most significant aspect of the shift away from roles is that instead of setting out lecturers’ functions (which are in any case set out in a range of documents such as employment agreements), the qualifications policy details the key competences which universities need to aim at developing in lecturers in the process of *upgrading them to professional status*. As a result of this, it is arguably less important to consider the roles of TVET lecturers than it is to consider carefully the expectations, in the more indirect form of qualities and abilities, that they can be presumed to have acquired in the process of completing a professional education diploma or degree. It is worth noting that all ten competences relate closely to the lecturers’ *teaching* functions; there is no mention of community, citizenship and pastoral roles. However, for a reality check, read the following TVET student reactions that Lawrence recorded in response to questions about the college Student Support Services.

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| ***Student support in TVET***  Some time ago TVET colleges have introduced student support services (SSS) to provide psycho-social and academic support to students. However, research conducted by Lawrence (2016) indicated that some students preferred assistance provided by lecturers during day-to-day interaction. Some students, Lawrence noted, feared stigmatisation and regarded counselling with staff from student support as a negative process, perceiving it to be similar to being classified as being disabled:  *“I know that SSS has services for students who struggle, but I prefer it if my lecturer helps me. Going to SSS makes me feel like a ‘special needs learner’”.*  *“The other day I did not have money for taxi fare to get home. My lecturer helped me out. I really appreciated it and paid her back later that week.”* |

**Question 2:** Although the *Policy on Professional Qualifications for TVET Lecturers* was published in 2013, at the time of writing this module most universities had not yet begun to offer programmes leading to the qualifications set out in the policy. It will therefore likely to be some time before TVET lecturers begin to graduate in significant numbers with the new professional qualifications which have been designed specifically as preparation for teaching in a modernizing, South African TVET system. In addition, a Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) report published in 2016 indicated that, of a 73% sample of TVET lecturers who responded to an official survey in 2014, 85% were deemed to be professionally unqualified to teach at the TVET level. Consequently, it may be some time before colleges adjust to the impact of an increasing proportion of staff being suitably qualified professional educators.

A reading of the professional competences indicate that lecturers might encounter some constraints or challenges in putting their abilities to work in at least five areas:

* In adjusting teaching and learning approaches to accommodate learner diversity (competence 3), lecturers may encounter resource, financial and time limitations on the extent to which special education needs and other diversity-related needs can be catered for.
* In assessing learners in a variety of ways (competence 6), lecturers are, at least in the short to intermediate term, likely to be frustrated by the somewhat rigid centralised examination systems in place in the mainstream TVET programmes.
* While broadband internet is currently being extended to all TVET colleges, infrastructure, opportunities and student access to suitable mobile devices will for some time continue to pose barriers to the effective integration of ICTs in teaching and learning (competence 7).
* There are numerous constraints that make it difficult for lecturers to use their subjects to equip students to meet the demands of the workplace (competence 8). These range from overarching facilitating structures not being in place to an overloaded timetable leaving little time for contact with the relevant industry, and the unavailability of suitable companies to host work-integrated learning (WIL) in the vicinity of the college.
* In colleges or regional clusters of colleges where there is little in the way of a culture of collaboration around areas of common pedagogic and academic interest, lecturers may experience challenges in initiating such reflective collaboration with their professional colleagues in communities of practice (competence 10).

Some of these problems are more intractable than others; some perhaps require building one’s influence among those members of staff with more decision-making power; in other cases, the problem may be responsive to persistence and creative thinking on the part of the individual lecturer. A discussion of how these challenges may be addressed is covered in Unit 3 of this module.

## Making sense of professions and professionalism

The focus so far in this unit has been on the professional competences that are now officially expected of TVET lecturers. They form part of the Government’s broader drive towards professionalising the education workforce. Similar qualification policies have been published for the four education sectors: schools (2011, revised in 2015), TVET (2011), Community Education and Training (2013) and Early Childhood Care and Education (2015). In order to understand the significance of the Government’s professionalisation agenda, it is necessary to have a good grasp of what the concept of *professionalism* entails.

### Activity 7: Your view of professionalism

**Suggested time: 15 minutes**

You will gain more from your study of this section if you begin by “brainstorming” and writing down your own thoughts on what the term “professionalism” means – the elements or characteristics of professionalism. Make a simple list in your Learning Journal starting with the words, ‘Professional teachers/lecturers …’ You will probably find it helpful to:

1. Let your thinking range beyond the education field and include other acknowledged professions, and
2. Ask yourself why it is that some occupations are widely acknowledged to be “professions” and others are not.

Discussion of the activity

Eric Hoyle and Peter John are two writer-researchers who thought hard and wrote extensively about the concepts *profession* and *professionalism*. In their classic 1995 analysis, *Professional Knowledge and Professional Practice*, they summarise the thinking of a number of writers on the subject of teaching as a profession.

Take Note

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| You will notice that this account is restricted to “*critical* qualities”. These refer to *essential characteristics* which distinguish *professions* from other *occupations*. Qualities or behaviours such as appropriate standards of dress and language, confidentiality and punctuality are obviously important, but they are also expected of non-professionals who provide services to members of the public. |

The following account of the critical qualities with which professions are associated draws on Eric Hoyle and Peter description:

1. **A crucial social function**

A profession is an occupation that performs a crucial social function or service requiring a considerable degree of skill and competence.

2. **Specialised knowledge**

Professionals draw on a well-established, well-tested body of specialised knowledge, for instance medicine or the law. Acquiring this body of knowledge and skill requires a lengthy period of higher education. (TVET lecturers are required to master *two* quite different bodies of knowledge, one related to their discipline and the workplace, and the other to teaching and developing students’ competence.)

3. **Professional competence**

This competence is exercised *in situations that are often uncertain or not wholly routine*, but which present new problems and require more than recipe-type knowledge or simple, ‘right-or-wrong’ judgements. For example, doctors may well face situations in which the best course of action is not clear, or in which two *right* courses of action are in direct conflict with each other. In contrast, electricians generally have to make relatively straightforward technical decisions, even though they may draw on a few possible solutions that involve advanced technical knowledge.

4. **Professional responsibility**

The long period of education required by professions entails socialisation into professional *values* – developing a professional work ethic. Primarily this means putting clients’ interests first, focusing on serving those interests rather than on deriving economic profit or other benefits for oneself. In other words, society expects professionals to make decisions that involve considerable risk, and to take a high level of responsibility for these decisions in the interests of their clients, for example a doctor diagnosing and treating a patient’s illness correctly. These professional values are set down in an ethical code of conduct, to which all registered and licensed members of the profession are bound to adhere.

5. **Professional autonomy**

Professionals require considerable freedom or autonomy to make judgements or find solutions to problems, because they have to draw on knowledge-based skills and values-based decision making in non-routine situations that are often complex and risky. This involves relative freedom from restrictive bureaucratic control by government or from public interference.

This freedom extends to the professional organisations that have control over the professional responsibilities and conduct of their members. These organisations enjoy the autonomy to register their own members, and to discipline them if they infringe the code of conduct.

6. **Professional accountability**

In exchange for professional autonomy, the controlling body of the profession assures society that its members are competent, responsible, and accountable. It also ensures professional control over their credentials and their entry into the profession; and it ensures a high degree of accountability through published codes of conduct, disciplinary committees, and audits.

This autonomy is not a “reward” bestowed on a profession by a grateful public so much as it is a hard-won right acquired over a long period of time, which is always open to challenge from members of society. For example, if people were to become suspicious that doctors are too readily prescribing expensive medicines, which they also happen to sell from their own surgeries, these people might react by challenging doctors’ rights to sell medicines.

To these elements of professionalism could be added:

1. **Lifelong professional development**

In order to keep abreast of developments in your discipline and sustain your own intellectual “edge”, it is necessary to develop and maintain your expertise in an ongoing manner. This endeavour can include: enrolling in CPD courses and programmes; further formal study; attending conferences and other professional gatherings; active membership of professional organisations; and regular reflection on – perhaps even undertaking action research on – one’s own practice and its effectiveness.

### Activity 8: Your view of lecturing in TVET as a profession

**Suggested time: 25 minutes**

Draw a simple table in your Learning Journal like the one below. Refer to the seven key elements or characteristics of professionalism described above, and in the right-hand column write down to what extent you see the work of TVET lecturers, and your work in particular, as being aligned with or including each of the elements. Then provide a brief example of each element.

| **Characteristic of professionalism** | **Is/how is a TVET lecturer’s work aligned to the characteristic?** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Performs a crucial social function |  |
| 1. Able to draw on a well established, well-tested body of specialised knowledge |  |
| 1. Required to undergo a lengthy period of higher education |  |
| 1. Expected by society to   use considerable skill and expertise in non-routine, complex  situations |  |
| 1. Required to have strong   professional values,  which focus on client  interests |  |
| 1. Bears a high level of responsibility for those who trust you to use your special knowledge to their benefit |  |
| 1. Professional obligations   are set down in an ethical code of conduct |  |
| 1. Has considerable   professional autonomy, control being vested in a professional body that ensures competence  and accountability by  controlling admission  to the profession and  monitoring conduct |  |
| 1. Keeps up to date in the discipline, undertakes continuous professional development (CPD), and/or is actively involved in the organised profession |  |
| 1. Engages in critical reflection on own practice |  |

Discussion of the activity

**1. Performs a crucial social function?**

Yes, most would agree that the primary role of TVET lecturers – to support young people in making the transition from education to work – is crucial for society, the economy, and for individual students.

There is however a lingering prejudice which goes back a very long way – that vocational education and training are inferior to higher or university education. This will be discussed in in the first part of Unit 3, which takes a look at some of the challenges that always seem to associated with vocational education and training.

**2. Specialised knowledge?**

Society certainly expects TVET lecturers to be able to draw on bodies of specialised knowledge that are well established and well tested.

**3. A lengthy period of higher education?**

Although for many TVET lecturers, the “lengthy period of education” has been spent learning their discipline or trade (which may or may not have included acquiring one or more university degrees), policies like the *Policy on Professional Qualifications for TVET Lecturers* are intentionally steering the sector towards also accepting the need for a reasonably substantial period of higher education aimed at qualifying as professional educators – obviously in the interests of providing better teaching for students.

**4. Skilled in non-routine, complex situations?**

When one thinks of what is required of lecturers every day in the classroom or workshop, there can be little doubt that such skills are needed (as they are in all teaching), though people who have experienced poor teaching and poor reactions from lecturers may disagree that this can always be depended on. This is, of course, not the point. In discussing the elements of professionalism, we should look at characteristics that are *ideally* in place, and recognise that not all people who would be categorised as “professionals” (even doctors and lawyers) *always* exhibit professional characteristics.

The point to be made here is that the education which *produces* a professional disposition *should* provide the aspirant professional with the ability to *weigh up the best course of action* in human situations when, for example, there seems to be a choice of alternative actions that may contradict one another, or involve some risk; in other words, when *practical wisdom* is called for. *All teaching* presents many such situations, some more and some less significant, virtually every day, and these involve trickier decision making than the decisions of a technician as to the wrong or right way to perform a technical operation. In addition, part of the demand of such decision-making for professionals is that, because they involve human beings, the stakes are generally that much higher.

However, this is not to downplay the importance of, or the stakes associated with, decision making in technical trades and occupations that are not generally considered to be “professions”. One only needs to think of the possible consequences if an electrician makes a bad choice in wiring a building meant to accommodate a large number of people.

**5. A focus on client interests?**

For the vast majority of TVET lecturers there can be little doubt about this element being a key characteristic of their professionalism. Sacrifices in the interests of students, often made unconsciously, are a mark of the majority of educators. An interesting point here (and one that in no way lessens the element of professionalism involved) is that there may be professional differences of opinion as to what the students’ best interests might be.

**6. Bearing a high level of responsibility for those who trust you to use your special knowledge to their benefit**

Taking a high level of responsibility for the safety and good education of students is certainly expected of and exhibited by lecturers on a daily basis. However, a factor that has sometimes contributed to arguments *against* teachers and lecturers being considered true professionals is the extent to which this responsibility is *shared* among a number of their peers (i.e. lecturers in other subjects, and possibly tutors).

The fact that doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects and the like tend to share their responsibility with only *small* groups of colleagues or associates, or to carry it on their own, seems to influence people’s categorisation of them as professionals.

Thus the public are unfortunately more likely to be conscious of educators’ high level of responsibility only in a negative way, when students fail.

**7. An ethical code of conduct?**

The South African Council of Educators’ (SACE’s) Code of Conduct is legally binding for TVET lecturers as well as teachers in the school system. This is evidence that TVET lecturers are moving increasingly in the direction of a full profession. In order to practice, lecturers must be registered or temporarily registered with SACE, which has the right to conduct disciplinary hearings and if necessary bring sanctions to bear on those who infringe the terms of the Code.

As a TVET lecturer you are also subject to the conduct requirements of the occupation or trade represented by your area of expertise. If you teach on an electrical engineering programme or a primary health programme, you are expected to align your behaviour with the accepted professional practice of those industries. As a TVET lecturer you are also expected to develop *students* whose behaviour reflects the professional standards expected by the industry for which they are being prepared.

**8. Considerable professional autonomy, control being vested in a professional body?**

SACE has created a certain amount of professional autonomy for the *collective* body of teachers. Yet its powers are mainly regulatory (registering and disciplining) and developmental (overseeing continuous professional development for educators). Day-to-day control still rests to a great extent with the Department of Higher Education and Training as employers, and with the principals and senior management of individual colleges, supported by the Regional Managers. However, in practice individual lecturers enjoy a degree of practical autonomy in their own classrooms or workshops.

Unions negotiate responsibilities and conditions of service (including salaries) with the state as employer at the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC).

1. **Keeps up to date in the discipline and undertakes continuous professional development**

These behaviours are certainly to be expected of TVET lecturers. The first is especially vital, and compliance with regulations regarding the second is ensured by regulation.

1. **Engages in critical reflection on own practice**

Like keeping up to date, engagement in critical self-reflection is greatly to be desired in professionals but is largely up to the individual – a matter of good practice rather than compliance. However, today reflective practice is supported by a number of developments that were not common in the past, in particular the formation of professional communities of practice among lecturers sharing the same discipline or similar responsibilities and the increasing availability of powerful learning analytics software designed to enable educators to learn a great deal from submitted assessment tasks and examinations.

The picture that emerges, then, is one of a profession that is *growing towards* a fuller expression of the *ideals* of professionalism. Most TVET lecturers understand themselves to have a professional identity (often grounded in the expertise they have in a particular discipline); they are for the most part trusted by their students to behave professionally; and they are generally expected to maintain professional standards in the work they do. The analysis above indicates that most of the characteristics of professions are indeed present. However, some of the criteria are likely to be satisfactorily met only when a larger proportion of the lecturer workforce has been more fully steeped, via one or other professional qualification, in the principles and knowledge that lead to the formation of what may be called a disposition to professional excellence.

Stop and think

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| If being a TVET lecturer means being a professional, yet this is a profession that is *growing towards* a fuller expression of the *ideals* of professionalism, where do you position yourself in this situation? Do you *tend* to think of yourself as a professional, *never think to question* your identity as a professional, or do you not bother yourself much about this question at all?  The important question to ask yourself, really, is whether you are, in general, motivated to strive to attain competence at a professional level in a range of areas, especially those related to teaching, supporting and preparing your students for the workplace. Write your reflections in your Learning Journal. |

The two elements relating to the regulation and autonomy of the profession, and the role of SACE (7 and 8 above) undoubtedly deserve further discussion, for they both relate to the important question of accountability.

Professional accountability

The intention of developing professional competence is one thing, but how does an occupation provide a reasonable *warranty* of competence and quality service so that the public can have the assurance that students are being given the best possible attention?

In a democratic society, lecturers need to provide such a warranty, otherwise the measure of professional control which they do have over their own responsibilities and standards will not be recognised, or may be eroded. (This threat is not to be discounted. Few people would question the professional status of university lecturers and professors, yet in many countries the past two decades have seen a steady diminishing of their professional autonomy resulting from the ascendancy of university management and a steep increase in managerialist demands like planning, student and self-evaluation and reporting, heavier marking loads, and the pressure to “publish or perish” coupled with additional pressure to involve themselves in “community engagement” and finding funders for their research.) Thus society requires an accountability mechanism for ascertaining whether lecturers are in fact “delivering”, and not breaching the constitutional rights of students. The trick is to develop a mechanism that imposes as little *additional* burden as possible on lecturers.

Linda Darling Hammond’s article, *Accountability for Professional Practice* (1989) (see link below in Activity 9 – for an extract from this article) points out the importance attached to educational accountability in a modern society. She sets out to dispel some of the confusion surrounding this issue by categorising a number of different *forms* of accountability. Three of these are as relevant to TVET lecturers in South Africa as they are to teachers in the United States:

1. *Legal accountability,* which implies that some fairly serious harm may *already* have been done, and a teacher or lecturer, institution or government department is held to account in a court of law (this process is not only expensive; it is reactive rather than proactive);
2. *Bureaucratic accountability*, which was the predominant means of educational management and accountability under the apartheid government, and which is still with us though in a more benign form; and
3. *Professional accountability*, which offers proactive rather than reactive reassurance to society.

The extract focuses only on two of these forms: bureaucratic accountability (summarised below) and professional accountability.

Darling Hammond mentions the good intentions behind *bureaucratic accountability*. It has the advantage (at least in theory) of ensuring that:

• Clients such as students are treated equally and consistently, so that decisions affecting them are not made subjectively by individual officials or lecturers;

• Rules and standard procedures are in place to control the actions of officials, and there are unpleasant consequences for those who do not follow them; and

*•* Standardised procedures and service rules are laid down with the intention of minimizing corruption and the squandering of the public’s time, money and wellbeing.

According to Darling Hammond, the *dis*advantages of bureaucratic accountability for lecturers (and implicitly for students) heavily outweigh the above-mentioned advantages.

• Lecturers become bureaucratic functionaries of the system following the prescriptions and regulations handed down by authorities, with little scope for their professional development (“Just follow the syllabus!”);

• Lecturer accountability takes the form of third-party moderation and evaluation (essentially a form of inspection) based on rule-following and exam results, and as a result it does not really foster *professional* responsibility and competence because it can only hold teachers accountable for following instructions.

* It also tends to make the assumption that standardised procedures are appropriate for all students in all educational circumstances. Permission must be requested from layers of management for anything bar the most routine practices, promoting a culture of compliance and “playing it safe” rather than innovative teaching and experiment.

Activity 9: Professional accountability

**Suggested time: 1 hour**

If accountability is necessary in a democratic society to control corruption, negligence, incompetence and the abuse of trust, is holding teachers to account compatible with the idea of teaching as a profession? And are there forms of accountability *other* than bureaucratic and legal accountability that can function in teaching? The answer to both of these questions lies in what Darling Hammond calls *professional accountability*.

1. Read the extract from Linda Darling Hammond’s article, *Accountability for Professional Practice* [here](https://www.oerafrica.org/sites/default/files/Being%20a%20Teacher%20readings_Section%20Two_Reading%208.pdf)
2. Focus especially on the section headed “Professional accountability” (you can scan the rest quickly).
3. Respond to the following in your Learning Journal.

**Questions**

1. In this often-quoted short statement on professional accountability, the author conveys a very important message. The three principles she sets out almost summarise the essence of the concept “profession” and, together, spell out the basis on which the “social contract” of all professions (or as she calls it, their “bargain with society”), is founded.

Try to express the essential nature of this social contract or “bargain” in your own way, either in words **or** by means of a simple diagram. (This is not intended as a mere exercise in paraphrasing; it is aimed at enabling you to “unpack” and gain deeper insight into a fairly complex concept.)

1. “The profession guarantees the competence of members in exchange for the privilege of *professional control over work structure and standards of practice*. Collective autonomy from external regulation is achieved by *accepting collective responsibility*.”

Lecturers cannot practise without registering with their professional body SACE, thereby “buying into” that body’s *collective responsibility* for seeing to it that professional standards will be observed. According to the principle that you have just unpacked above, one may infer that this should result in lecturers having a fair degree of *professional control over work structure and standards of practice*. Do you feel that this is the case?

Discussion of the activity

**Question 1:** One way to express professionals’ “social bargain” with society:

Society tends to trust the advice and decisions of professionals on the following basis:

1. their advice and decisions will be based on a solid body of acquired knowledge that is recognised as well-founded on research and joint experience (hence the relatively lengthy period of higher education in theoretical as well as practical knowledge);
2. professionals have pledged always to make their clients’ welfare their first concern; this undertaking is at least implicit, if not a component of, their registration with their professional body; and
3. their professional body takes on *collective responsibility* for defining and enforcing standards of professional conduct. (Note that this degree of regulation is accepted by professionals in exchange for the relative freedom that society affords them to practise as it sees fit, with fewer prescribed rules.)

Have a look at the diagram as well:

Lecturers register with their professional body, accepting this body’s right to regulate their professional conduct, in exchange for supporting their right to the relative freedom necessary to practise their profession (fewer rules prescribing exactly what is taught, when, and how)

The profession itself provides the warranty of professional standards, and of the ethical conduct of professionals

**Professional accountability**

Lecturers undertake to act in their clients’ interests

The professionals’ practice will be in their clients’ interest

Lecturers undertake and complete approved professional studies

The professionals’ practice is underpinned by a body of knowledge recognised as sound

**Figure 2: A different way of depicting professionals’ “social bargain” with society**

In exchange for the *regulation at the point of entry into the profession*, teachers gain relative *autonomy of* *practice*, for example, the *deregulation* of teaching. As Darling Hammond argues, professional accountability promises society competent teachers, an expanding knowledge base, and an overriding concern for the welfare of students. As legal accountability provides the possibility of redress in court *after*, for example, a party has committed some alleged misconduct, so professional accountability provides some degree of assurance *in advance*. Bureaucratic accountability, on the other hand, only holds lecturers to account for the faithfulness with which they have complied with standard procedures and implemented policies.

The author suggests that professional accountability holds much more promise than legal or bureaucratic accountability. It provides a sort of “forward-looking” accountability by emphasising the regulation of practitioners at the point of entry into the profession, guaranteeing that whoever enters it has been thoroughly prepared for the demands of the work. Emphasis therefore falls on the preparation, evaluation, selection or “screening” and certification of candidates for the profession.

**Question 2:** A case in point: Recently the use of rubrics in Integrated Continuous Assessment (ICASS) was officially prohibited, to be replaced where necessary by checklists (which are often very long and not as effective). Yet well-designed rubrics are widely acknowledged as one of the most effective mechanisms for assessing competence in a way that allows for relatively fine *degrees* of competence to be evaluated, at the same time providing detailed feedback without requiring lecturers to provide laborious comments for individual students. In addition, when rubrics are provided to students along with the assessment tasks (as they should be in most cases), the students are able to see precisely how their work will be assessed – criterion-referenced assessment at its best.

This ruling on the use of rubrics certainly does not seem to reflect lecturer’s autonomous “control over work structure”. However, it seems that the ruling was introduced on account of far too many lecturers *misusing* rubrics by awarding many of their students the highest marks available per criterion rather than marks associated appropriately with more modest achievement, thereby debasing the entire logic and basis of assessment for all students.

An important lesson seems to emerge from this: professionalism is indivisible. The system on which professional accountability in TVET, and indeed professionalism itself, is founded, requires *all* practitioners (or at least the overwhelming majority), to consciously adopt professional standards of practice. If significant numbers of members of the profession take “shortcuts” and advantage their students unfairly, *collective responsibility* is breached, and the entire system suffers.

However, TVET in South Africa seems to be moving in the “forward-looking” direction that Darling Hammond describes, through the *Policy on Professional Qualifications for TVET Lecturers* steering lecturers towards attaining formal professional qualifications as educators, and through compulsory registration with SACE.

Activity 10: SACE Code of Professional Ethics

**Suggested time: 1 hour**

1. Read through the, *Revised Code of Professional Ethics for TVET Lecturers*, 2020 South African Council for Educators (SACE). 2020 [Source](https://www.sace.org.za/pages/the-code-of-professional-ethics)
2. Then respond to the questions that follow below the Code.

**THE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS (AS AMENDED)**

DEFINITIONS

**In this Code, unless the context indicates otherwise any word or phrase defined in the South African Council for Educators Act, 2000 has that meaning and:**

* 1. ‘**Code**’ means the Code of Professional Ethics of the South African Council for Educators;
  2. ‘**Council**’ means the South African Council for Educators;
  3. **‘Educator’**means any educator registered or provisionally registered with the Council;
  4. **‘Learner’** means a pupil or a student at any early learning site, school, further education and training institution or adult learning centre;
  5. ‘**parent**’ means:
     1. any natural parent or guardian of a learner;
     2. any person legally entitled to custody of a learner; and
     3. any person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) or (b) towards the learner’s education at school.

GENERAL

**The educators who are registered or provisionally registered with the South African Council for Educators:**

* 1. acknowledge the noble calling of their profession to educate and train the learners of our country;
  2. acknowledge that the attitude, dedication, self-discipline, ideals, training and conduct of the teaching profession determine the quality of education in this country;
  3. acknowledge, uphold and promote basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa;
  4. commit themselves therefore to do all within their power, in the exercising of their professional duties, to act in accordance with the ideals of their profession, as expressed in this Code; and
  5. act in a proper and becoming way such that their behaviour does not bring the teaching profession into disrepute.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND THE LEARNER

An educator:

* 1. respects the dignity, beliefs and constitutional rights of learners and in particular children, which includes the right to privacy and confidentiality;
  2. acknowledges the uniqueness, individuality, and specific needs of each learner, guiding and encouraging each to realise his or her potentialities;
  3. strives to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa;
  4. exercises authority with compassion;
  5. avoids any form of humiliation, and refrains from any form of abuse, physical or psychological;
  6. refrains from improper physical contact with learners;
  7. promotes gender equality;
  8. refrains from courting learners from any school;
  9. refrains from any form of sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of learners;
  10. refrains from any form of sexual relationship with learners from any school;
  11. refrains from exposing and/or displaying pornography material to learners and/or keeping same in his/her possession;
  12. uses appropriate language and behaviour in his or her interaction with learners, and acts in such a way as to elicit respect from the learners;
  13. takes reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the learner;
  14. does not abuse the position he or she holds for financial, political or personal gain;
  15. is not negligent or indolent in the performance of his or her professional duties; and
  16. recognises, where appropriate, learners as partners in education.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND THE PARENT

An educator, where appropriate:

* 1. recognises the parents as partners in education, and promotes a harmonious relationship with them;
  2. refrains from offering a bribe in any form to parents; and
  3. does what is practically possible to keep parents adequately and timeously informed about the well-being and progress of the learner.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND THE COMMUNITY

An educator:

* 1. recognises that an educational institution serves the community, and therefore acknowledges that there will be differing customs, codes and beliefs in the community; and
  2. conducts him/herself in a manner that does not show disrespect to the values, customs and norms of the community.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND HIS OR HER COLLEAGUES

An educator:

* 1. refrains from undermining the status and authority of his or her colleagues;
  2. respects the various responsibilities assigned to colleagues and the authority that arises therefrom, to ensure the smooth running of the educational institution;
  3. uses proper procedures to address issues of professional incompetence or misbehaviour;
  4. promotes gender equality and refrains from sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of his or her colleagues;
  5. uses appropriate language and behaviour in his or her interactions with colleagues;
  6. avoids any form of humiliation, and refrains from any form of abuse (physical or otherwise) towards colleagues.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND THE PROFESSION

An educator:

* 1. acknowledges that the exercising of his or her professional duties occurs within a context requiring co-operation with and support of colleagues;
  2. behaves in a way that enhances the dignity and status of the teaching profession and that does not bring the profession into disrepute;
  3. keeps abreast of educational trends and developments;
  4. promotes the ongoing development of teaching as a profession;
  5. accepts that he or she has a professional obligation towards the education and induction into the profession of new members of the teaching profession.
  6. refrains from any contravention of the statutes and regulations of the Republic of South Africa, relevant to the Code;
  7. refrains from indulging and/or being in possession of intoxicating, illegal, and/or unauthorised substances including alcohol and drugs within the school premises and/or whilst on duty;
  8. refrains from carrying and/or keeping dangerous weapons in the school premises without any prior written authorisation by the employer; and
  9. refrains from engaging in illegal activities.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND HIS OR HER EMPLOYER

An educator:

* 1. recognises the employer as a partner in education;
  2. acknowledges that certain responsibilities and authorities are vested in the employer through legislation, and serves his or her employer to the best of his or her ability;
  3. refrains from discussing confidential and official matters with unauthorised persons; and
  4. must inform and declare his or her business interests to the employer prior executing them.

CONDUCT: THE EDUCATOR AND THE COUNCIL

An educator:

* 1. makes every effort to familiarise him/herself and his/her colleagues with the provisions of the Code;
  2. complies with the provisions of this Code;
  3. discloses all relevant information to the Council;
  4. informs Council and/or relevant authorities of alleged or apparent breaches of the Code within his/her knowledge;
  5. co-operates with the Council to the best of his or her ability; and
  6. accepts and complies with the procedures and requirements of the Council, including but not limited to the Registration Procedures, the Disciplinary Procedures of the Council and the payment of compulsory fees.

**Questions:**

1. Do you find the Code of Conduct enabling for lecturers, or do you think it is chiefly focused on the regulation of lecturers’ conduct? (Mention an example or two as evidence for your opinions.)
2. What sort of accountability – bureaucratic, legal or professional – does the Code provide for?
3. What kind of self-view might it give rise to in lecturers?

### Discussion of the activity

**Question 1:** In the view of the writer, the Code reflects a balance:

of *regulation* (“must … declare his or her business interests to the employer prior to executing them” and “respects the dignity, beliefs and constitutional rights of learners …includ(ing) the right to privacy and confidentiality”)

and *enablement* (“recognises, where appropriate, learners as *partners* in education” and “keeps abreast of educational trends and developments”),

of *negative* stipulations (“refrain from…”)

and *positive* (“exercises authority with compassion” and “recognises the employer as a partner in education”).

**Question 2:** Currently lecturers in South Africa are of course subject to all three forms of accountability discussed above: professional, bureaucratic and legal, and the SACE Code of Conduct underpins all three. *Legal* accountability decisions are often partly based on specific provisions in the Code; the Department of Higher Education and Training (i.e. the employer) partly depends on the Code to support its *bureaucratic* requirement of co-operation and compliance with its official procedures, protocols and mandates; and as you have seen in Activity 9, the Code is absolutely central to the social contract at the heart of *professional* accountability.

**Question 3:** The general tone of the Code is democratic, not draconian or punitive. It is fully and explicitly in line with the South African Constitution, is structured around obligations to the various stakeholders, and is not unlike many other contemporary codes of conduct. It is therefore unlikely to negatively influence the self-view of lecturers who are to any degree committed to their profession; on the contrary, except for people of an anarchic persuasion or people of questionable ethical disposition, it provides support for sustaining a professional identity.

If you come from a trade, occupation or profession that has its own formal code of conduct, it is quite likely that you found many of the behavioural expectations in the two codes to be similar. So when you reflected on your area of expertise, it is quite likely that you found that some of the behaviour expected in that profession is transferrable to your classroom or student workshop.

This will probably make your job easier, especially when it comes to influencing students’ values and attitudes in the direction of what will be expected of them in the workplace. Insofar as you are a role model for them, your practice standards as an educator will be likely to reflect your practice standards as a representative of your trade or discipline.

Beyond accountability

Finally, we need to ask whether accountability mechanisms are *enough* to ensure that teaching quality and professional development are maintained, and that a vibrant culture of teaching and learning is developed.

Our answer to the above question would have to be no. Accountability involves a sort of unspoken transaction and *obligation* between professional and client. As you have seen, it is part of an understood “bargain” in which the freedom to use professional discretion is allowed because there are clear assurances that standards have been met.

There can be no doubt about the necessity of such social arrangements in a democracy. However, because it is an obligatory transaction, its power to motivate educators to perform their multiple tasks to the best of their ability is limited, especially when no-one is looking. For instance, one may be well-qualified and able to come across well within the context of appraisal, but mark student work in a slapdash way, or be careless in how one handles a delicate situation involving learners.

According to Eric Hoyle and Peter John (1995, p. 110), “*Systems of accountability are vital to the attainment of quality education, but they are not in themselves sufficient. They must be balanced by responsibility*.”

Although “accountability” and “responsibility” are often used in such a way that they mean much the same thing, “responsibility” is the broader concept. For example, I am being responsible if I accept that accountability is necessary, but the reverse does not apply.

Keeping in mind what we have said about accountability involving an *obligatory transaction* between teachers and society, responsibility involves a more *internal* and *intrinsic* commitment to principles of good practice and to a set of values that prioritise the interests of the learner, even when no-one else is aware of it.

### In conclusion

At this point, halfway through the module, you should have built up a reasonably thorough and even critical understanding of the nature of vocational education, training and technical education, the crucial relationship between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge in TVET, and the quality-related concepts of vocational competence, vocational excellence and craftsmanship.

You should also have acquired a deeper insight into the role of TVET lecturers in society, and come to understand the significance of the Government’s shift in focus from educators’ roles to professional competence, the professionalisation of TVET lecturers and the meaning of professionalism, as well as the crucial significance of professional accountability.

Unit 3 will explore the inherent challenges facing TVET globally, the particular challenges confronting TVET lecturers in South Africa, and some of the qualities and practices that are needed to meet these challenges.

# Unit 3: The challenges facing TVET lecturers

## Outcomes

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify and critically discuss the inherent challenges that face colleges and lecturers wherever TVET is offered
2. Identify and critically discuss the particular challenges and constraints confronting TVET in South Africa, and
3. Evaluate some of the qualities and practices that are needed to meet these challenges, and apply these to your own practice.

## Introduction

In this unit you will explore in some depth the inherent challenges in TVET that face colleges and lecturers worldwide, as well as a selection of challenges and constraints confronting TVET lecturers in South Africa, which lecturers as professionals need to be prepared for. The unit concludes with a brief consideration of some of the qualities and practices that are needed to meet these challenges.

## Generic challenges facing TVET lecturers and colleges

This section does not pretend to be an exhaustive discussion of all the challenges which may be said to be inherent in, or generic to, TVET. Five key challenges have been chosen for discussion, and they are dealt with in some depth because they go to the heart of TVET and what it is to be a TVET lecturer. You may also feel that a few of the particular problems facing TVET in South Africa, as discussed later on in this Unit, in fact reflect universal challenges, and could therefore be added to the generic challenges discussed in this section.

Challenges related to the dual role of vocational educator and occupational expert

TVET lecturers are often referred to as having a “dual role”. They need two quite different sets of professional skills: they are required to have expertise as teachers (i.e. have pedagogic knowledge), and they are also expected to be experts in their occupational specialism.

In itself, this does not distinguish them from most school teachers, who need to have expertise in both pedagogy and subject disciplines. The difference, perhaps, lies in the fact that school subjects do not require teachers to have trained, qualified, been employed and built up expertise *as* geographers, historians, linguists or mathematicians. It is perhaps the sense of having *two careers* (for instance, lecturer and plumber), more than anything else, that gives rise to the “dual role” identity.

Another shortcoming of the “dual role” characterisation is that it excludes the multitude of lecturers in colleges who do *not* have histories of “industry” experience and expertise. For example, those who teach general subjects like languages, mathematics and life orientation in NCV programmes, some having qualified and perhaps worked as school teachers, and others being themselves graduates of TVET colleges whose biographies include no other significant workplace experience.

One thing that all TVET lecturers do have in common, however, is their function of assisting young people in their transition to work, and this involves the *collective* aim and *joint* function of providing education and training that include, and integrate, both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge and skills.

In itself, this collective dual function does not pose a difficult challenge for the individual lecturer if the two components of the curriculum, theory and practice, are kept in balance and integrated. However, an understanding of the history of vocational education reveals that this balance and integration are precarious.

In pre-industrial times theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge were not thought of separately in the teaching or learning of crafts and trades, which always took place in the work environment. In the ongoing mentoring relationship between “master” and apprentice, the master artisan possessed all the knowledge and performed all the operations required to produce an article, understood all the principles involved (even if sometimes tacitly), and through repeated observation, imitation and practice – *on the job* – the apprentice would gradually come to master these as well (Gamble, 2006, p. 94).

In the wake of the industrial revolution in Europe, through the nineteenth century and on into the early twentieth century, industrial-scale mechanisation, mass employment and mass education resulted in a more technical specialisation of labour which meant that workers, and of course apprentices, often did not see all aspects of the production process. The knowledge gap that resulted, and loss of *all-round* craft knowledge and skill, were compensated for by introducing instruction, offered in separate evening classes or colleges, in more general scientific principles.

In this kind of curriculum, much of the learning was (and still is) *context-independent*, abstracted from the particular tasks and tools of the actual workplace. An example would be geometry, where learning deals, not with actual objects and materials in the work context, but rather with abstract shapes, straight and curved lines, angles and principles of calculation that exist in the mind, or as representations on paper. This kind of learning, in which the learner is steered away from the context of concrete objects to the abstract domain of numbers, symbols, generalised principles and scientific laws, enabled the learner (now more of a student than an apprentice) to develop a *conceptual* understanding of the full production process, even if he or she was exposed to only a part of it in practice (*ibid*.). The contrast with the *context-dependent* learning and knowledge of *particulars* that constituted the pre-industrial apprentice’s on-the-job learning was significant. Mastery was now gained through formal learning in the classroom rather than by “learning through doing” in the workplace.

This development gave rise to the curricular separation of theory and practice which TVET systems, and many governments, are now trying to *re-integrate*, with varying degrees of success – Germany and Denmark having the reputation of achieving more success than most. Even today the efficacy of this type of curriculum has relevance in a context of highly automated technology where composite machinery tends to arrive at factories in already-assembled sealed units, giving employees no option but to interact with it on a daily basis although they have little idea of how it in fact works.

The separation of theory and practice was a logical enough response to the specialisation of labour in the nineteenth century. “Originally, technical colleges offered a “theory” component to (support) work-based apprenticeship” (Gamble, 2006, p. 96). Over time, however, apprenticeship came to be reconceived as an adjunct (or add-on) to a college-based “vocational education” either theory or practice tended to predominate, sometimes to the virtual exclusion of the subordinated element.

When institutionalised *vocational education* predominates and workplace learning comes to be seen as *ad hoc* and secondary to college instruction, *knowledge* may become the dominant element. For Billet (2013, p. 128), this results in a tendency to forget that the most common and conspicuous means by which people actually develop the capacity to secure their own economic independence and at the same time contribute to society’s needs, has in fact always been learnt, at some point, *in practice*, and in the workplace. If a strong connection to practice and the workplace is not preserved, the knowledge taught in vocational education institutions becomes increasingly outdated, out of touch with the workplace, and irrelevant to employers’ needs. Then students are able to try to apply their knowledge only once they get into a job.

On the other hand, Gamble argues (2006, p. 87) that with the arrival of competence-based vocational education in the late twentieth century, what counts (as the desired learning outcome) is *demonstrable performance*. Knowledge is viewed as merely “embedded in” or “supporting” performance, rather than as an indispensable and distinctive component of the curriculum in its own right. (“It doesn’t matter what *content knowledge* you teach them in order to reach the intended learning outcome; what matters is what they’re competent to *do* as the end-product of the learning; what counts is that the learning outcome is achieved.”) As a result, Gamble complains, the theory-plus-practice combination that has been the hallmark of vocational education for so long can be transformed into “practice” only, with practice and performance virtually eclipsing *knowledge* in the curriculum. Since it is the systematic, theoretical *knowledge* component of the curriculum that provides a basis for further study, and enables students to understand what they cannot see, develop a capacity for problem-solving in a range of different contexts, “see the bigger picture”, transfer learning to other fields and thus adapt to changing work opportunities, its loss is indeed significant.

The final account TVET needs to give equal attention to both kinds of learning opportunity:

There is no occupational area that can claim that workplace practice is sufficient preparation for building knowledge and skill, just as there is no occupational area that can claim that instruction without an opportunity to do practical work, both before and after classroom-based work, is adequate (Gamble, 2004, p. 19)

Stop and think

This has for a long time been the major tension at the heart of TVET. If you experienced any difficulty in following the quite dense narrative above, it would probably pay you to give it a second reading.

Do you think your college is more inclined towards the dominance of *knowledge acquisition*, or towards a strong emphasis on the *development of practical knowledge and skill*? On what evidence do you base your response to this question?

Challenges related to integrating college-based and workplace-based learning, and to establishing strong relations with industry

These challenges are closely related to the previous one, since both sets of challenges relate to the teaching and learning of theory and practice aspects of vocational disciplines.

The challenge of integrating college-based and workplace-based learning in vocational education is both long-standing and encountered in most countries, in varying degrees. The college or school-to-work transition of young adults has been well-researched, yet there are still knowledge gaps and unanswered questions.

### Activity 11: College-based learning and workplace-based learning

**Suggested time: 40 minutes**

1. Read the account below of how research on vocational education in Sweden, which entails alternating between college-based and workplace-based learning, found evidence of a holistic approach that integrates both types of learning, creates enabling conditions for “putting disciplinary knowledge to work” in the workplace-based learning component of vocational education, and largely manages to bridge the theory/practice dichotomy.
2. When you have completed the reading, respond to the questions below. If it is at all possible to discuss the questions and the account with fellow students, add value to the activity by taking the opportunity to do so.

|  |
| --- |
| ***Students’ vocational learning: Enabling conditions for putting knowledge to work***  The integration of school or college-based and workplace-based learning has remained a challenge in Sweden for the past few decades. In Sweden, as was the case with some programmes in South Africa, vocational education was organised in the 1990s to provide better *general* education and basic eligibility for *higher* education. As a result, the direct links between upper secondary school vocational education and work life weakened, and transitions from school to work become problematic in various vocational fields. Since then, the related problems of high youth unemployment, skilled labour shortages and the need to strengthen young people’s direct access to the labour market led to renewed interest in workplace-based learning and forms of apprenticeship, and to attempts to improve the integration of both theoretical and work-specific knowledge into vocational education. Globalisation, digitisation, and changing forms of work organisation have intensified the demand to bridge the gap between education and work.  Political efforts were made, at both the central and local level, to develop frameworks for co-operation between schools and workplaces. Vocational students are required to progressively use and recontextualise knowledge that they gain in school, “putting it to work” in the workplace context and then bringing their augmented learning back to school in a kind of spiral curriculum.  Students’ mere presence in a workplace for part of the year is not enough to allow students to apply the knowledge gained in the school context to the workplace context. Vocational learning in the workplace is not restricted to training in specific skills only; it also entails knowledge about activities, roles and social practices, and the formation in the student of a vocational identity.  Vocational teachers have a key role in the students’ learning, and are often recognised as role models; they give students access to relevant vocational experiences and serve as intermediaries between school and work life, gradually exposing them to more challenging tasks. It is important for students to receive as much preparation as possible at school before beginning their workplace-based learning, especially in the form of working through contextualised “real-life” cases in the classroom or workshop that prepare them for their vocation. An important condition in working with these authentic situations is that the students are permitted to make mistakes, learn from them and reattempt tasks, developmental activity for which there is little opportunity in the workplace.  Indeed, the students’ role in this model is far from passive. Students are encouraged to develop different strategies to integrate the knowledge they gain from the different contexts, such as *asking questions* and *identifying role models from whom they learn the new vocation*. Their challenge is to form *personal development strategies* that make use of both school-based and workplace-based knowledge to gain the knowledge, skills, and insights they need to learn, develop a vocational identity, and meet the demands of their chosen vocation. In some schools, the students are given the opportunity to learn specific work tasks that require licensed skills, such as welding, forklift driving and occupational safety certification. Such certified skills and knowledge breed confidence and can immediately be “put to work” in the workplace.  In some cases, planned meetings are held between the workplace supervisor, the vocational teacher and the student, in which time is set aside to discuss the student’s work experiences and personal development – the focus being not only on the students’ vocational learning but also on building strong collaborative relationships with the company involved.  In the workplace, each student has a formal supervisor, which research has shown to be crucial for students’ learning. Of course not all supervisors are equally effective. However, in cases where supervisors do not provide the expected support, other experienced co-workers often informally fill the gap, creating valuable learning opportunities by demonstrating and explaining how and why production routines and work tasks are organised in a certain way.  What the students themselves contribute to the process, demonstrating high levels of personal agency, is important for creating enabling learning conditions. To be accepted as a member of the work community and, presumably, achieve status despite being only an apprentice requires students to actively position themselves as resources for co-workers, being alert when they are asked to perform particular tasks. The students’ active engagement creates more learning opportunities, and the more they are accepted, the more they are trusted to perform more advanced tasks. A factor which probably contributes to this proactive student behaviour in the interests of their own development is the Swedish school system which generally promotes democratic participation and educates students to think of themselves as active learners.  The companies that receive students on a regular basis seem to transform the everyday workplace into a pedagogical environment. This suggests the development of *workers’* skills in articulating and explaining tacit knowledge regarding production work and being able to answer the students’ questions.  Another factor which may contribute to creating the conditions for successful workplace learning is often the students’ social background.  Several of the students (researched) had parents and relatives who worked in the industrial sector. In these cases, the students were familiar with the informal constituents of industrial culture in local workplaces, which is marked by a certain manner of talking and making jokes. This probably eased the students’ relocation of knowledge from school to the workplace and partly explains why the vocational students were keen to fit in and show their social and communication skills in ‘handling the jargon’ in work groups. (Gustavsson and Thunqvist, 2019, p. 995).  However, it should be noted that while such skills may enable access to workplace communities, other cultural elements such as gender, may function as a barrier for female students in a male-dominated industrial sector.  (Source: Adapted from a book chapter by Gustavsson and Thunqvist, 2019) |

**Questions**

1. How would you characterise the “enabling conditions” which contribute to the integration of school-based knowledge and workplace knowledge in Sweden? Try to sum them up broadly, as far as possible in your own words. Do the practices described above strike you as having come about as a result of a radical, high-profile national reform, or do they seem more low-key?
2. Although in Sweden it is not customary to make ostentatious displays of wealth, the country has one of the highest standards of living in the world. After reading the passage above, reflect on whether an approach that has been found to have some success in such a developed society could be made to work in South Africa? (Explain your answer.)
3. Two further points of particular interest in this account are worth noting. The first is the importance of the active roles taken by the students themselves in the interests of their own growth and development as artisans. The second is that significant numbers of employees of the hosting companies are being won over to a more accommodating and supportive role than might have been expected. From what you have read in the account, how have these two developments come about?

Discussion of the activity

It appears that in the 1990s, it was not only South Africa that experienced a downplaying of the importance of actual college-level vocational education; in Sweden too vocational education tended to be seen as either a vocational element of general education or as offering an “escape route” to higher education, or both. This view turned out to be fairly short-lived in both countries, and was replaced by a clearer and more devoted focus on specifically vocational education and training, bringing in its wake an interest in workplace knowledge.

So challenges and wrong turnings that we take to be local problems are frequently also encountered internationally. However, it is understandable that we tend to be cautious about assuming that policies and models which achieve some success in highly developed societies will take root and bring about the desired transformation in our own. For instance, the Swedish students are said to have developed in school the habit of asking questions and discussing their development with teachers – a type of behaviour that is not expected in the workplace but is beginning to elicit positive responses from those employed in industry. Many South African TVET students come from schools that do *not* encourage such relations between students and teachers. Does this mean that a dynamic such as that described in the passage is unlikely to develop in our workplaces where TVET students are hosted? The obvious answer is that most South African students have *not* experienced such democratic relations in their schooling, and that they are therefore unlikely to pursue such affirming relations in the workplace.

However, this itself speaks to the centrality of the role of TVET lecturers, and to the vital need for them to make a conscious effort to compensate for any such lack, by *encouraging* constructive dialogue and questioning, *actively supporting* students’ right to learn from mistakes, and promoting a climate of enquiry, reflection, problem-solving and personal growth in their classrooms, lecture halls and workshops.

Lecturers could also achieve much, with little expenditure of effort and resources, by introducing role plays, scenario-based and other learning activities related to real-life cases from the workplace; by encouraging students to be proactive in their own interests and to craft p*ersonal development strategie*s; by setting up planned meetings with students and workplace supervisors or mentors; and by forging strong collaborative relationships with the companies that host their students.

Although Gustavsson and Thunqvist do not mention it, reading their account one is struck by how the developments and enabling environment seem to have come about, not in response to a high-profile national campaign or policy drive, but rather as a holistic, gradual and many-sided shift of emphasis and approach. It seems to be a change of many small steps taken by stakeholders in colleges and workplaces across the country, often with no guarantee of success but dependent on a growing shared vision of the need to integrate theory and practice, disciplinary learning and work learning. Given the diversity and inequality of the South African landscape, such a shift may require a greater measure of conscious co-ordination than it would in Scandinavian society, but it may be more feasible than some of the expensive high-stakes policy-driven initiatives that we have tried in the past.

The pro-active roles taken by the students themselves in the interests of their own growth and development seems to be prompted by the tendency of Swedish schooling to promote democratic participation and an active learning mindset, and in some cases this is aided by the students’ own familiarity with industry culture if family members have similarly been employed in industry. However, there also seems to be an emerging social dynamic where helpful attitudes on the part of the students breed a corresponding measure of trust among the employees. Indeed, the students’ enthusiasm appears to be infectious, leading to a positive shift in the attitudes of company employees towards apprentices, and reminding us of one of the DHET mottos: “Making every workplace a place of learning”. Again, there are strong indications in the account of the key role played by the lecturers in inculcating this enthusiasm in the students.

Negative attitudes towards TVET

In Unit 2 it was argued that few would disagree with the view that TVET’s primary role – supporting young people in making the transition from education to work – is crucial for society, the economy, and for individual students.

There is however still a lingering prejudice in some countries, with roots that can be traced back at least to Ancient Greek society, that vocational education and training are inferior to higher or university education.

Stop and think

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| We tend to think that this perception goes back to Apartheid South Africa and the foundation of  technical colleges, but read the abridged extract, “*Why is there a problem concerning the*  *attractiveness of TVET?”* by Christopher Winch and learn how this notion was accepted as the  norm 25, 000 years ago in Ancient Greece.  Read and give some thought to Winch’s account (below) to whether the perception of TVET’s  status as inferior is beginning to change, and to what might be contributing to, or working against, such a change in South Africa.  Record your reflections in your Learning Journal. |

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| ***Why is there a problem concerning the attractiveness of TVET?***  TVET has traditionally been thought to be a relatively unattractive educational option compared with higher education (including vocational higher education, VHE). While the relative unattractiveness varies greatly across different countries and cultures, it is nevertheless remarkably pervasive, and has ancient roots (in Fifth Century BC Greece, where both Plato and Aristotle recorded without questioning it the common view that training which prepared young men for particular occupations, no matter how useful to society, was inferior to general education directed at developing virtues). (…)  Until very recently, in most civilizations, education was offered only to a small proportion of the population. Training, on the other hand, was provided in order for the large majority of the population who found themselves in employment of one kind or another to do their work. Sometimes, for a relatively favoured few, it was in the form of a formal apprenticeship with a contractual agreement, but for the vast majority of the world’s population, informal workplace learning or an extended informal apprenticeship was the most that they could expect. It was rare that such forms of vocational learning incorporated elements that belonged to the curriculum of those who received a *formal* education. The confinement of restricted TVET to the non-élite sections of the population, and the isolation of its curriculum from that of élite education, did nothing to enhance its attractiveness.  Connected with this is the fact that to engage in paid employment was widely thought in earlier times to exclude individuals from participation in élite culture. Those being paid to work were essentially seen as engaged in ignoble activities not befitting a gentleman. (…)  TVET has then been associated historically with those classes of society who have to work for a living and who do not partake of the kind of education fit for the gentry, even if the greatest experience and ability is required in order to practise an occupation. A conception of what a worthwhile life could be has thus been implicitly shaped around the ideal of cultivated leisure. Working for a living has traditionally been thought in many societies to be undignified, and not a worthwhile way of spending one’s time. This view was reinforced in classical and neoclassical economic theory (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) through the idea that work is a *dis*utility and therefore needs to be compensated for (Verdon, 1996, p. 21).  Although this kind of negative attitude is associated with an obsolete view of society, in which education was not offered to the great majority of the population, it nevertheless has a continuing effect on the attitudes of wide and influential strata of the societies of many different countries around the world. (…)  Source: Excerpt from Winch, C. (2013). The attractiveness of TVET. In *Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice*. Bonn: UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, pp. 92-93. |

When negative perceptions have such deep roots, it is beyond the capacity of individual lecturers to make a significant impact on the problem; however, what *is* important is the *collective* impact of more and more lecturers, not campaigning but committing themselves to professionalism and excellence, and collaborating in various forms of communities of practice to support one another’s efforts. Without this, government’s advocacy and the structures it puts in place, including efforts aimed at securing co-operation and winning support from *employers*, will be undermined by a lack of substance and come to naught.

On the other hand, such state-created structures are indispensable. As Winch argues (2013, p. 109),

The general thrust of research into the attractiveness of TVET suggests that there are two critical loci for decision-making on VET: *government* and *employers*. Without the full engagement of each, and their extended collaboration, it is difficult to make decisions that can be put to good effect.

Winch points out that in order tohave any positive impact on negative perceptions of TVET, national governments need to take the initiative in establishing durable, stable structures that regularly engage employers and other social partners such as trade unions and regional government (*ibid*., p. 109). Various models of such state-sponsored social partnerships are in use in a number of European countries, the best-known case being the apprenticeship-based “*dual system*” in Germany, where detailed coordination and supervision as well as high-level decision-making and strong ties with employers are vital to the successful functioning of TVET.

The state has a crucial role not just in initiating change, but also in ensuring continuity. TVET is unlikely to become attractive to employers and individuals if it consists of “complex, unstable and ever-changing structures that are difficult to understand” (as, it may be argued, has been the case in the past in South Africa). Stable governance and the provision of clear, agreed-on study and qualification pathways are all critical to ensuring the long-term attractiveness of TVET to both students and employers. “A significant reason that TVET is not attractive to individuals is that it is not particularly attractive to employers either” – for a number of reasons (*ibid*., p. 112). Winch concludes:

The state is not omnipotent; it does not have the power to change perceptions on its own. However, the kinds of structural reforms suggested (below), together with the use of well-established methods of information dissemination, can do a great deal to begin to alter entrenched perceptions about the value of TVET, *particularly if the information really does reflect substantial change* (*ibid*., p. 113).

Some of the structural reforms Winch recommends are:

* A sound careers advice system employing specialist advisers who can provide accurate, up-to-date information about available employment in the labour market and the relevant qualifications required.
* Better use of the accreditation of prior experiential learning system (APEL – similar to South Africa’s RPL).
* TVET qualifications that contain a significant mix of technical and general education and apprentice schemes with a strong educational and personal development element.
* A framework for TVET that ensures the *quality* of qualifications, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. All other efforts will be compromised if students’ and employers’ experience is negative.

Discussions of what constraints work against, or what developments might contribute to, the improvement of perceptions regarding TVET in South Africa will be presented later on in this unit.

The changing world of work, patterns of employment/unemployment and pressures on the TVET curriculum

The need to educate for employment in the rapidly and radically changing world of work, and the need to adapt such education to a context characterised by *a lack* of formal employment (in other words, for *self-employment* or *entrepreneurship*), are paired challenges of major significance confronting TVET as a sector.

Technological change, globalisation, and shifts in demography (populations, groups within populations and the dynamics of such groups) are combining to produce deep changes in economies and labour markets across the world (Wilson, 2019, p. 4). Challenges resulting from these forces include job losses and rising unemployment, poverty, problems caused by ageing populations, maintaining economic growth, as well as population instability and migration.

In addition to these forces, significant economic downturns such as occurred in 2008, and more recently in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, have brought with them instability, national recessions and widespread unemployment. Coupled with the fend-for-yourself neo-liberal agendas of most large companies and many governments, these trends lead to chronic unemployment (with no improvement in sight), more and more people caught up in casualised forms of employment with little or nothing in the way of leave, other benefits or job security, and the proliferation of a variety of precarious micro-economies based on subsistence in the informal sector.

For decades now, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been the dominant factor driving technological change, especially the impact of robotics and artificial intelligence on employment in both the manufacturing and service sectors, making many people redundant or jobs and skills obsolete. Machines such as robots now do much routine and predictable work (both manual and non-manual), without incurring for employers the costs of needing to take leave, recover from illnesses, and attend union meetings - or to go on strike.

Among those who are *not* unemployed, largely among the middles classes, ICTs have also facilitated an increasing “migration” of employed or self-employed people from centralised and corporate workplaces to working from home (remote working and telecommuting).

Some authors argue that globalisation (also enabled in large part by digital technology) means that there is no longer any certainty about where work will be done and by whom (*ibid*., p. 8). Migrations of capital and industry to countries or areas where labour is relatively cheap, and migrations of people to countries and cities where they hope to find paid work, have become the norm. For example, enormous numbers of unskilled workers from India are “imported” to work in menial positions for very low pay in oil-rich and investment-enriched cities like Dubai, while large corporations producing expensive brand-name goods readily move their manufacturing operations from developed countries to distant countries where labour is much cheaper (think of Apple iPhones now being produced in China). There is thus a general trend towards inward migration in developed economies and outward migration from developing economies.

Local demographics also drive change in economies and labour markets. In most developed economies, partly as a result of technological advances in medicine and health care, the average age of the population continues to increase as people live longer and birth rates fall. These trends have a significant impact on the demand for goods and services (such as a rising demand for health care from an ageing population).

**Trying to predict labour market trends and engaging with industry**

These shifts in employment have made trends in the labour market difficult to predict. There is an expectation that TVET colleges should try to align the programmes they offer with the skills demands of the labour market, yet policy makers and the TVET sector find it challenging to do so when conditions are constantly in flux (Gamble, 2004, p. 186). It would be helpful if TVET colleges were able to engage more effectively and regularly with employers to establish what skills are in demand. However, they also need to be aware that employers’ skills demands can change frequently as they seek to enhance their own productivity and bottom-line profit, and respond to opportunities and unpredictable shifts in consumer preferences. Employers are also not always 100% reliable, consistent or in consensus in judging what it is that they actually require in the way of skills and knowledge.

“Engaging with the industry” can also be time-consuming for individual lecturers and even colleges, especially if it is done in a piecemeal, *ad hoc* way. In this respect the German system is often cited as a model, in that its apprenticeship system, which is rooted in craft traditions dating back hundreds of years, is generally viewed as owing its success to *high levels of cooperation between employers and government* (and between employer organisations and trade unions). Rather than being state-funded, the system is funded by employers, who largely feel responsible for the system. However, some scholars have warned against other countries assuming they could transpose the German model to their own contexts without appreciating how deeply embedded the institution is in many other elements of the German socio-economic structure (Crouch, Finegold and Sako, 1999, cited in Gamble, 2004, p 185).

**Key trends that *are* discernible in the demand for skills**

In developed economies such as the USA, the UK, Europe and Japan, the long-term shift in employment from the primary sectors (agriculture and traditional manufacturing industries) toward services and the knowledge-intensive economy is a well-established key feature. The main source of new jobs in recent years has been the services sector, although there are exceptions such as those Eastern European (such as Rumania) and some Asian countries (such as the Phillipines) which have benefitted from inward investment in manufacturing as a result of lower labour costs (Wilson, 2019, p. 8).

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| ***Motor car maintenance and repair***  When motor cars first made their appearance, they were individually constructed works of mechanical art. Then Henry Ford pioneered the techniques of mass production and the assembly line to produce the Model T Ford in 2013, and by the 1950s, cars were all relatively simple and similar to each other in their components. A motor mechanic required a basic knowledge of internal combustion engines, transmission systems, suspension, steering and braking systems and the like, and then could get on with the job.  Nowadays, however, cars have many more sophisticated “features”, control mechanisms, safety features and warning systems, most of them computerised. Although this latter characteristic makes the job of fault diagnosis easier, less time-consuming and usually more accurate, it increases the mechanic’s dependence on the onboard computer, increases the distance between mechanic and mechanism, and at the same time reduces his competence to work on modern cars in general. Mechanics now have to be specialised in particular makes or models of vehicle, bringing not only mechanical knowledge, but also computer skills and electronic knowledge into the mix. In addition, training in communication skills and customer service and satisfaction has become important. For the modern motor mechanic, flexibility is the key to retaining clients. Increasingly, therefore, garages and motor dealers are requiring their staff to have a good educational background and flexible technological skills. |

Over the past few decades, there has also been an increased demand for higher-level occupations and qualifications. In Europe, almost 40% of employment is now in higher-level jobs such as management, professional work, or technical jobs that typically require a university degree as an entry requirement (*ibid*.). At the same time, there has been significant growth in some lower-level jobs, especially in services; for example, elementary and precarious, casualised occupations in areas such as hotels, restaurants and fast-food businesses (sometimes called “Mac-jobs”, with reference to the well-known fast-food chain).

High-level qualifications are still likely to be an advantage in obtaining and retaining employment and salary levels, and facilitating flexibility and adaptability in adjusting to career and job changes, but they no longer guarantee work security, since artificial intelligence, nanotechnology (ultra-miniaturised components) and the ability to utilise “big data” bring a surprising array of higher level skills (including computer programming itself) within range of computerised automation.

Nevertheless, the argument is that people *without* the necessary levels of knowledge and skills will either struggle to find jobs or will be stuck in low-paying and low-status jobs. Therefore, equipping oneself with more high-level knowledge and skills is seen as increasing one’s chances of not becoming redundant, and of being able to compete for changing job opportunities. However, writing of college graduate “underemployment” in the United States – in low-paid jobs such as waitering, Derek Thompson writes,

More people are pursuing higher education, but the real wages of recent college graduates have fallen by 7.7 percent since 2000. (…) The job market appears to be requiring more and more preparation for a lower and lower starting wage.

(Thompson, 2015).

Against this backdrop, the remainder of this section will explore a selection of concerns or trends that are putting pressure on TVET curricula globally.

**A shift of focus from employment to employability**

Jeanne Gamble argues that since the mid-1970s the hope of governments that stimulating demand in the market would help to achieve full employment has dwindled, and is now “a thing of the past”. Globally, when talking of the aims of TVET colleges in helping to meet students’ aspirations, politicians, planners, policy makers and others have begun to make increasing use of the term “*employability”*, preferring to skirt around the notion that qualifications would result in employment. It is always wise, when such terms rapidly gain currency in a particular field, to treat them with a little suspicion, no matter how harmless or sensible they sound.

### Activity 12: From employment to employability

**Suggested time: 25 minutes**

1. Carefully read the brief excerpt from Jeanne Gamble, *A future curriculum mandate for Further Education and Training colleges: Recognising intermediate knowledge and skill*.

**Note:** This article was written in 2004, when technical colleges were referred to as FET as FET Institutions (FETIs) and were not yet name, TVET colleges.

1. Then answer the following questions in your Learning Journal.

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| ***From employment to employability***  Since the mid-1970s, political rhetoric throughout the world has subtly shifted from promises of full *employment* to full *employability* (Ashton and Green, 1996). Individual “employability” is now seen as the source of economic opportunity, choice and occupational status (Ashton and Green 1996, p.7).  Brown and Lauder, in their critical examination of alternative interpretations of the relationship between education and economic development, argue that centre-left “Modernisers” (those in pursuit of social justice *and* economic growth) see investing in education and training as the only way to enable workers to become fully employable at a time when it is clearly “a mistake for nation-states to ‘guarantee’ full employment” (Brown and Lauder, 1996, p.11). The shift from employment to employability (…) shifts the goal posts, so to speak. Rather than focusing on an economy’s responsibility to create sufficient jobs for all, education and training are given the task of making *everyone* “employable”, *regardless of whether there are jobs or adequate opportunities for self-employment.* Responsibility for getting or not getting employment in some form rests with the individual, not with the state.  (In South Africa), the policy framework for the new FET college sector (as it was then) recognised this sector as “the key sector to reach out to constituencies that have, historically, been excluded from education and training opportunities” (Department of Education, 2001, p. 6).  Crouch, Finegold and Sako argue that the most likely response to an intensified demand for education and training will be “an even more desperate search for qualifications, perceived as a means of gaining an advantage in the struggle [for jobs]” (1999, p. 230), leading to what Brown and Keep (1999, p. 33) have called *over-education* and/or *over-training*. With many more people “employable” in labour markets that are not nearly creating sufficient jobs, it is *a buyer’s market*. With reference to a number of advanced industrial countries, Crouch *et al.* (1999, pp. 114, 126, 230) show that when employers find that vocational routes do not provide broad problem-solving skills and capacity for communication, they recruit people with *higher education* qualifications instead. The result is that people with vocational qualifications do not get access to the kind of occupations for which they believed they were being prepared, while graduates from higher education institutions find themselves in occupations *below* what they anticipated when they entered higher education.  The response from FET institutions to demands for preparation for “employability” can only be to broaden their curricula as much as possible but – the question must be asked: at what cost? Introduction of additional courses or modules and courses such as communication, information technology (IT), entrepreneurship, life skills and citizenship exert pressure on courses of study underpinned by science and mathematics as knowledge disciplines, where tuition requirements are high and timetabling is already a juggling act of the first order. Many South African colleges are well aware of their obligations to prepare their students in a broad and holistic way, but they typically can do no more than try to ensure that students have at least one “free” period a day, during which they can make use of the language and computer laboratories, set up to help those for whom English is not a first, or sometimes even a second language, to improve their basic proficiency and to introduce IT to those without previous access. Students know that they need to make use of these opportunities, but they are often already overwhelmed by the demands of the technical curriculum and they cannot take on more.  Employability may be the new educational aim in FET, but an extended curriculum that introduces a broader general repertoire runs the risk of decreasing the time spent on the acquisition of scientific principles. (…) Far from classroom and practical tuition in mathematics and science being extended to allow educationally disadvantaged students (…) access to these knowledge disciplines, they are likely to be short-changed. This is not through malevolent intent, but simply because the tuition day has limits. It should also be remembered how a racially-based system of job reservation prevented their parents from entering artisanal and trade occupations (Department of Education, 2001: 3–4), which means that these students mostly do not come from (the sort of) “tinkering” environments that (would have) provided practical grounding as the first step in the movement between practical and theoretical knowledge. The stark reality that emerges is that preparation for employability rather than for employment may *disadvantage* rather than assist those who at last have an opportunity to enter middle-level employment.  Source: Excerpt from Gamble, J. (2004 pp. 187-89) |

**Questions**

1. In what way could education for employability result in *over-education* and/or *over-training* and a “*buyer’s market*”?
2. How does Gamble reach the conclusion that preparation for employability rather than for employment may *disadvantage*, rather than assist, many of those young learners who at last have an opportunity to enter middle-level employment?
3. What seems to be the difference between preparing students for *employment* and preparing them for *employability*?

Discussion of the activity

Owing to automation, ailing economies and what seems to be chronic unemployment, there are simply not enough jobs to go around, and young learners are desperate to gain some advantage in the competitive struggle for jobs. Under these circumstances, it is unwise, even dangerous, to make matters worse by creating the impression that if students just have enough of the right subjects (including a range of subjects such as communication, entrepreneurship and life skills in addition to the crucial occupational disciplines), one will be more “employable” (i.e. “self-marketable”) in the job market.

Creating the impression among young people and their parents that it is enough just to be “employable”, will entice still more would-be students to set their sights on entering a labour market that in many sectors is in fact shrinking, not expanding. This will in turn give rise to an ever-increasing pool of frustrated, even desperate qualified-but-unemployed youth – a “buyer’s market” for employers who will have many candidates to choose from, and be able to keep salaries low.

Despite the innocuous or harmless -sounding nature of the term “employability”, which has enabled it to find a place in numerous policy statements and programmes aimed at promoting job creation and *combating* unemployment (Schultheis, 2009, p. 77), preparing for employability may actually further *disadvantage* young learners from already-disadvantaged backgrounds. This happens through overloading an already-crowded curriculum with subjects like those mentioned above, especially if some of the additional subjects are given the same weight and treated in the same way (including theory *plus* practice – a point Gamble makes elsewhere) as mathematics, science and technical subjects. It is widely accepted that, especially for students with compromised schooling backgrounds, it mathematics, science and technical subject that usually require as much time and tuition as possible.

The author also points out that such students tend to experience additional challenges in that the language of instruction is generally not their first language, in many cases they have had little exposure to ICTs, and they are more often than not first-generation post-school students, with none of the helpful experience within their families that often paves an easier path for children of the middle class. Thus the “employability agenda” in countries like South Africa, despite the emphasis on poverty often associated with it, in reality ignores the many forms of deprivation that affect youth living in low socioeconomic status urban townships and rural areas (Powell and McGrath, 2019, provide vivid examples of this).

What then is the conceptual difference between preparing students for *employment* and preparing them for *employability*? In the reading, Gamble only indicates that whereas in the past it was assumed that a healthy economy would generate jobs (i.e. employment), this notion is being supplanted by the idea that post-school education and training is responsible for giving people whatever it is that they need in order to become “employable”, *regardless of whether there are enough jobs to go around or not*.

A number of other scholars have analysed what is going on in the “employability agenda”, but first it would be a good idea to “connect the dots” ourselves.

If, say, TVET and other vocational colleges carry the responsibility for making the means available for as many people as possible to *become employable*, firstly this absolves industry/businesses from the responsibility of providing, or paying for, vocational education and training (unlike what happens in Germany, for example). Secondly, because the emphasis is put on “employability” as the central and sole purpose of TVET, rather than on *preparing students or artisans for actual jobs*, industry/businesses are also absolved from being overly concerned about *high unemployment* rates and retrenchments, and the public outcry which these usually bring in their wake. This arrangement is of course extremely convenient for them in view of the fact that modern digital technology and the outsourcing of functions like marketing are making it easier and easier to avoid employing many people at all – other than a relatively small number of managerial-level staff and relatively highly-qualified technicians.

Another consequence is that, while “employers” carry less and less responsibility for anything other than what they claim they do best, which is to maximize profits (the old argument “…*and create jobs*” is heard less often today, or is uttered with less conviction), it is seen as *individuals’* responsibility to develop and transform themselves into employable citizens, who should not be a “burden on society”. Subtly, this shifts the blame for *un*employment to the supposed deficiencies of those youth who do not manage to find jobs (Powell and McGrath, 2019, p. 375). And as Gamble shows in the reading resource, this blame is likely to fall most heavily on the most vulnerable among those youths.

The employability agenda functions as a form of “structural violence” that locks youth into a cycle of poverty and then reinforces this with “symbolic violence”, persistently and stubbornly insisting that TVET prepare learners for a formal labour market – one that simply has not employed and *probably never will* employ the majority of them. Here are some background facts, cited by Powell and McGrath (2019, p. 373):

Of the 36.1 million South Africans who are of working age, 5.4 million are unemployed, and at least 15 million are not economically active because they (have become) discouraged from finding a job (StatsSA, 2015). Such problems are long-standing, and all evidence indicates that they are intractable…More than half of South Africans (55.25% according to StatsSA, 2017) live below the poverty line (R992 per month, around $69 US dollars). These …problems …affect the wellbeing of millions of South Africans, including the 3.3 million young South Africans who are not in employment or education and training (StatsSA, 2017).

One may ask how this “employability agenda” came about. To be brief, it is a manifestation of the neoliberalism ideology, which favours free-market capitalism, the deregulation of markets including the labour market, and reduction in government spending and state welfare provision. These aspects of the ideology have roots in classic nineteenth-century liberalism, but the modern form of neoliberalism came to prominence in the era of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States, during the 1970s and 80s. Currently various forms of neoliberalism characterise the governments and institutions of many countries. Part of the reason for its pervasive global influence is the propensity it has shown to “colonise” (adopt and take over) concepts, thought patterns and practices associated with movements and ideologies that are *opposed* to it – the employability agenda being itself a good example of such a “co-opted” concept.

From the beginning neoliberalism took aboard the arguments of the slightly older ideology *human capital theory* (HCT). In essence this holds that both individuals and nations will find it profitable to *invest in education and training*, as such investment will increase skills and hence productivity in the workplace, which in turn will later *repay the investment* in terms of economic growth, generating wealth (Robinson, 1981; Blakemore and Cooksey, 1980). Thus HCT sees education as an investment in “human capital”, which will accelerate economic growth as would the building of a new power station or industrial development zone. A shortcoming of HCT is that it tends to subject all educational endeavours and initiatives to simplistic and often-inappropriate cost/benefit analyses (the initiatives are required to demonstrate returns on investment that are measured in long-term financial gains).

Unfortunately, the theory that expanded education causes economic growth has never been proved. Examples of *correlation* between expanded education and economic growth often turn out to be an indication that economic growth leads to the expansion of *education*. And there are many well-researched examples in developed as well as developing countries of massive investment in education *not* being followed by economic growth. The most generally accepted conclusion today that many have reached is that education and training constitute an *important background factor* in economic growth rather than its cause, and that in any case the economic growth of society is not the only aim and purpose of education and training.

Neoliberalism, to an even greater degree, is characterised by the marketisation of all human relations. Its key assumption is the applicability and superiority of market dynamics for *all* social transactions. Education is regarded as a commodity (i.e. an article of trade). Students are viewed as consumers, or even as customers. According to its principles, educational institutions need to think of themselves as “entrepreneurial”, and should conduct themselves and be managed like businesses. Even *individuals* need to see themselves, and think of their lives, as enterprises, and to make decisions using the same forms of rationality as they would if they were businesses in competition with others.

Framed within neoliberalism, skills within the employability agenda are narrowly defined as those required by industry and commodified as an individual asset in a competitive labor market. …Underlying this literature is a deeper concern that spotlighting the supply of “skills” serves to deflect and distract from deeper structural inequalities that are the fundamental causes of unemployment and poverty (Vally and Motala, 2014).

In summary, then, employability is a term to be used with care, as it carries significant ideological baggage and does not simply denote the unquestionable “social good” that it would *seem* to represent, especially in a context of possibly irreversible unemployment.

A last word is perhaps in order at this point. Near the beginning of the discussion Gamble pointed out the danger of overloading an already-crowded curriculum. If, for purely practical reasons, TVET colleges need to be cautious about simply adding new content elements to students’ curricula on the justification that they add vitally-needed “twenty-first century skills” in the interests of employability, there are other pressures on the curriculum that may need to be considered with great care before rushing to grant them “admission”.

Two that are currently making very strong claims for incorporation are “fourth industrial revolution” technology and thinking, and the accommodation of the “greening TVET” agenda. Both of these certainly deserve serious attention if TVET colleges are not to become irrelevant and end up teaching “the history of technology”, or contributing to an unsustainable future. However, it is of critical importance that they be *integrated into* rather than simply *added on to* curricula, and that hard decisions be taken about removing other knowledge and skills whose shelf-lives are rapidly approaching their end.

Digitisation and online learning

“Digitisation is fundamentally altering our world and, with it, the roles, requirements and potential of TVET” (Douse and Uys, 2019, p. 23)

This subsection presents a challenge of a different kind to those discussed above. It is not inherent in the nature of TVET, but it is introduced here because it is certainly a pressing challenge for TVET colleges worldwide, and is hence a universal challenge, the subject of teaching and learning online, and of *adapting* to teaching online, could easily fill several books, and scores have been published. The subject of digitisation and its impact on the worlds of work, and of vocational education and training, are even broader. This subsection only provides the briefest of introductions to a few of the key issues that need to borne in mind when making the shift to teaching online.

One of the fears TVET lecturers harbour is that the threat of job losses that have accompanied digitisation in so many fields may eventually put their own at risk. However, as many have pointed out,

While the digital future will transform TVET – in terms both of what needs to be learned and how best it should be ‘delivered’ – it involves no either/or choice between technology and teacher… Digital age TVET require(s) excellent instructors working in tandem with the optimum technology (*ibid*., 2019, p. 33).

Lecturers will still be needed,

to create blended learning experiences, motivate trainees, support them with time and task management, mentor and model life skills, help them dig deeper into material and develop higher-order thinking skills (analytical, conceptual, and creative), and take responsibility for ensuring learning outcomes. They will retain responsibility for diagnosis, assessment, and accreditation: and in each of these, they will be supported by digital technology: no longer the ‘sage on the stage’ but the ‘guide by the side’ (*ibid*.).

Some eight months after the world went into various forms of “lockdown” in order to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, this brief account is written in the full consciousness of how far-reaching the effect of that pandemic has been on every sector of education, though this is not the place to dwell on that. Suffice to say that almost all post-school institutions and educators that were not already orientated towards online and distance education were forced with great suddenness to confront the challenges of adapting to offering programmes and teaching online.

In March 2020, some 1.6 billion learners around the world were suddenly being taught through online learning, with many instructors and learners experiencing an online platform … for the first time (TeachOnline, Contact North, 2020).

Amasing achievements were recorded and many lecturers, senior managers and administrators burnt a great deal of midnight oil. However, there seems to be general consensus that much of what has been achieved is at best a compromise in terms of the quality of education and training. This has been both inevitable given the urgency and multiple constraints, and unfortunate, since while the pandemic has brought forward the acceptance and spread of online learning by a decade, the online educational output has for the greatest part been mediocre, and has not provided a model of what these modes of educational “delivery” are capable of.

In all too many cases, for instance, institutions have simply resorted to producing poor-quality videos of recorded lectures, or videos of lecturers talking to the camera, possibly with the addition of frequently second-rate PowerPoint presentations. Students are easily distracted or lose concentration while viewing such videos, and there is often little or no provision for student-lecturer interaction. While some lectures thought it sufficient to just post their lecture notes online or to require their students to work through their text book chapters and then respond to assessment tasks set online.

What capabilities then does online learning offer institutions, lecturers and students that differs from, without being inferior to, more traditional, classroom-and-contact-based teaching and learning?

Although *open learning* is not by any means the same thing as online learning, the key principles that constitute the former provide relevant criteria for describing the potential benefits of online learning without ignoring the limitations of the latter.

#### **Access, success and cost-effectiveness**

*Open learning* is a *principled approach* to education and training; it is *not* an educational technology like e-learning, *nor* is it a mode of delivery like face-to-face teaching or distance learning, or indeed online learning. Its principles all relate to three fundamentals: access, success, and as far as possible, cost-effectiveness (DHET, 2017.

The flexibility of provision offered by online learning makes for expanded access, allowing institutions and students to overcome problems like living at a distance from campuses, institutional timetables that are incompatible with people’s working lives or family responsibilities, unaffordable student residence and transport costs, insufficient classrooms, lecture rooms and workshops as well as lecturers, and, yes, those lectures that are in fact exceedingly boring and ill-prepared.

While conventional, correspondence-type distance education has traditionally presented an alternative to face-to-face teaching, its record has generally been dismal, with poor contact between lecturers and students and unimaginative learning materials contributing to (though by no means the only reason for) much higher student dropout rates and lower success rates than are evident for equivalent contact learning programmes (Subotzky and Prinsloo, 2011, p. 178).

Hence the emphasis on *quality* of online provision being maintained at the highest possible levels, including access to quality learning materials and learner support, in order to maximise student success.

Pushing up student access and enrolment numbers often leads to a reduction in the quality of provision. Where initiatives aim to produce *both* increased access (resulting in expanded student enrolment) *and* improved quality (resulting in higher student success rates and improved student retention), the result has almost inevitably been an increase in the *cost*, either to students or to institutions or government.

Some institutions of higher education, attracted by the prospect of increased enrolments and revenue, have opted to introduce distance education (sometimes partly online) in order to increase their “reach” substantially at relatively low cost. In such offerings, relatively low quality of materials and student support has invariably been the result. Many, but by no means all such programmes are often abandoned, by students or institutions or both, at least partly because of the inevitably low throughput of students and the ensuing reputational risk.

This is where the principled approach of *open learning* methods can make such a difference. If:

* Enough effort and expertise is put into the development of high quality online materials and student support systems;
* Increased access is aimed not just at increased enrolments but also at student-centred flexibility of provision that allows students more scope to determine where, when, what and how they will learn, as well as the pace at which they will learn; and
* Open educational resources (OER – see below) are used judiciously, reducing the cost of production,

it is in fact possible, as *economies of scale* take effect over time, to improve access and quality in incrementally cost-effective ways.

To explain this dynamic in simple terms, the preparation and initial set-up costs of quality courses are notably high; however, if large numbers of students enrol over a number of years, the costs of materials revision and providing tuition and assessment are progressively offset by the reduced need to build new teaching facilities and campuses and to employ additional full-time and fully-qualified lecturers. At the risk of over-simplification, the provision of a good course or programme that attracts large numbers of students over a number of years stands to become more cost-effective as time goes by. This cost-effectiveness can be boosted if appropriate OER can be sourced in the initial preparation or even revision of the course materials.

**Open educational resources (OER) and other benefits of online learning**

Open Educational Resources (OER) are educational resources that are openly licensed for educators and students to use, modify, re-use and share, without being required to pay any royalties or licence fees. OERs include course materials, readings, videos, animation, multimedia applications, simulations, podcasts, lecture notes, educational games, curriculum maps, and any other materials that have been designed to support teaching and learning. They have in fact been released under an open intellectual property license (most commonly a “Creative Commons” licence) that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. The popularity and numbers of such learning materials have been increasing constantly over the past two decades, in the context of a growing international trend in many areas of human endeavour towards the “free sharing of knowledge and peer collaboration” (Butcher, 2011, p.24), and the readiness of access and re-use offered by digital technology and the Internet.

The legalised freedom to both re-use and adapt OER reduces the need for unnecessary duplication of effort, and the ability to do so without having to search for copyright holders, formally request permission, and pay royalties or licence fees, translates to substantial savings in the cost of initial development. In South Africa, the cost and effort of using OER are also being reduced by the DHET’s adoption of an Open Learning Policy Framework (draft published in 2017), and the establishment of a National Open Learning System online repository.

As post-school institutions and lecturers have begun increasingly to test the waters of quality online teaching/learning, they have discovered that it can in fact have many advantages over traditional contact modes – including pedagogic benefits. These benefits include:

* The ability to devote time and resources to designing and constructing (with the assistance of technical materials development teams) excellent courses and teaching/learning materials that can be shared and re-used across multiple campuses and classes,
* Asynchronous forums as well as synchronous chat rooms that enable shared student/lecturer and peer interaction and evaluation,
* Access to an ever-growing supply of inventive digital tools for making learning an exciting and engaging experience, involving for example gamification, simulations or webinars featuring experts from industry,
* The ready use of easily-integrated resource-based learning, including videos and simulations, and
* Increasingly sophisticated and powerful learning analytics tools which draw on the enormous amounts of student-use and assessment-based data generated in online learning to enable the predictive monitoring and tracking of student progress.
* New-generation *international* qualification frameworks (possibly privately run) which will allow for the worldwide recognition of TVET qualifications based on *learning outcomes* rather than diplomas, with built-in quality assurance based on *world reference levels* (WRLs). A UNESCO working group has already been working since 2013 on a set of WRLs, seen as a “translation device” that will act as a neutral reference point for recognizing learning across borders (UNESCO, 2018, p. 8).

**Blended learning**

These advantages are capable of being used in combination to produce a learning experience that few individual lecturers are able to match (how many really good lecturers and memorable lectures do you recall from your own years as a student?). This has in turn led to the increasing adoption, in institutions designed for face-to-face tuition, of a wide variety of *blended learning* approaches in re-constructing their traditional programme offerings. Most of these combine, in various formats, the very real advantages that face-to-face contact can bring, for instance lecturers who have a particular talent for engaging students, with the array of offerings described above.

A good example of such blended learning that is by now becoming a commonplace is the “flipped classroom” (see Teaching Resources: Twelve Proven Lesson Methods, in the module, *From Curriculum to Lesson Plan*). This term itself covers a range of different pedagogic structures or formats, but the essence of “flipped lessons” is that students are set a task such as reading a well-chosen resource or to doing other preparatory work such as completing a worksheet in their own time, and in a place convenient to themselves, the day *before* the lesson. Typically, this preparatory work is then discussed, with students interacting as much as possible, in the first 15 or so minutes of the actual contact lesson the next day. During the lesson, students may be asked to practise applying key concepts they have identified, and receive feedback from the lecturer. As a possible follow-up after the lesson, they may also be instructed to check their understanding and extend their learning to a more complex task.

In traditional lectures, students often try to transcribe the lecturer’s words. They cannot stop to reflect on what they are hearing, and often miss important points because they are too busy taking notes. There is also usually little time for the lecturer to work in a differentiated manner with individuals or small groups that are struggling.

When online learning or e-learning technologies are used to “flip” the lesson by introducing key knowledge input *outside of* and *before* the lesson, with the students playing an active role their own learning, the class contact session becomes available for *more differentiated* work than is usually possible, so that *all* the students may be involved and interact. Such lessons can also be devoted to *higher order, active* learning such as small projects, discussions or other activities, with the lecturer available as a guide, support, advisor and assessor, mostly on an individual or small group basis.

### Activity 13: Online learning

**Suggested time: 25 minutes**

Dr Tony Bates has for years been one of the world’s most respected authorities on distance education and open, online learning. He is also a Research Associate for Contact North/Contact Nord, a large organisation based in Ontario, which produces many authoritative publications on open and distance learning and supports distance learning centres over a vast area of Canada. A recent edition of Contact North’s TeachOnline newsletter featured Bates’s, *Ten lessons for a post-pandemic world.*

1. Click the link provided [here](https://teachonline.ca/tools-trends/10-lessons-post-pandemic-world)
2. Then scroll down the page until you see the links to the *ten lessons*. Select one or two of the lessons that appeal to you, read and reflect on the text, if possible with a colleague or fellow student, and finally record your thoughts in your Learning Journal.

What particular challenges confront TVET in South Africa?

Aside from sharing the never-quite-resolved issues discussed in the sub-section dealing with the *generic challenges facing TVET lecturers and colleges,* which seem almost inherent in the very nature of technical and vocational education worldwide, South Africa has a range of problems that, although some of them appear almost insoluble, do have their origins in bygone policies, and in human attempts to deal with the legacy of those policies by developing further policies. This is significant because it means that these problems, rather than being inherently insoluble, can in time and with patience be unravelled and solved.

Many of the challenges that are specific to the South African TVET context have not necessarily been directly caused by, but were brought into sharper focus by the reforms introduced from the late 1990s, and especially by the introduction of the NCV programmes in 2007, when the sector had not yet been made the responsibility of the new DHET, and was still referred to as Further Education and Training (FET). This important moment in this history of the colleges, plus the fact that it has been the subject of many research papers, makes the introduction of NCV a convenient point of focus for identifying and understanding several of the key challenges confronting TVET today. Of the unforeseen problems that this initiative brought in its wake, some that were largely resolved may be mentioned in passing but will not be dwelt on here. Those issues which *remain* challenges will be focused on, with the addition of one challenge that is not particularly associated with the NCV or past reforms.

### Activity 14: Reforms in the TVET sector

**Suggested time: 35 minutes**

1. Read the, *Brief background on the South African TVET College sector*, an excerpt from the 2018 article “Lecturer experiences of TVET college challenges in the post-apartheid era: A case of unintended consequences of educational reform in South Africa” by Zandile Buthelezi.
2. When you have read and digested the reading, focus on the 2nd to the 5th paragraphs (i.e. leaving aside the first and last paragraphs). Reflect on the questions that follow the text. If possible discuss them with a colleague or fellow student, and briefly record your conclusions in your Learning Journal.

|  |
| --- |
| ***Brief Background on the South African TVET College Sector***  Reform of (what are now called) TVET colleges in South Africa (…) was as a result of the country’s exposure to 46 years of authoritarian apartheid governance which brought imbalances and inequalities to all spheres of peoples’ lives including education. Educational institutions were racially segregated, with a bigger budget spent on educating a white child at the expense of black children. This implied inequity and separation in educational standards, as the education resources for non-white children were embarrassingly inferior. (…)  From the year 2000, TVET colleges underwent a barrage of major institutional, structural and curricular changes. Formerly known as technical colleges, they were also racially and ethnically segregated (Sayed, 2003), as all South African education used to be. There were four major educational changes that transformed the VET landscape drastically. Firstly, change was conceptualised by amalgamating 150 technical colleges that had existed for many years, into 50 multi-sited colleges that were to be accessed by learners, irrespective of their race, class, gender or religion. (…) The mergers brought lecturers from different backgrounds together and this resulted in tensions “associated with race and cultural beliefs that were not effectively addressed” (Kraak, Paterson and Boka, 2016, p.27).  Secondly, new governing bodies known as College Councils were formed for each TVET college. The College Councils (were) responsible for developing strategic plans, mission statements and acquiring substantive strategic planning capabilities (FET Act, 1998). This meant a shift towards institutional autonomy and financial control. (…) (However), existing research indicates that top college managers, including Council members, “lack management skills and knowledge to success fully implement the new policy imperatives” (Moyo, 2007, p.5).  Thirdly, the FET Colleges Act of 2006 endorsed that management staff will be appointed by the government, while employment of all other new staff, including lecturers, became the responsibility of the colleges. The Council was given power to approve conditions of employment, including the determination and review of salaries for lecturers and support staff and all other forms of remuneration, in accordance with the rules (FET Colleges Act of 2006, 34). Amongst other things, this move created divisions amongst lecturers as the majority of older staff members were permanently employed by the state while new lecturers on Council payroll were in contract positions.  Fourthly, the new National Certificate Vocational (NCV) curriculum, which commenced in January 2007, was introduced. It was a new TVET qualification that was to give learners industry-focused vocational alternative to the academic grades 10–12 offered by senior secondary schools in the mainstream education system. The programme sought “to overcome outdated divisions between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ education, and training, and is characterised, not by the ‘vocationalisation’ of education, but by a sound foundation of general knowledge, combined with practical relevance” (Department of Education 1998, p.30).  From their inception, TVET colleges are viewed as “a vehicle for providing skills that respond to the economic needs of the country” … The perceived “learn and work” benefits are considered to be building blocks for economic growth (McGrath, 2003, 2005; McGrath *et al*., 2006; Akoojee, 2008), and are not unique to South Africa but have occurred worldwide. (…) Canada reported that TVET systems in the United Kingdom, Scotland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand had introduced quite specific reform measures to achieve a more vocational focus in education (Chappell, 2003). The revitalization of TVET is also evident in many African countries, including southern African states like Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland (Akoojee, Gewer, and McGrath, 2005; McGrath *et al*., 2006). Rauner and Maclean (2008) argue that many countries consider TVET “a key factor in improving competitiveness of enterprises and national economies”. The World Bank (2006) confirmed this when it stated that “the time has never been better to invest in young people living in developing countries; and (for) young people to succeed in today’s competitive global economy they must be equipped with advanced skills beyond literacy.”  Revitalisation of TVET colleges in South Africa necessitated many policy changes which later revealed tonnes of unintended consequences. For example, the introduction of a new curriculum named the National Curriculum Vocational (NCV). This curriculum was perceived to be relevant to the needs of the economy as the country was experiencing a shortage of artisans (McGrath and Akoojee, 2007; Akoojee, 2008; Brier and Erasmus, 2009; Bird, 2010; Godongwana, 2011; Mateus *et al*., 2014; Buthelezi, 2016). It was never anticipated that the curriculum will be plagued by a myriad of challenges (…)  Source: Excerpt from Buthelezi, Z. (2018). Lecturer experiences of TVET college challenges in the post-apartheid era: A case of unintended consequences of educational reform in South Africa. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training, 70*(3), pp. 365-67 |

**Questions:**

1. Collectively, what do these paragraphs suggest about the Government’s actions with regard to TVET at that time?
2. Look again at each of these paragraphs. What does each one reveal about the Government’s specific concerns and goals where TVET was concerned?

Discussion of the activity

This particular summary of key events was selected for inclusion here because it appropriately presents the actions of Government in the context of well-intentioned reform, rather than as a series of mistaken decisions. Most people would view the general aims of this raft of reforms as commendable – to redress the racial segregation and gross inequity imposed on education under apartheid; to revitalise the somewhat neglected TVET (then-called FET) sector; and to respond to the economic needs of the country, including enabling it to participate successfully in the competitive global economy, by increasing the supply of home-grown artisans into the economy. Only the word “barrage” alerts us to the probable error of undertaking too many far-reaching changes over too short a time, not giving all the stakeholders involved a chance to assimilate and adjust to new arrangements.

In the body of the article from which the background summary is taken, the author reveals how the mistiming of some reforms, a lack of foresight, political over-eagerness and impatience, failure to consult key stakeholders adequately or provide them with adequate preparation or training, insufficient implementation planning and other such factors resulted in a succession of unforeseen and unintended consequences. Despite some of the most immediate results having been addressed and/or rectified, a number of the challenges that face TVET today, at least in their most visible form, date from these developments.

Going into more detail, the first move was motivated by a concern to dismantle the sprawling apartheid-era infrastructure of vocational and technical education, and thus to merge the segregated, and therefore unequal, colleges and campuses inherited from the apartheid dispensation into stronger institutions.

The next was to begin the process of *decentralising* governance, thus giving the newly- merged colleges a measure of autonomy under their own Councils, bringing them a little closer to the autonomous status of universities and partly releasing them from bureaucratic governance under provincial governments.

The third dimension of reform was to give the College Councils power to approve conditions of employment and review salaries. The fourth was to overcome outdated divisions between academic and vocational education, and to provide industry-focused vocational education alternatives to the academic secondary school grades 10–12. This culminated in the introduction of the NCV in 2007/8.

The rest of this section will examine the following challenges confronting TVET colleges and lecturers. The first six challenges either relate closely to the reforms just discussed, or stand out more clearly when examined in the light of these reforms. The last one probably has roots unrelated to reforms or the NCV, but on the other hand it does not seem to be a challenge generic to, or inherent in, TVET itself like those discussed in the preceding subsection:

1. Issues of diversity and inequality among students
2. Low student success rates and underperformance
3. Curriculum shortcomings
4. Inadequate resources
5. Professionally unqualified lecturers and diverse career histories
6. A centralised and problematic examination system
7. A competitive inter-college culture.
8. Issues of diversity and inequality among students

From the time of the technical colleges, the student intake, generally males in their young twenties, had always included a proportion of students from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds, some with specific career intentions, others because TVET offered the only viable post-school option.

The advent of the NCV allowed learners to enroll for this programme after completing Grade 9, but the programme also attracted students who had dropped out of school in Grades 10, 11 and 12, and some who had already passed Grade 12 but hoped to improve their employment chances by switching to the technical/vocational stream. The curriculum also does not discriminate against learners with special learning needs. This resulted in classrooms “full of students who are not only at different educational levels, but also of mixed learning abilities” (Buthelezi, 2018, p. 374). Furthermore, mixing 15-year olds with 20-year olds in the same class poses problems for both students and lecturers. It can thus be said that the NCV attracts large numbers of students with different levels of academic readiness, requiring lecturers to teach very different cohorts of students in the same classroom (Badenhorst and Radile, 2018, p. 3)

These obvious challenges are also compounded in less obvious ways. Many of the learners who enrol for the NCV with only Grade 9 find the first-year NCV curriculum content very difficult. On the other hand, those who have already matriculated find having to sit again through the NCV equivalent of Grades 10, 11 and 12 unstimulating, especially in the compulsory general education subjects: Language, Mathematics/Maths Literacy and Life Orientation.

Secondly lecturers who had been used to teaching young adults suddenly found themselves having to teach adolescents. As Buthelezi points out,

A college environment operates differently in terms of supervising and instilling discipline in students. Colleges are not as strict as schools, where students are under the watchful eye of a teacher. In TVET colleges, students are not reprimanded for late coming, absenteeism and for not doing homework (*ibid*., p. 376).

Lecturers find that 15-year olds are not mature enough to handle this measure of adult self-discipline, leading to high levels of absenteeism, late arrival for classes and general indiscipline. In some colleges however, according to lecturers, it is older students, many of whom are involved in substance abuse, who are disruptive and inclined to bully younger students, and thus contribute to high failure rates (*ibid*., p. 377).

Thirdly,

complicating the multilevel composition of the NCV learner population was the disjuncture between the perception that the TVET College is a ‘dumping ground’ for academically challenged learners, and the (relatively) rigorous demands of the NCV courses

(Wedekind *et al*., 2016, p. 130).

The authors cite an example of principals admitting to advising slow learners to enrol at TVET colleges whenever there is overcrowding in their schools.

Some colleges are evolving various ways of dealing with these problems of inadequate admission criteria leading to multi-level teaching in classes of extremely mixed ability and mixed age. It is hoped that in time these issues will become a thing of the past.

1. Low student success rates and underperformance

In addition to the challenges described above contributing to high failure rates,

many of the learners come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Thus poverty and unemployment are typically associated with many NCV students’ home experiences. The learners were often hungry, struggled with transport and were exposed to environments where the social fabric of the community was under strain (*ibid*., p. 131).

Furthermore, such students will have come through nine or so years of basic education in which schools, many of them dysfunctional, are still struggling with the legacy of apartheid education, thus the level of preparedness that they bring to TVET colleges is wholly inadequate, especially for NCV studies, and especially if they have no technical background.

Of course, although policy makers, parents and many learners look to TVET to provide an avenue out of poverty – and although it does in fact achieve this for many students, it cannot be expected to undo all the effects of a history of inequality and oppression. However, the situation of students struggling with disadvantage is not helped when regulations place unmanageable, even if unintended, obstacles in their paths. As things stand, this is what happens in the NVC programmes, which comprise heavy subject loads to begin with (i.e. seven subjects more or less equivalent to those in Grades 10-12). Compounding this was a

government directive that students who passed three out of seven subjects should be promoted to the next level and may carry the failed subjects. This is a significant additional load of subjects (seven, plus four being repeated, means *11 subjects in a year*) for a student, when the student who is already demonstrably at risk is placed under this pressure (*ibid*., p. 131, italics not in the original).

It should also not be forgotten that students redoing courses year after year pushes the cost per graduate much higher than it should be for TVET. As Badenhorst and Radile point out, quoting a 2014 DHET source, large amounts of money were injected into the TVET system to boost continued development: R1.9 million in 2006, R2.5 million in 2012, and R17.4 billion in 2013. Despite this level of funding, students’ results have been dismal.

For example, in 2007, a national certification rate of around 10 per cent was recorded. The success rate continued to be generally poor as evidenced by the 4 per cent throughput rate obtained in 2009 (DHET 2012). Although pass rates increased gradually (from) 2012–2016, the trend of poor performance still persists, with certification rates hovering between 29 per cent and 41 per cent. These figures can hardly validate the generous capital injection from the DHET (Badenhorst and Radile, 2018, p. 3)

1. Curriculum shortcomings

First, a little more background: The old technical colleges had been geared towards providing *theoretical* courses to apprentices in various technical fields. These NATED courses were mostly presented in three-month blocks, enabling artisans to be released from the workplace in order to complete these theory courses. The majority of their time was spent in the workplace, and the lecturers were usually qualified artisans themselves, whose first identification was with their trades rather than as teachers.

From the mid-1980s there was a significant decline in the numbers of apprenticeships, and colleges began offering the NATED courses to students without an apprenticeship, resulting in an *overly theoretical* curriculum and *too few opportunities for practical work* (Wedekind *et al*, 2016, p. 120). The NCV curriculum was introduced from 2007 to address the shortcomings of the NATED curriculum by including *a more generic fulltime vocational qualification* geared towards learners leaving school after Grade 9.

The NCV, introduced after a very short period of consultation, was designed to run parallel to the secondary school Grades 10 to 12, and to offer a *vocational alternative* to the National Senior Certificate (NSC). Compulsory subjects, as mentioned above, are Language, Mathematics or Maths Literacy, and Life Orientation. In addition to these, students have to take four specialist elective courses selected from fourteen different *vocational* fields aligned with identified scarce skills – seven courses in all, each running for three years and taking the student up to Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The minimal period of official consultation, plus the fact that lecturers were informed only a few months before the NCV was launched in colleges, resulted in lecturers viewing the new curriculum as a “top-down” initiative imposed on docile “implementers” – without any share in decision-making, training, or a chance for lecturers to “buy into” the new requirements. These are exactly the sort of measures that experts in educational change like Michael Fullan insist are absolutely crucial to the successful introduction of reforms. (Key works on leading and managing educational change by Michael Fullan are detailed in the Module Reference section).

Many colleges did not comply with the Department of Education’s (DoE’s) call to phase out the old NATED curriculum. Instead they offered the new NCV fulltime and offered part-time NATED courses in the afternoons or at weekends. This arrangement worked for the colleges and for some of the lecturers (indeed, at the time of writing there are still more students enrolled for NATED courses than for NCV programmes). Lecturers who taught the NATED classes earned additional money, as this was an activity outside formal office hours. However, this gave rise to envy and tension between lecturers who worked in colleges that offered part-time NATED classes, and those whose colleges had elected to focus solely on the NCV. On the other hand, many lecturers found running the two programmes simultaneously, and teaching the two curricula (which required quite different teaching approaches) to be exhausting.

More lecturers were affected by this when TVET colleges were transferred to the new DHET (under the so called *function shift* process) and were permitted to continue offering the NATED courses while both NATED and NCV are under review. This happened partly because despite the shortcomings of the NATED courses, they were preferred by most employers since they allowed students to move between college and industry for relatively short periods of time. NATED courses were also preferred by many students, who could earn a small income while in the workplace, and because they could complete a programme in 18 months, whereas the NCV took three years to complete.

A further serious shortcoming of the NCV was that because of the amount of study time devoted to the general education subjects, and a lack of resources for practical training, graduates could “qualify” at NQF Level 4 without having acquired practical or workplace skills or experience.

This instability surrounding the curriculum played itself out in a context of recent mergers, changes of governance from provinces to partial autonomy, concern among college staff over conditions of service, rapid expansion of student enrolments and significant increases in the staff: student ratio, as well as the need to become accustomed to profound changes in the make-up of the student body.

What was the NCV’s academic impact on students? A full answer to this question would be beyond the scope of this section, but it can be said that many students “enrolled in the NCV without sufficient knowledge of the discipline-specific, rigorous nature of the various curricula, and (saw) it as a last resort rather than a conscious choice to pursue a particular vocation” (Wedekind *et al*, 2016, p. 132). NCV courses such as Engineering require academically capable students, but learners who would not choose to take science subjects or Mathematics in ordinary high schools, misguidedly choose these courses in TVET colleges, mistakenly thinking that the colleges will offer easier options.

1. Inadequate resources

An additional concern for lecturers when the NCV was introduced was a shortage of the resources necessary to give effect to the vocational subjects. TVET colleges are commonly criticised for using equipment and facilities that are obsolete. Students, understandably, want to enter the labour market as well-equipped as possible, but TVET colleges are sometimes simply unable to provide training on or with new equipment. A major challenge faced by TVET colleges is that they are constantly and carefully trying to manage procurement processes on very limited budgets.

TVET colleges also have to balance current demand – which may be based on employers’ perceptions or current vogue rather than on labour market intelligence data (itself not always reliable) – with the provision of the sort of resources that will without doubt contribute towards meeting real labour market demand.

### Activity 15: Resources available to TVET

**Suggested time: 30 minutes**

Think about the discipline or subject area that you teach or plan to teach. Identify what you consider the most important physical, ICT or other resources you would need in order to provide adequate, relevant and practical teaching in this subject area. Once you have identified the resources that you need, identify those which are readily available at your TVET college, and which would need to be procured.

Discussion of the activity

In your reflection you may have identified resources like a classroom and, depending on your field, a workshop, kitchen or laboratory. For the classroom you may have identified resources like a whiteboard and a data projector. For your workshop, kitchen or laboratory you would, no doubt, have identified a range of tools and pieces of equipment that are necessary for providing practical training to artisans in your field. Most classrooms have some sort of writing board, most TVET kitchens have stoves and most workshops have workbenches. However, not all classrooms have data projectors, tutorial kitchens may not have blast-chillers, and the lathes in workshops may be outdated and worn, with some spare parts unobtainable.

The challenge facing you as a lecturer and your college is to teach students effectively, ensuring that they are prepared for the modern workplace without all the resources required for effective teaching and learning. One possible solution is for the college, acting corporately, to keep in touch with local business, and attempt to raise funds from them for the equipment they would want graduates to use. However, securing funding income from local business is not an easy task; some effective colleges employ a professional fundraiser to assist.

A scarcity of furniture, textbooks, libraries, computers, printers, photocopiers and the equipment needed for practical subjects has been a recurrent phenomenon in South African vocational education. Buthelezi (2016) cites a scarcity of resources as an important factor contributing to the high failure rate in TVET colleges.

1. Professionally unqualified lecturers and diverse career histories

Historically, most vocational education lecturers were recruited from industry. They have technical qualifications and are experienced artisans, but they are also expected to teach, most of them without a formal teaching qualification (Wedekind *et al*, 2016, p. 123). For such lecturers there have only been top-up, in-service training short courses and sporadic workshops that lasted from a few days to a week. South Africa has never had any dedicated institution for the professional education of TVET lecturers.

Today a majority of new lecturers have either a diploma or a degree-level qualification in education, but in most cases these were designed to prepare them to teach in ordinary schools, not vocational and technical education (Buthelezi, 2016, p. 367). Others again were recruited in the face of severe staff shortages when the NCV was introduced, to teach the general education subjects, and have neither workplace experience nor professional qualifications as educators.

When the NCV was introduced, many lecturers felt inadequately qualified. They were expected to be able to integrate theory and practice in their teaching, but many felt that they lacked confidence in their abilities to impart practical skills to learners (*ibid*., p. 368).

It is hoped that the DHET 2013 *Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training*, aimed at enabling lecturers to become professionally qualified educators, will have an impact in this area over time. However, an unintended consequence to be guarded against would be that an increasing focus on education may come at the expense of attention to the world of work, and that the colleges’ connections with industry could be weakened.

1. A centralised and problematic examination system

A centralised examination system is probably a feature of TVET in many countries, but in South Africa it has developed a number of ailments (again these are unintended consequences of policy and procedural decisions) which tend to impede transformation in the sector and breed disillusionment in stakeholders.

Through the many changes in governance, curricula and student intake described above, the centralised examination system has remained firmly embedded in both the NATED programmes and the NCV. The fact that these two quite different curricula sit uneconomically side by side imposes a huge burden of examination-related administration involving well over a million entries that have to be centrally captured and processed to arrive at the results of candidates. Reports of students waiting more than a year for their results and certificates have become an annual staple of the news media. The enormity of the exercise also creates a fertile ground for corrupt practices, thus leakages of exam papers are not uncommon.

The continued existence of the old NATED system alongside the NCV (both widely regarded as and acknowledged to be theoretical in nature rather than practical, as well as outdated) requires an extremely complex exam system comprising no fewer than five exam cycles per year. This calls for very short turnaround times in marking, and a complicated system of semesters and trimesters which break up the teaching year. This problem is compounded by the extended exam timetables for each of the exam sessions in the year, which significantly compromise teaching time, making it extremely difficult to teach content-heavy curricula. Taking the many exam periods and numerous other events into account, lecturers have to try to complete syllabi designed to be completed within a 40-week academic year in well under 30 weeks. Furthermore, when the setting, administering, marking and moderating of exams and the processing of results for large-scale assessments absorb too large a proportion of lecturers’ workload (internal continuous assessment must also be included), there is little or no time for other worthwhile pursuits such as lecturer capacity development.

In such a fraught and time-consuming system, the quality of question papers is impaired and even moderation processes are compromised, partly because of limitations in the skills needed for the assessment processes just mentioned – by lecturers, exam-setters and moderators. This is evidenced in exam papers that are often repetitive in nature from one exam to the next, and tend to be almost exclusively focused on recall and understanding rather than on higher-order cognitive abilities. This has been referred to as “re-cycling mediocrity” (Singh, in a presentation at a College Lecturer Education Project national dialogue event in March 2019).

The implications for pedagogy are significant: teaching becomes exams-focused and textbook-bound (and is often dependent on and influenced by the examiner’s own choice of textbook). Thus the need to meet the perceived requirements of the national exam paper has a restraining effect on creativity and innovation in teaching.

Fortunately, some of these constraints should be partly addressed as the DHET intends phasing in more locally set examinations and reduced reliance on centralised national examinations, as well as benchmarking national examinations with international standards.

1. A competitive inter-college culture

The final challenge to be mentioned here is a challenge of a different sort from the others – more in the nature of a dare than a description of a complex problem – and it has nothing to do with the post-2000 reforms or the advent of the NCV.

The challenge posed – to colleges as much as to lecturers – is to reflect deeply on the culture of competitiveness that seems to have evolved between colleges which in fact share similar goals. While a general climate of “friendly” inter-institutional competition, or the practice of self-competition, can both be motivating, and help to build positive, collegial and constructive relationships or boost performance, competitiveness should not be allowed to become an overriding principle between colleges when sharing and collaboration offer far more rewards in the long run.

We live in a time when organisations, and even businesses, are being encouraged to take a long look at the benefits of pooling scarce resources, sharing the intellectual products of their endeavours, and collaborating in the design and development of new ideas and strategies. Such co-operation and collaboration can help colleges overcome many of the challenges discussed in this section; in fact, it is a vital tool of transformation that should not be ignored. Equally within departments, greater collaboration between lecturers in lesson planning and assessment would also serve to strengthen existing pedagogic practices throughout the college sub-sector.

Phenomena as different as the quest for solutions in the Covid-19 pandemic and the opportunities created by the new approach to intellectual property of open sourcing and OER are turning our conventional habit of individualistic, zero-sum thinking on its head. The limited and self-serving neo-liberal mentality of “We invested our own resources in x; how can we be expected just to share the results with our competitors?” needs to be cross-examined in the light of the growing demonstrations of success of enterprises and movements based on sharing knowledge such as Creative Commons, Open Source, numerous websites, crowd-sourcing and wiki-sites.

In fact, a sector afflicted by scarcity in terms of time, human energy, financial and physical resources – but in which operating in isolation or in “silos” is the norm, and the proverbial “wheel” is reinvented over and over – cannot afford to continue viewing sharing as cheating, partnerships as a dissipation of corporate energy, and communities of practice as “just another time-consuming talk-shop”. Some TVET colleges have realised this and begun to collaborate with other colleges to good effect, and/or to encourage internal collaboration, in a variety of ways. This needs to become the new norm – we have more to gain than to lose by collaborating (see the module *Collaboration in TVET*).

Stop and think

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| Take a few minutes to reflect on how simple forms of collaboration could impact some of the assessment challenges described in the previous subsection. |

Regional curriculum clusters could be established to share the development of quality assessment tasks. Communities of practice could be established between or within colleges to analyse question papers and develop high quality prototypes, helping to build capacity among lecturers who are struggling. There are already examples of such collaboration operating in some regions.

## What qualities and practices are needed to meet at least some of these challenges?

In 2014 the South African Government published its vision for an integrated post-school system, of which TVET would be an important sub-sector, in the *White Paper for Post-school Education and Training.* Since then, the governance of and responsibility for TVET have been transferred back to central government (i.e. from being a largely provincial concern and for a while, quasi-autonomous, with each college governed by its own council, to the DHET). Though underfunded, the sector is now receiving more of the informed attention it deserves, and the TVET colleges as well as the development of artisans have been the focus of several high-profile advocacy and communications campaigns in recent years. Capital projects have seen the expansion of the sector in terms of new campus buildings, including workshops and residences, and a project to extend broadband internet connectivity to every college is well under way at the time of writing.

Although, as discussed in the sub-section immediately preceding this one, there are still major challenges, especially with regard to curricula, under-qualified staff, student intake, resources, examinations and assessment in general, several reforms and initiatives have been mooted or launched.

**Centres of specialisation and the new Occupational Certificates in priority trades:** Arguably the most significant of these is the co-ordinated development of the new national Occupational Certificates, and the identification and establishment of Centres of Specialisation at various TVET colleges, covering 13 priority trades in the engineering and construction fields. Each of these centres is linked to one of the Government’s eighteen Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) spread across South Africa, themselves part of a planned national infrastructure investment programme. Each SIP is a collection of projects addressing particular local socio-economic opportunities or challenges.

Importantly, the new Occupational Certificates are designed to address the demand for priority trades needed for implementing the National Development Plan and National Infrastructure Plan. A second aim is to build the capacity of TVET colleges to deliver trade qualifications in close collaboration with employers as full partners in a development along lines patterned on the German Dual System (DHET, 2016). Industry will take responsibility for providing practical training, which will ensure that trainees graduate with a sound, up-to-date understanding of the workplace.

As the many components of this composite plan gradually come together, and with a target of producing 30 000 artisans a year by 2030, the Government and particularly the public TVET sector are aiming to re-establish a sound, responsive artisan training system, developing capacity and quality in the TVET colleges to deliver trade qualifications in close collaboration with employer partners. And to make TVET colleges “institutions of first choice” for many school-leavers.

What qualities, characteristics and habits will be required of TVET lecturers to meet the challenges which have been enumerated in this unit? More importantly, what qualities and habits will you need to cultivate in yourself going forward? After reading section preceding sub-section, you will certainly not be adopting a blinkered view as you work through these last sections of this module.

It would be presumptuous to set forth a detailed and comprehensive programme of personal action in a module like this one, and in any case several of the characteristics to be nurtured are dealt with in some depth elsewhere in this module or in other modules in the Adv. Dip TVT programme. Thus the more modest intention in this section is merely to suggest a (briefly elaborated) list of qualities, characteristics and habits for you to ponder and, if you decide to adopt them, to work with some persistence at building them into your own sense of your identity as a TVET lecturer:

1. As an educator, aspire to earning the full respect due to a ***professional teacher*** (see Unit 2). Provided you can learn, or figure out ways to motivate students, there can be few experiences more rewarding than knowing you are instrumental in helping those young people to attain their life goals, build self-respect, and gain a stake in society and the economy.
2. If your discipline or subjects are technical or occupational rather than general, aim to inspire students to feel confidence and take pride in their trade or occupational identity, in the installations or repairs or assemblies they’re responsible for, or the services they render. Aim to help as many students as possible to become ***craftsmen and women***. A good part of this can be achieved if you frequently ask yourself, “What kind of role model *am I* being?”
3. Cultivate a sense of ***agency*** in your students. The module, *From Curriculum to Lesson Planning* discusses this idea in depth, and provides a number of ideas for teaching approaches and techniques that can express your professional status and your ability to plan lessons that go *beyond* the confines of the official curriculum.

It is not uncommon for TVET lecturers to criticise the curricula they are responsible for teaching, when in fact they are choosing, perhaps simply by default and through inertia, *not* to grow as professional educators, *not* to push the boundaries and experiment with an innovative new teaching method, *not* to surprise your students by bringing some currently relevant teaching resource, perhaps from way outside the confines of the curriculum, into your lesson.

### Stop and think

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| Have you ever heard this sort of remark being made by TVET lecturers? To what extent do these views reflect your own experience? Do you agree with the sentiments expressed below?   * “We are given a file of notes and resources from the previous lecturer, and have no choice in what and how to teach.” * “After all, we must prepare the students for a national exam.” * “The curriculum is out of touch and out of date, but it ***is*** the official curriculum.”   The official curriculum is in fact a *guideline* for your action, not a precise prescription of exactly what you have to do. Official curricula provide *general indicators* of content to be taught, and assessment for which lecturers must prepare students. They have been written as national documents to be used over a number of years in different situations, but not as prescriptive blueprints. |

1. Make every possible effort to ***keep in touch with the workplace***, and with the needs of employers. Keep up to date with developments in the relevant technology, and strive to be responsive to the real world of work. In the new Occupational Certificate programmes and Centres of Specialisation, the development of artisans in the workplace is designed to be a fully integral part of the qualification, with employers taking the lead. But until such programmes become the norm, it will still be up to lecturers to take a proactive role in this area.

And don’t neglect to bring the awareness you gain back to your students, and to weave it into your explanations in the form of examples, and into your assessment tasks (make sure they are authentic).

1. ***Encourage your own creativity*** and educational imagination. Let it take you down untrodden paths of innovative teaching. Challenge yourself to move away from plain lecturing as often as possible, and design engaging, challenging activities and projects for the students. Remember: *active learning* is infinitely more effective than passive learning. (You will find a multitude of practical ideas for lessons based on active learning in the modules TVET Pedagogy and *From Curriculum to Lesson Planning*.)
2. ***Resilience*** is not just a trait one is born with. It is the outcome of countless interactions between challenges and threats on one hand, and protective attributes and factors on the other, many of which can be acquired as part of developing one’s professional identity. It is crucial, especially in your first years as a lecturer, for it has enabled the majority of educators and the more successful colleges to survive, and then to thrive, despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks.
3. Cultivate the habit of ***mindfulness***: stay alert – not just to safety and potential hazards (a very “big deal” in their own right), but also to your students as individual people (someone else’s son or daughter, partner or parent), and to opportunities that can lead to insight and make learning an exciting road. Work on your ability to improvise and “think on your feet” (reflection ***in***practice). We cannot all be “McGyvers”, but these are *not* qualities that you have to be born with. They do improve with conscious use and practice.
4. Cultivate ***self-reflection*** and self-awareness as a mental habit (reflection ***on*** practice – see the module *Reflective Practice in TVET*). Read widely; think independently; question what you see, hear and read critically; when solving problems, “stay loose” and apply your mind “alternatively”.
5. Each day, make a point of focusing on one or two different students. Try to get to know them a little better. Do you have the ability to ***recognise and unlock the potential in students from different backgrounds***?
6. Make it your business to develop strong and empathetic ***facilitation skills***, such as active and careful *listening*. Avoid always jumping in to explain, and feeling that you must have the last say – ***challenge*** students above all things!
7. In which area(s) of ***communication*** are you strongest: reading, writing, speaking, questioning, explaining, listening, humour? Which areas do you wish you were better at? Make it a personal project over the coming month to work at improving your skill in one of them.
8. ***Lifelong learning*** – remain a scholar, remain a craftsman or woman in your self-identity, remain a teacher who is always also a learner.

# Unit 4: Surviving and structuring a career in TVET

## Outcomes

By the end of this Unit, you should have developed:

1. An awareness of some of the particular challenges in surviving your initial years as a lecturer, and of the importance of mentorship and resilience
2. Some familiarity with what is involved in structuring and managing a career in TVET
3. Some familiarity with what it means to engage in life-long learning.

## Introduction

This unit comprises two sections:

The first section, deals with *becoming resilient* and *surviving* your next few years as a lecturer, whether you are a novice lecturer or have more experience. It addresses questions like: How do I learn to *become* a TVET lecturer, to grow into the role if I am new to the job? How do I deal with the particular challenges that confront most novice lecturers? This section also provides a perspective that mentors, potential mentors and other more senior staff may find useful in their dealings with colleagues in their initial years of lecturing.

The second section, focuses on *thriving in your career*: How do I develop in my own learning and career path as a TVET lecturer? Life-long learning, and opportunities for promotion (upgrading) or “branching out” (re-skilling) are discussed, as well as continuous professional development and further qualifications. (Kersh and Huegler)

Entering a TVET classroom is but the starting point of a career in TVET. In addition to providing work in the classroom and workshop, TVET offers a range of career opportunities. Some include leadership, administration, training TVET lecturers and taking up opportunities in related fields of education and training.

Being an excellent TVET lecturer is not the only requirement of a credible TVET professional. Equally important is being active in the TVET teaching and learning community and developing yourself through professional development activities. You need to develop a clear career vision and career path. In being a TVET professional you need to identify extra-curricular work that interests you, keep current with developments in your area of expertise and consider improving your qualifications.

## Becoming resilient and surviving your initial years as a lecturer

Resilience was initially understood as a personal attribute of the individual educator – the ability to “bounce back” in the face of potential risks. Now it is viewed as being – in addition to a personal trait – a complex, multifaceted *process* or *outcome* resulting from a *dynamic* (changing) relationship between risk factors and protective factors, in the educational institution as well as within the individual (Beltman, Mansfield and Price, 2011, p. 185). Resilience, as the outcome of this interaction between challenges on one hand and protective attributes and factors on the other, can also be seen as part of the development of one’s *professional identity*, a process which has enabled the majority of teachers to sustain their motivation and commitment to teaching, despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks (Sappa, Boldrini and Barabasch, 2019, p. 1673).

In a large meta-study, a statistical analysis that combines the results of multiple scientific studies of research from many countries by Beltman *et al*., (20120, the authors were able to discern a number of key risk factors and key protective factors encountered in teachers.

**Key threats or risk factors were:**

* Heavy workload, lack of time
* Meeting the needs of disadvantaged students
* Classroom management / disruptive students
* Externally imposed regulations and reforms
* Unsupportive or disorganised college leadership staff
* Lack of resources or equipment
* Lack of a mentor; of recognition and feedback (especially for new teachers) being assigned to teach out-of-field subjects or the most difficult classes
* Poor hiring practices; job insecurity; low salary (Beltman *et al*., 2011):

Teachers need to be valued and socially recognised to anchor their professional identity on a shared feeling of pride and awareness that teachers and schools can actually make a difference in students’ lives. In this respect, salaries and contractual conditions represent the first evidence of social recognition, and contribute significantly to supporting or hindering teachers’ commitment and engagement over time (Beltman, Mansfield and Price, 2011, p. 191).

**Key protective factors contributing to resilience were:**

* An altruistic motivation to improve the lives of others; a sense of vocation (motivated by intrinsic rewards); influence of faith – this motivational attitude is encountered frequently in resilient teachers
* The ability to be flexible as a teacher and to use a range of teaching practices, classroom management methods and pedagogical techniques
* A sense of competence, pride and confidence in one’s teaching abilities (increases with experience)
* A sense of agency, of an internal locus of control; belief in one’s ability to make a difference
* Positive attitude; enthusiasm; optimism
* Tenacity; perseverance; persistence
* Knowing the students; having high expectations and helping them succeed
* Having strong, caring and supportive social networks (colleagues, friends, family); being socially competent
* A sense of humour
* Proactive problem-solving skills, including the inclination and ability to seek help
* Emotional intelligence and stability
* The ability to let go, accept failure, learn and move on
* Being creative, exploring new ideas for teaching and learning
* A willingness to take risks / accept failure
* Self-insight, self-evaluation, reflection
* Professional aspirations; being professionally proactive – taking on responsibilities and even leadership roles
* Being committed to ongoing professional learning
* Collegiality and a sense of belonging to the school community
* Taking active responsibility for one’s own wellbeing
* Having the appropriate type of qualification

(Source: Beltman, Mansfield and Price, 2011, p. 193; Sappa *et al*., 2019).

Several researchers surveyed in the meta-study saw the characteristics of resilience not so much as a set of innate individual attributes but rather as *learnable* behaviours, or as a process of adaptation and *agency*, employing *strategies* to overcome adversities.

This suggests that during pre-service and induction programmes, student educators should be taught to be prepared “to seek and create support for themselves in the early years of teaching” (Hoy and Spero, 2005, cited in Beltman *et al*., 2011). Pre-service lecturer education programmes should also provide opportunities for students to reflect on and discuss their beliefs, values and concerns about teaching and learning. Specific personal skills such as managing stress, self-regulation, assertiveness and coping behaviours should also be taught.

Research on the specific challenges experienced by *novice TVET lecturers*, and on what the latter can do to meet or mitigate such challenges, is extremely scarce. One study, focused mainly on mentoring needs at three campuses of a TVET college in KwaZulu Natal, provides some useful glimpses (all quotations from lecturers below are drawn from this source – Shandu, 2016).

It appears that the official one-day official induction process is of limited value and bureaucratic in emphasis, crowding into a single day a campus tour, information about the college structures and departments, what is available on the various campuses, the complex assessment protocols, human resources policies, the Safety, Health, Environment, Risk and Quality (SHERQ) risk management system and the code of conduct. Although the DHET’s official Teaching and Learning Plan for TVET Colleges 2020 includes training on lesson planning, delivery and assessment, the bureaucratic emphasis usually ensures that the process contributes very little or nothing regarding teaching *per se*:

*It is about the vision and the mission of the college, the college structure, the code of conduct for the staff and then they get into briefly about the policies and documents, very briefly.*

*We do have a college prescribed induction where they are taken for one day and they are bombarded with how to fill these forms, how to open our SHERQ system … what else? …the code of conduct – we do have that, but it’s too generic and it is not at the campus level. At the campus level, we have none.*

Novice lecturers’ most immediate concerns tend to be about meeting their classes, presenting lessons, *classroom management* and maintaining discipline:

*Sometimes students will provoke you because they want you to react badly, but as the lecturer you have to act as an adult … Support must be more on teaching methods and classroom management in most cases.*

The complicated *protocols and procedures* related to assessment, reporting, self-evaluation and record-keeping in TVET are intimidating, especially in the first year, even for mature novice lecturers with a history of working in industry:

*If you are coming from industry and you hear people talking about PoE’s, PoA’s, ISAT and FETMIS, all these terms are new. So we need training, not because it is difficult, but (at least) just the introduction.*

### Activity 16: A programme of induction for novice TVET lecturers in Ireland

**Suggested time: 20 minutes**

A challenge that is *endemic* *to TVET colleges* specifically is experienced by the many novice lecturers who are “academically” qualified in a trade or occupation, but have *no professional education or training as educators*.

*You join the sector and … you are coming from the industry and you have been dealing with the production and now you are dealing with students and no longer with producing a product, but now you have to produce results in learning. One must be informed in terms of how do you prepare your work and your subject, how do you present it in class, and how do you communicate it to a learner?* (Campus manager).

*…the professional skills in particular because this person is well qualified in the field, but when it comes to the professional skills and the knowledge of how to teach, that one is lacking* (Campus manager).

*In teaching methods, I always use one method (for) practicals, and I think I need to know and understand other teaching methods.*

It is not only discipline, bureaucratic protocols and teaching methods that are worrisome for the new lecturer; there is also the all-important matter of the *college culture* – “how they do things there”.

As a campus manager said,

*And also just to assist them in coping with the culture, the college culture, which is totally different from where they are coming from. Therefore, it is important that you introduced them to this culture to say this is how we do things.*

Of course, experiences differ both on an individual basis and from one campus to another. Thus in one case the novice lecturer found himself isolated from the help he needed because his more experienced colleagues were overloaded:

*Since I (was seeing) those things for the first time, I did not know how to do such things. Unfortunately, people at the college are always busy when you try and seek help, they are always busy and you end up not knowing what is expected of you.*

Whereas another found his new colleagues to be an indispensable lifeline:

*It was so difficult because I did not even have somebody to assist me and show me how to do things here. I can say in most of the things, I was successful because of my colleagues, otherwise I would not have been able to do things.*

One campus manager pointed out the importance of being proactive in seeking out an appropriate mentor figure, even if the college does not have policy of appointing one formally:

*…therefore it is important that in the first week when a person joins the institution, before this person can be grabbed and be taken by a person that is going to impart a negative attitude, you just have to make sure that you are able to identify people from your team that will be able to hold this person’s hand and lead them to the right direction.*

The novice lecturers interviewed in this study made it clear just how valuable they saw the services of a mentor as being:

*Assessments! I did not know how to conduct them so it was also challenging because the way I used to set a paper… I used to set a difficult paper for the students because I did not know all those criteria on how to do it. The first need is to have time with the mentor as the novice lecturer so that he is able to explain everything, especially when it comes to documents, the preparation of files, how do you prepare before you go to class.*

The issues confronting new educators can be quite complex. Another layer is added to the challenges by the need for “impression management”. Novice lecturers’ ability to follow through on consequences with regard to discipline is often limited, partly because they might not be in a permanent position; on the other hand, they feel that if they request help from management, this could raise doubts as to their ability as educators (Beltman *et al*., 2011, p. 192).

Newer lecturers tend to compare themselves with more experienced colleagues, or with peers whom they perceive as better teachers than themselves. More experienced teachers can rely on their own previous experiences of success to assist them in judging themselves as competent. The main risk in the early stages is to lose self-confidence and one’s sense of self-efficacy while still learning one’s profession and possibly experimenting with different pedagogic approaches (Sappa *et al*., 2019, p. 1679). Hence individual support in the form of mentoring programmes is most important in this stage.

Interestingly, from the meta-study it seems that many younger educators, although they often face challenges in their everyday work, actively *seek* challenges, showing a willingness to take on new roles and responsibilities, particularly as they gain more experience (Beltman *et al*., 2011, p. 192).

Lecturers in the early career stage are mostat risk of leaving the profession. Thus leadership and managementneed to be supportive and provide encouraging feedback to novice educators, recognizing their contribution to the institution where possible as this helps young lecturers to build a sense of self-efficacy – one of the most important factors in building resilience. They should also make a policy of *not* assigning new educators to teach out-of-field subjects or the most difficult classes.

Stop and think

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| So far this section has focused on resilience and the qualities that can contribute towards its development, as well as the particular challenges facing novice lecturers, touching on what can be done to support them. Earlier the comment was made that a number of researchers saw the characteristics of resilience as *learnable* behaviours, or as a process of *agency*, employing *strategies* to overcome adversities. Perhaps you are wondering whether there is a programme of practical strategies available that novice lecturers themselves can adopt to render themselves “shatterproof”.  The following strategies can help you to thrive in your first years of lecturing and build the kind of resilience that will carry you through the many challenges all lecturers face. |

### **Class management:** There is a great deal of advice out there for novice educators regarding discipline, and much of it is conflicting, so we’ll keep this comment modest and brief. From the very first minute of the very first day, show your students (i.e. *demonstrate*, with your body language and actions, as well as the way you speak) that you are there to *teach* them. Without trying to project an image of being mean, take a firm a hand in leading the class from the word “Go” (as firm a hand as you’re prepared to take at any stage). If you leave this till later, it will be a much more difficult task to achieve, and not nearly as effective). And be sure to couple this with,

### taking the trouble to get to know as many students by name as soon as possible, and

### showing that you are fair, and respect them as individuals.

### You’re not there to try and make them like you; if they come to do so in time that’s fine, but it should never be your aim.

### **Build a supportive social network:** Your relationships with others can build and help to maintain your strength as an individual for when times are tough. Build strong relationships with those around you, especially your colleagues. Communities of practice, loose clusters of colleagues and friends can be lifesavers.

### **Seek out positive mentors:** Some experienced lecturers become jaded and cynical, while others remain positive and optimistic. If you find yourself amongst the embittered, excuse yourself from the company. Seek out mentors (even informal ones) who can share the practical wisdom that is the fruit of their experience. Such people are nearly always to be found, so don’t be afraid to ask.

### **Ask for help and continuous professional development:** There is so much to learn as a new lecturer, and you cannot close these learning gaps without help. If possible, make it known that you would be grateful for a good mentor. It’s also never too early to start on a programme of continuous professional development (CPD). Look out for and ask about professional development workshops, online courses, and (eventually) even conferences.

### **Observe other teachers at work:** Try to observe really effective teachers in your college at work. Even if they don’t teach the same subject you teach, you will learn a great deal. Pay attention to only one or two aspects of a lesson so that you’re not overwhelmed. For example, pay attention to routines and procedures, to how a lesson is paced or structured, how questions are asked and responses are handled, or the different ways that students are engaged. You will need to be circumspect about requesting an opportunity to observe a colleague’s lesson (and be sure to give sufficient advance warning).

### **Write down your vision for yourself as a lecturer:** What do you see as your goal or purpose as a lecturer, and can you express it in a few sentences? Creating a concise personal vision or statement of goals can help to make you feel grounded you when you come up against big challenges. It is probably only for your eyes, so it doesn’t need to be too complicated or formal.

### **Take care of your health:** Get enough sleep, eat well, exercise – you’ve heard it all before. This is particularly important in your first year of teaching when the stress can deplete your immune system. Don’t leave it until you get sick before you commit to taking care of yourself – start today.

### **Do something that’s not related to lecturing or TVET:** At least once a week, do something that takes your mind off work and makes you feel good. Enrol for an art class or a modern dance class. Run marathons. Go mountain biking. Join a book club. Do something that engages other parts of your being. It’s easy to get sucked into doing nothing but teaching and preparing for teaching and reporting on teaching during your first year. Give your mind, body and spirit a regular, even daily, break. Consider taking up mindfulness meditation or yoga.

### **Record every success you experience in the classroom or workshop:** This one is really important. Keep a journal and write your successes down in it – what’s going well, or any progress made by you or your students. Identify your successes, even the small ones: *Ashwin actually participated in a class discussion. Xola persisted with the procedure until she got it right. Finished my lesson planning on schedule!*

Elena Aguilar (2016) Edutopia website: [Source](https://www.edutopia.org/blog/10-tips-surviving-and-thriving-your-first-year-teaching-elena-aguilar)

In the following section we will discuss career management for TVET lecturers which includes continuing professional development and life-long learning.

## Career management for TVET lecturers

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| ***A career path involves decisions and action based on decisions***  A career usually consists of a series of jobs or posts, some of which may contribute to a clear progression towards senior or executive responsibility, a prestigious position or a higher salary or earning power; others may not. You may look on the latter as mistakes best forgotten, as part of your life experience from which you learnt important lessons, or as something you planned to do that brought its own rewards. How you characterise such experiences depends largely on how much you are motivated by personal ambition or whether you are more inclined to try things out and see how they work for you.  A *career path* may be planned or unplanned, but the perceived degree of success achieved will likely as not also depend on successful selection by others – in shortlisting and interviews, in networking and through personal contacts, and sometimes in being promoted. While all of these developments depend partly on others’ decisions, the person who benefits is always also an agent – in carefully crafting an application letter and CV, in preparing thoroughly for likely interview questions, in making use of networking opportunities and so on.  *Professional* career development also includes planning, initial study, decision-making such as the selection of suitable premises if one is going into private practice, further formal and informal study, joining one or more professional associations, and standing for election to positions on professional bodies. In general, most of these actions and activities involve a greater degree of personal initiative, and of taking responsibility for one’s own progress than is usually the case in most non-professional careers.  Professional career development *for TVET lecturers* may comprise all of these activities, but the decisions and choices along the way have a particular character specific to vocational educators. For instance, if one is already a trained, qualified and experienced artisan, the initial decision to “branch off” into another sort of career altogether as a vocational lecturer, though related to one’s initial career, is quite a radical step.  Having taken such a step, one discovers that many other choices and decisions will follow from it – choices that will be quite different from those one would have been making if one had remained in the industry as an artisan. The potential consequences of those decisions – their possible successful outcomes or pitfalls – will also be of a quite different nature. The initial action will be to ensure that one’s qualifications and applied teaching skills are appropriate to the job and of an appropriate level. After that one’s decisions might well include the choice to remain actively in contact with one’s trade network (a wise choice), the decision to teach in a public TVET college or a private one, and the choice to further one’s formal education as artisan or educator, or both. There may also be a choice at some point as to whether to remain in teaching or to return to one’s first career.  Of course, the less radical but still quite far-reaching choice made by a qualified teacher in the school system who decides to teach in a TVET college may not lead to later career choices that differ all that much from those made by a teacher who remains in the school system. However, all career paths, like the individuals who walk them, are ultimately unique, hence all the advice one receives as to the management of one’s career (including the content of this sub-section) should not be viewed as conclusive or “the final word”.  One decision, or rather series of decisions, that goes without saying once one has chosen to become a professional teacher of adults, is to remain a lifelong scholar – always to be learning and ready to learn more about one’s occupation or trade, about the contexts in which it takes place, about teaching, and about the wider world. |

### Professional and career development

Research on professional development and career management reveals several models which all emphasise a number of similar elements. One point on which virtually all the models agree is that the key to individual career management and professional development is oneself. *Career self-management* starts with gathering as much of the relevant information about yourself and the work you are involved in as you can (Hartzenberg, 2002:5-6). The starting point for *self-led professional development* is therefore the clear-eyed identification of your abilities and competences, interests, values and preferred life-style. Then compare these with the jobs, positions, potential employers and learning opportunities available to you. This relatively straightforward exercise will help to provide a clear picture of what it is you really want to achieve, and will assist you in setting your own career goals.

The development of career goals involves finding answers to the following fundamental questions:

1. What do I need to know, and be able to do, to get my work done?
2. What do I need to know, and be able to do, to progress in this profession?
3. What areas of knowledge am I relatively strong in, and what identifiable skills do I have?
4. What I do I need to do to bridge the gap between what I know and do now, and what I *need* to know and do?
5. How do I make this happen?
6. Are there identifiable pitfalls that I can try to avoid?

### Activity 17: Articulating your career goals

**Suggested time: Take as long as you need**

The six key questions above that you need to answer in order to identify your career goals are presented outside of this activity because you may not feel that you have sufficient time to undertake such an important exercise as part of an activity in a learning module. It is however, strongly recommended that you do make the time, now or later, perhaps when you are completing this module to reflect on these six questions and to record your responses in your Learning Journal. In this instance there is no suggestion that you discuss your responses with a colleague! This *could* be one of the most important learning activities you ever undertake.

Discussion of the activity

You may have noticed that this set of questions in some ways resembles the SWOT analyses (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats) which organisations undertake when they need to plan for the future.

When you have thought about and identified your strengths, learning needs and career opportunities, and what you can do to bridge the gap between your needs and meeting them, you should be ready to work out an “implementation strategy” or “plan of action” for yourself, and to subject this to a “feasibility analysis” or reality check. (These terms are used as an analogy or metaphor only – there is no need to write your responses in a formal way or to use organisational jargon to express your thoughts, as no-one should see your notes but yourself.)

The points below provide some guidance on steps you could take or think about taking in developing a professional development strategy or “plan of action”:

* Identify your career goals. Each person’s career is unique, as are each person’s career goals and career path. Ask yourself the following questions:
  + “Where do I want to be in my career in five year’s time?” “In ten years’ time?”
  + “What must I do to get there?”
* Self-assessment. This includes an identification of skills, strengths and weaknesses and development needs.
* Identify available methods and mechanisms to make planned development happen. Methods and mechanisms include all the potential things that lecturers can do to develop their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes related to the profession.
* Identify individuals who can assist you and contribute towards furthering your career. Discuss your options for appointing a mentors or specialist coach with your Head of Human Resources.

### Be proactive and set up a small professional learning community (PLC) with other lecturers from your department, and try to meet regularly even if meeting frequently is not possible.

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| **A professional learning community**, or *PLC*, is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. The term is also applied to learning institutions that use small-group collaboration as a form of [professional development](https://www.edglossary.org/professional-development/). Shirley Hord, an expert on school leadership, came up with perhaps the most efficient description of the strategy:  *“The three words explain the concept: Professionals coming together in a group—a community—to learn together.”*  Source: Hord, S. and Sommers, W. (eds). (2008). |

* Find out how your college, and the DHET, may be able to support your professional development. Ask about possible funding for further study purposes, and about study leave.
* Remember to monitor yourself. Check your professional development progress against your personal development plan of action and remember of revise it as necessary.

### Activity 18: Managing your own professional development

### **Suggested time: 1 hour**

Use the guidelines provided above to develop a professional development plan of action. Record your plan in your Learning Journal, writing it up in as much detail as you can – your goals, your self-assessment, and the methods you will use to achieve your plan. This will be a personal development, so no template is provided.

### Discussion of the activity

There is of course also no model answer for this activity. Each person’s life story is different and, as a result, each person’s self-development process will be different. Read the two short stories below. Each is different, but both exemplify how, despite limited education and training options to start with, both these TVET lecturers were able to optimise a range of professional development opportunities during their careers in TVET colleges, resulting in successful and fulfilling professional lives.

**Themba’s life story**

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| Themba was brought up in a working class home. In the 1990s, his parents enrolled him at a technical college so that he would “always have a job”. He qualified as a brick layer and entered the building trade. While he enjoyed his work and was good at it, he discovered that he really enjoyed being a Sunday School teacher for a bunch of young teenagers. This made him think more broadly about teaching. He applied for a post as a technical teacher, and was appointed even though he was not a qualified teacher. He realised that his lack of a teaching qualification would be an inhibiting factor in his career, but he was not sure how to go about getting such a qualification. He applied for a post in the Building Department at a technical college. Once employed at the college, he completed some short courses related to teaching methods, and was soon promoted to Programme Manager.  He then found out that he could do a professional diploma in education. He did this, following it with an Advanced Certificate in Education. He continued teaching building subjects while studying, and tried to apply what he learnt in his teaching, even though his professional qualifications were not focused on teaching technical subjects. He completed an Assessor course, followed by a Moderator course. Eventually he was appointed as a national examiner, and later moderator, in his area of expertise.  When technical colleges were reconstituted as further education and training (FET) colleges and started offering National Certificate Vocational programmes in 2007, he found the change interesting. The new curriculum and college structure provided him with opportunities to apply the knowledge he had gained from studies in the new curriculum in the college. He registered for a B Ed (Hons) in educational leadership and management, and applied for a Campus Manager post at another TVET college. He currently still works as a campus manager and continues to try and stay up to date by doing a number of short courses on leadership, and seeing how best he can apply his new knowledge and skills at the TVET college campus that he manages. |

**Maureen’s life story**

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| Maureen teaches catering management at a TVET college. She loved cooking and obtained a catering diploma after completing school. In her third year she did her work- integrated learning at a national catering company that specialised in providing corporate meals. She loved her work. She particularly liked the working hours, much of which were at night and over holidays. Her working hours meant that she was off duty when most others were working. It also gave her a chance to travel outside of peak holiday times. Her situation changed when she had children and felt that she needed to be home, at least for the major holidays that were special to children.  She applied for a post at a TVET college, primarily teaching cooking and catering management. The programme manager was an old friend who shared her teaching files, assisted her with class preparation and generally acted as a mentor. The college organised for her to attend short courses in teaching methods and classroom management, which she did. She also completed an assessor course and went for some in-service workplace experience, first at her previous place of employment but later also with other companies. She enjoyed doing this as it kept her up to date with business trends.  When the college’s Human Resources Department distributed a circular on funding formal TVET teaching qualifications, she jumped at the opportunity and was able to complete a Dip (TVT). She was very proud of being officially qualified as a professional educator. In addition to qualifying as a TVET lecturer, she regularly does cooking and catering courses that the college funds. She also enjoys spending time with her family, particularly Easter and Christmas, which her children enjoy. She was recently elected to serve on the governing body of the school that her children attend. |

### Lifelong learning

**From “Learning to Be” to “Learning to Be Productive”**

The concept “lifelong learning’’ gained currency in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when it was seen in terms of the assumption that the aim of development is ultimately *the complete fulfilment of the individual human being* – as individual, as citizen, and as a member of a community. It was also viewed as an expression of and support for *democracy*, implying individuals’ right to realise their own potential and to share in the building of their own future (Biesta, 2006, p. 171).

Over the decades that followed, the concept was “colonised” to a great extent, especially in Europe, by neoliberal notions about the development of “human capital”, seeing it as an “investment in human resources” (see Activity 12 in this module: From employment to employability). Thus lifelong learning came to be seen as serving the interests of the knowledge-based economy or “learning economy” rather than being concerned with the development of human potential. Biesta points out how *allowing individual citizens to participate fully in society* came to be construed as *strengthening* (for example) *European international competitiveness and economic growth*. Neoliberal writers increasingly began representing lifelong learning more as a duty than as a right. *Not* to be engaged in some form of useful learning was increasingly seen as a problem, and the argument began circulating that more humanistic forms of lifelong learning (stereotypically characterised as “courses in flower arranging and basket weaving”) were wasting valuable resources (*ibid*., pp 170-78).

It is thus necessary to be aware when we read or hear about lifelong learning that it may mean rather different things:

* Being an active member of the “learning society”, which requires its citizens to continue developing themselves, keeping up to date with current practice and new developments in industry as part of a national process of *remaining internationally competitive*; or
* “The ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal *or* professional reasons”, … which can take place not only in schools, colleges, universities and libraries but also in homes, workplaces and even in leisure pursuits (*Wikipedia*, accessed 12 November 2020).

**Working towards your own goals:** Without necessarily buying into the neoliberal ideology, your own understanding of your professional and career needs may still impel you to adopt the habit of lifelong learning in terms of developing your own work-related skills and qualifications. Whether your motivation is closer to your own economic necessities, personal ambition or personal fulfilment, the actions you take (and insert in your own strategic professional plan) may in any case be exactly the same.

### Activity 19: Lifelong learning

**Suggested time: 40 minutes**

1. Think of where you see yourself in five years’ time. Then note the education and training qualifications, and any informal learning that you would need to achieve this.
2. Think of where you see yourself in ten years’ time. Then note the qualifications and possibly informal learning that you can foresee yourself needing in order to achieve this.

### Discussion of the activity

This short section introduced the concept of lifelong learning as a *contested* concept. Your position as a professional TVET lecturer in effect requires you to become a lifelong learner, if you are not one already. Your TVET students equally need to be encouraged to see *themselves* as lifelong learners, but make sure that it is under their own volition – for their own reasons.

### Formal professional TVET qualifications for lecturers

The Department of Higher Education and Training has developed a policy, aligned with the *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* policy (DHET, 2011) that indicates minimum professional requirements for TVET lecturers, and a series of further professional qualifications.

Three professional qualifications, which certify that the holder has specialised as a TVET lecturer in a specific subject or discipline, are included in the TVET policy:

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| ***Specialist TVET Lecturer Qualifications***   * Bachelor of Education in Technical and Vocational Teaching – B Ed (TVT) – a four-year degree (NQF Level 7), aimed at school and college leavers. * Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching – Adv. Dip (TVT) – a one-year or two-year part-time qualification (NQF Level 7), aimed at people who have graduated from a university or university of technology, or have an NQF Level 6 national diploma. The Adv Dip (TVT) is seen as “capping” a 3- year Bachelor’s degree or 3-year diploma. Together with the preceding degree or diploma, it provides a professional qualification equivalent to the B Ed (TVT). The Adv. Dip (TVT) includes education subjects only; subject specialisations must have been included in the preceding Bachelors degree or diploma. * Diploma in Education in Technical and Vocational Teaching – Dip (TVT) – an entry-level three-year NQF Level 6 qualification, offered full-time as a pre-service initial teaching programme or part-time over a longer period as an in-service programme designed for people who are already employed by TVET colleges, but who are not professionally qualified. On graduating with a Dip (TVT), a person is expected to complete an Advanced Diploma, putting them on a par with those in possession of a B Ed (TVT) or an Adv. Dip (TVT).   A number of post-professional qualifications are also included in the qualifications policy (the fact that they are available does not mean that all lecturers should aim at completing all of them):   * Bachelor of Education (Honours) – B Ed (Hons) (NQF Level 8). * Post Graduate Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training – PD Dip (TVET) (NQF Level 8). This qualification is similar to the B Ed (Hons), but without the emphasis on preparing the student to undertake research. * Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training – Adv. Dip (TVET) (NQF Level 8). Not to be confused with the Adv. Dip (TVT); the Adv. Dip (TVET) is an alternative to the B Ed (Hons) and PG Dip. * Master of Education and Doctor of Education   + These are research-based senior degree qualifications.   For full details, download the 2013 *Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in TVET*: [here](https://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/Policy%20on%20professional%20qualifications%20for%20lecturers%20in%20technical%20and%20vocational%20education%20and%20training.pdf) |

The Policy is packed with useful information about the professional qualifications, but the actual qualification descriptions can be found from p. 16 – p. 31. The range of qualifications may seem daunting, but because each one is designed for a very specific purpose and level, you just need to locate the one that seems right for you at a particular stage in your career. The introduction you have just read should help you to do this.

Do not avoid doing the activity below; if you don’t do it now, do not put it off too long. Because your Learning Journal is entirely your own and nobody else’s to see, you can easily change your mind about your options and “go back to the drawing board”. However, it’s good to get the process started as part of your career plan.

### Activity 20: Determining your formal professional development progression.

### **Suggested time: 30 minutes**

Reflect on your existing qualification(s). If you have an initial TVET lecturer qualification, identify what the next step in your professional development should be. If you do not have an initial TVET lecturer qualification, where would you start?

When you have consulted the qualifications policy and made a thoughtful choice, write a brief note in your Learning Journal, mentioning your choice/s and your reasons for making it/them. Recording your reasons at this stage is a good idea because they may change over time, and it will be useful to see what you were thinking when you first pondered this question.

Work-related skills and professional development

Although a professional TVET lecturer qualification is now a requirement for appointment as a lecturer at a TVET college in South Africa, effective teaching within the TVET context requires that you are also a specialist in the field for which you are developing students (even if this is one of the general education subjects like Mathematics or Life Orientation). However, as time goes by it is surprisingly easy to grow progressively more out of touch with the workplace and workplace skills if you do not make an effort to keep in touch, actually spend time in a working environment related to your occupation or trade, and if at all possible exercise your practical skills. In some countries, provision is made for lecturers to spend time in the workplace in a regular and contractually structured way. While we are far from having such arrangements in South Africa, the importance of work-related skills in vocational education and training is so critical (enough has already been said about this topic in this module), that it will be worth your while to take whatever steps you can to create such opportunities for yourself.

### Activity 21: In-service workplace-based learning for TVET lecturers

### **Suggested time: 30 minutes**

Carefully read the **second** part of the excerpt, *Induction of new teachers and continuous professional development*: ***Finland – Work-based learning for TVET teachers*.** Click link to access [reading](#Reading).

Identify and write down in your Learning Journal what you have learnt from this reading that could serve as a model for introducing *workplace-based learning for in-service TVET lecturers* in South Africa.

Do you think these ideas or practices could take root in this country? Why, or why not?

Discussion of the activity

The Finns have managed to devise a *work placement* system which provides an opportunity for *in-service vocational educators* to build on and update their occupational skills in the field, including time for reflection, and for evaluating their own ongoing teaching practices in the light of workplace realities. It appears that this scheme also boosts lecturers’ professional identity and self-efficacy as representatives of a particular trade or occupation.

As with the Irish induction initiative, the financial cost involved is probably the main serious barrier to introducing a programme along these lines, as training and appointing sufficient substitutes in order to release lecturers to spend periods in the workplace translates into significant expenditure.

### Being responsive to informal and non-formal learning opportunities

Formal qualifications are not the only form of professional development. Formal qualifications, in fact, sometimes have a major shortcoming. Because they occur in a university classroom and sometimes include of a research project, their relation to a lecturer’s development as a classroom practitioner or TVET leader is often rather indirect. For formal learning to become part of your professional development, you need to apply it in practice and use it to *improve* your practice.

In addition to formal learning you can also use *informal* learning in your professional development, a form of learning that is usually *embedded in practice*. Some sources of informal learning are:

* Yourself, by being aware of what you are doing, reflecting on it and learning from it. A *reflective practitioner* does all three.
* Your students. Students are often more receptive than we give them credit for, and are often also good communicators. By listening to and talking to students, you can learn a great deal about the success of your practice – or where there may be shortcomings. Students can often help to get your “stuck” technology to work, and can let you know if you are doing well or if you are not doing well.
* Experienced colleagues. Experienced lecturers often have a wealth of knowledge that cannot be found in books or from doing formal courses. Sometimes their advice is the last thing you want to hear, but if it seems to be well-intentioned, it is at least worth listening to and reflecting on.
* Line managers are responsible for monitoring your performance and, as part of their job, may be able to provide you with tips on what to do and how to do it, even if it is just to survive in the TVET bureaucracy. Line managers should be in possession of college policies, and can be requested to share them with you.
* Meetings are commonly used to provide information to college staff. Meetings and minutes of past meetings can be a good source of information on college issues, procedures and policies.
* Practitioners from the industry associated with your field of expertise. Practitioners can keep you informed about new developments in industry. They may also have ideas about how to apply or present this in your classroom or workshop.

There are also various *non-formal learning* opportunities:

* Individual colleges, regional structures, the Department of Higher Education and Training, unions, non-profit organisations or other providers commonly hold continuous professional development (CPD) training workshops and short courses. Such training, if applied in practice, can make a most valuable contribution to the development of your skills and professional expertise.

### Activity 22: Non-formal professional development

### **Suggested time: 30 minutes**

Carefully read the **third**part of the excerpt*, Induction of new teachers and continuous professional development*: ***Denmark – Innovation and development in TVET curricula and systems.*** Click link to access [reading](#Reading).

Identify and write down in your Learning Journal what you have learnt from this reading that could serve as a model for providing *continuous professional development (CPD) in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy* *to in-service TVET lecturers* (not necessarily novice lecturers) in South Africa.

1. Do you think these ideas or practices might be viable in this country? Why, or why not?

Discussion of the activity

The key characteristic of this innovation is that educators are not handed short courses and other CPD interventions in a top-down fashion. Rather, colleges apply for funding for specific professional development projects *on the basis of what educators themselves request in order to improve their professional practice*. This “bottom-up” approach puts the educators at the centre, and respects their authority and autonomy as agents of change.

Seemingly, given the necessary adjustments to the state’s (and SACE’s) procurement arrangements, this initiative could be introduced locally at a cost not greatly exceeding the current amounts that flow to providers of CPD short courses to in-service educators.

### Effective professional development for educators: What to look for

TVET lecturers do not have time to waste on continuing professional development that is poorly planned or presented and does not meet their needs. Having found that while many professional development initiatives aimed at educators failed to produce positive results, there were also many that did, Linda Darling-Hammond and a team of researcher/writers reviewed 35 studies conducted over the last three decades in order to identify the elements of effective professional development. Defining effective professional development as “structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes”, they identified *seven key characteristics of successful educator professional development*. Such professional development:

**Is content focused:** Professional development that focuses on teaching strategies associated with *specific curriculum content* supports teacher learning within educators’ classroom contexts. This element includes an intentional focus on discipline-specific curriculum development and pedagogies in areas such as mathematics, science, or literacy.

**Incorporates active learning:** Active learning engages educators directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, providing them an opportunity to engage in the same style of learning as they are designing for their own students. Such professional development uses authentic artifacts, interactive activities and other strategies to provide highly contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional learning models and environments that are lecture-based and have no direct connection to teachers’ classrooms and students.

**Supports collaboration:** High-quality professional development creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district.

**Uses models of effective practice:** Curriculum models and modelling of instruction provide educators with a clear vision of what best practices look like. Teachers may view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer educators, and video or written cases studies of teaching.

**Provides coaching and expert support:** Coaching and expert support involve the sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on educators’ individual needs.

**Offers feedback and reflection:** High-quality professional learning frequently provides built-in time for educators to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Feedback and reflection both help educators to move thoughtfully towards expert visions of practice.

**Is of sustained duration:** Effective professional development provides educators with *adequate time* to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice. Their research shows that effective professional learning incorporates most or all of these elements. They also examined professional learning communities (PLCs) as an example of a professional development model that incorporates several of these effective elements and supports student learning gains. This collaborative and job-embedded professional development can be a source of efficacy and confidence for teachers, and can result in widespread improvement within and beyond the school level.

Stop and think

This review of best practice in professional development is clearly aimed at people who design, present, conduct or make decisions about professional development initiatives. Of what use is it then to lecturers, who are the *recipients* of professional development?

This review is included here simply to provide you with a set of criteria with which to evaluate the professional development experiences that you will either be required to participate in, or those in which you will voluntarily participate. If you are considering taking a short course or enrolling for a diploma, you could use it as a checklist for assessing what the course invitation or prospectus promises – will the learning experience meet your actual needs? Most professional development these days – whether it takes the form of mentoring or a one-day workshop – ends with a request to evaluate the service provided with the aim of improving its future quality. Whether your attendance is compulsory or voluntary, having the seven criteria in mind would enable you to provide productive feedback.

The version of the seven characteristics provided above is taken from the executive summary of the review. Should you wish to read more, you can download the full report: [here](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report)

# Reflection on Unit 4

This unit started by discussing some of the particular challenges that novice lecturers often experience, examined the concept of resilience, and set out some techniques to help you survive your initial years as a lecturer. It is hoped that experienced lecturers who may be considering taking on the role of mentor, or those already in that position, may gain some insights from reading this section.

The unit also introduced you to the notion that achieving and sustaining the identity of a professional TVET lecturer (being a TVET lecturer) and effectively managing one’s career, is a self-driven process that encompasses one’s career over time, and requires effort, forethought and reflection.

# Summative assessment

You are approached by the editor of the *TVET Times* to contribute a “thought piece” article on *professionalism for TVET lecturers* (length 800 words max.). Your summative assessment task is to produce this article.

You could simply write as yourself, or you may take on the point of view of anyone with a connection to the TVET context. Do *not* limit your focus to the content in Unit 2; *contextualise* professionalism by drawing on ideas related to the challenges facing TVET colleges and lecturers, and the qualities needed to meet these challenges.

Finally, be aware that most of your peers will probably refer to the same elements of professionalism and the same challenges. Therefore, try to make your article distinguished by its depth of understanding of these elements, and by the originality and illustrative crispness of the examples you provide.

Before you commence your article on *professionalism for TVET lecturers*, carefully study the rubric below which sets out the criteria which will be used to assess your article. This will provide guidance on how to structure and approach your article.

**Rubric** (single criterion – discriminate on the basis of the quality descriptors)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Excellent/outstanding**  **(80-100%)** | **Good (60-79%)** | **Acceptable (50-59%)** | **Not acceptable, does not meet competence requirements (<50%)** |
| **Grasp and presentation of the concept professionalism in the context of TVET lecturers and the challenges they face** | * Content is *appropriately* comprehensive (keep in mind word limit) w.r.t.: * the rationale of professionalism (e.g. professional accountability, professional competence) * elements of professionalism * inherent challenges * challenges in South African TVET * qualities/characteristics/ actions needed. * Depth of understanding is critical where appropriate and insightful. * Structure and presentation of ideas is skilful, logical and clear, with well-chosen examples. * Crisp, readable style, with very few language errors, can boost %. | * Coverage of content adequate to the task of providing some *insight* into: * professionalism in TVET * challenges confronting lecturers * some of the qualities needed.   However, some gaps in the content.   * Reasonably good conceptual understanding, but little that could be labelled “critical or in-depth understanding”. Some understanding of inherent challenges being inherent. * Structure for the most part clear and reasonably logical, with a few appropriate examples. * Style: reasonably appropriate for a think-piece article; some language errors. | * Coverage of content just barely adequate on: * professionalism in TVET * challenges confronting lecturers (inherent and South Africa-specific challenges not distinguished) * some of the qualities needed. * Reveals little real insight, and some significant gaps in the content. * Little sign of a structured argument, but points presented in a reasonably logical order. * Very few examples, with relevance of some examples unclear. * Stylistically sloppy, with many errors, but still makes basic sense. | * Several significant gaps in the content (e.g. no attention paid to key elements of professionalism or other key concepts, or challenges.) Slapdash – details poorly expressed. * Very superficial understanding of professionalism or professional competence. * Structure confused, haphazard; examples irrelevant or non-existent. * Language obstructs reader’s understanding |
| **Student score (write score in appropriate cell)** |  |  |  |  |

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# Reading

## Induction of new teachers and continuous professional development

Excerpt from European Union Commission. (2014). *TVET teacher education in Africa: Synthesis report* Brussels: Directorate-General for Education and Culture, International Cooperation in Education and Youth

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**Ireland – Pilot project for new design of induction of new teachers (“Droichead”)**

**Description:** This intervention was designed by the Irish Teaching Council to reconceptualise the link between “induction” (additional workshops / training, sometimes complemented with actual support in the workplace), and the “probation” period (the initial work experience until registration). In its new conceptualisation, probation is the point that marks the end of the induction period of a newly qualified teacher. To structure this new induction period, the Teaching Council started a pilot called “Droichead” (Irish for “bridge”).

**Context:** In Ireland a relatively strict registration system is in place for newly qualified teachers. Upon graduation, newly qualified teachers need to engage in a number of workshops to finalise “induction” into the profession, complemented by the approved teaching experience of 300 hours, within the first three years. Upon meeting these criteria, the national Teaching Council formalises the registration of new teachers. Only after this formal registration, are teachers fully qualified to teach by themselves.

**Approach:** The core of the Droichead approach is to offer newly qualified teachers a structure for support from experienced colleagues, who understand what is involved in teaching and learning in their school. These professionals will themselves be supported through the provision of a range of structures and resources. The design of Droichead is based on a body of research in education, which shows that the closer the support and the learning is to the site of practice, the greater the impact of that support and learning. It should also be seen in the context of institutionalising professional development at the workplace, which does not stop at induction or probation of newly qualified teachers, but is a continuous feature of the teaching profession.

Currently, Droichead, which is still a pilot, functions alongside the “normal” induction system, which provides a combination of workshops and information sessions to newly qualified teachers. Droichead adds a structure for professional support to the existing requirements for newly qualified teachers in the field of minimum teaching hours and participation in relevant workshops. Under Droichead, each participating school (primary, and various types of post-primary schools, including vocational schools) sets up a professional support team for newly qualified teachers, consisting of at least 3 experienced (and fully registered) teachers, the school principal, and the mentor of the newly qualified teacher. The Teaching Council recommends that the members of the team have at least five years of professional experience. The mentor will have the primary supporting role to the new teacher, and will plan in detail personalised steps for development. The other members of the support team are not that closely involved, but may offer feedback after regular observation of the teaching of the newly qualified teacher.

In the currently running pilot, the Teaching Council suggests for various schools in the same region to work in clusters, to also include views in the professional supporting teams from professionals in other schools. This contributes to including fresh views on the performance of teachers across different schools.

The pilot project for a new induction period offers a very relevant learning trajectory for new TVET teachers, which is equally valuable for industry professionals that enter into the teaching profession after gaining professional experience in the sector. By offering personal guidance in introducing the new teacher into the profession, the chances are increased that the newly qualified teacher stays in the TVET sector. Participants in the project are very positive about the potential of the programme. Mentors for instance, find the process of supporting new teachers’ induction into the profession a very rewarding one, which contributes greatly to the cohesion between the body of staff (both new teachers, and those who are fully registered and experienced), while it also offers relevant learning perspectives to the mentor.

An interesting element that is observed in the programme is the high level of responsibility assigned to the mentor, principal and other members of the professional support teams, as these have the responsibility to report to the Teaching Council whether a newly qualified teacher can be assigned the full registration status.

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The type and content of continuing teacher education curriculum is equally relevant. A Finnish initiative is finding a way to encourage TVET teachers to update their skills to prevent them from becoming obsolete. Again, this practice targets the skills of teachers but equally seeks to contribute to the motivation and self-image of the TVET teacher, which, as this report shows elsewhere, are crucial elements.

**Finland – Work-based learning for teachers**

**Description:** To ensure the link between education and practice, and ensure that TVET teachers continue to update their technical skills with the latest developments in the labour market, the “competent to work markets” project enables work-based learning, not for students but for teachers. With support of the project, Finnish vocational teachers were placed in an authentic work placement for a period of time (ranging from 2 weeks to 3 months), to develop their competences in collaboration with employers. During this period, teachers worked in jobs in their expertise area, either in enterprises or in the public sector. Formally, the aim was “to develop substance knowledge pedagogy as well as to create facilities for systematic cooperation between the workplace and educational institution.”

**Approach:** The idea behind the project is that a teacher’s competences are not permanent, and need to be continuously updated. The needs of working life change, as do education, technical development in the field and work processes in relevant industry sectors. An authentic work placement for a limited period for teachers thereby offers possibilities for updating and developing professional expertise. It can also give teachers various perspectives from which to choose new and innovative study content for students to meet the future needs of work life after obtaining their qualification.

Participating teachers reported that the work placement had a positive influence on the teachers’ personal competences and contributed to the integration of school curricula with the work place. Particularly the dialogue that is supported through these interactions is given an important positive role. The work placement offered teachers the opportunity to reflect on their daily work and confirm their knowledge of practices and work cultures in the field, reflect on professional theory and practice in their field of expertise, and most importantly, make use of refreshed understandings to develop new ideas for teaching practices. An unintended consequence of the interactions is that the positive experiences of teachers in the programme also contribute to motivation at work and increased feelings of self-respect.

The benefits of the work-based learning for teachers do not only extend to the personal development of teachers. Instead, positive effects were also reported for the educational institution. The work placement offered a relevant opportunity to evaluate ongoing teaching practices, and branded the local education institution more specifically as a relevant service organisation in the local economy. By making the teachers directly visible to local business, ties could be strengthened to the benefit of the schools, teachers and the students. It offered a way to inform businesses about ongoing education processes, evaluation of students, contents, purpose and curricula. As such, this project shows how the development of TVET teacher skills can make a broader contribution to the quality of TVET. Participants in the project indicated that they saw themselves differently; they were no longer school officials (civil servants), but instead facilitators of learning, and crucial representatives of an economic sector.

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The curriculum of TVET teacher education ideally has two sides which deserve equal attention. On the one hand training the technical side of teachers is crucial to equip TVET students with the necessary and relevant skills to find sustainable employment. The Finnish example of work placement of TVET teachers is an interesting approach that contributes to this goal. The other element of TVET teaching, which encompasses pedagogy is equally important. A Danish practice that has been active over the last decade shows how to develop and update the pedagogical skills of TVET teachers by means of continued professional development.

**Denmark – Innovation and development in TVET curricula and systems**

**Description:** Denmark has a long tradition of using local innovations to modernise TVET curricula and systems. Particularly in the 1990s, the funding through so-called “innovation and development” projects has been an important tool for the Danish Ministry of Education to support local or regional projects within set priority areas guided by the expertise of TVET teaching consultants. These development projects are seen as important contributions to the continued up-skilling of TVET teachers in Denmark, where innovation of content, methods and teacher competence development go hand in hand.

**Approach:** As part of larger system of reforms in the 1990s towards a more market-oriented provision of TVET, pilot projects on internal quality development were initiated at a number of colleges. To support TVET colleges in their work to translate the new national objectives into local approaches, the Danish Ministry of Education set up a fund for innovation activities, targeted at the teaching staff. Through this fund, the Ministry set yearly priorities, allowing TVET providers to request funding for specific projects under the set priority. To obtain the funding, teachers were required to indicate where they wanted to improve their practices. Given this bottom-up focus of projects under the funding, the projects are closely related to the challenges perceived by teachers. In practice, the projects are guided by the expertise of TVET teaching consultants funded directly by government. Most literature points to this approach as good practice as it combines innovation of content, methods and teacher competence development. It is unique in the sense that these projects contribute to the development of quality in those areas indicated by teachers, while also explicitly focusing on teachers as “change agents”. Afterwards, the results from these colleges are integrated into an overall quality strategy. The overall aim of the strategy was to improve and develop the VET that was provided, and to make the VET programmes more attractive. This was to be achieved by motivating the VET providers to integrate the principle of “self-evaluation” into their overall management philosophy, so that this would comprise an on-going, internal quality assurance and development, and a continuous evaluation of activities and results. In order to promote the quality strategy at the colleges, quality became one of the priority areas by the mid-1990s, and all colleges were able to apply for funding for quality assurance activities.

This Danish practice gives an example of how a central government can contribute to developing the quality of TVET teachers, by allowing teachers themselves to select the competence areas they want to focus on. To make this work, it is essential that funding is made available to contribute to the quality development of teaching staff. Potentially, the Danish model may therefore be adopted as a model for foreign donors in designing continued professional development for TVET teachers. Whereas the exact model of competition for central funding may not be possible to replicate in an African context, this Danish example underlines the need for national policymakers to respect the autonomy of TVET teachers, and see them as “change agents”. Without helping TVET teachers develop their competences to deal with the issues they encounter daily in the classroom, national governments will not be able to raise the quality of TVET. Whereas the Danish government put out a set of priorities in which it provided funding, they left it to the creativity of TVET teachers to design projects for their own further competence development.