



# Exploring a Work-Based Values Approach in South African TVET Colleges to Improve Employability of Youth

## Literature Review

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# Abbreviations

CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
EPWP	Extended Public Works Programme
ETI	Employment Tax Incentive
FET	Further Education and Training
GDP	gross domestic product
HRD	human resources development
HRM	human resources management
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
NATED	National Accredited Technical Diploma
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NCV	National Certificate (Vocational)
NPO	non-profit organisation
NQF	National qualifications framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OC	Occupational Qualification
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WBE	work-based education
WIL	work-integrated learning



# Abstract

While access to post-secondary education has expanded at unprecedented levels in South Africa in the last decade, access of the country's youth to decent work and livelihoods remains a national concern. South Africa's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, predominantly attended by marginalised Black African youth, are situated at a pivotal point that has the potential to build the critical bridge between education and the labour market, and as a result, improve the employability of the youth. In this literature review, we consider this opportunity for systemic change from a perspective that, in our view, is largely under-researched in South Africa as well as internationally. Our focus is on student, lecturer and employer values, specifically on values related to working and workplaces. Drawing on the available literature and a few available examples of African and international interventions in this area, we argue that the findings can be used to design a values approach to work-based learning in South African TVET colleges. This approach, and the interventions that can follow from it, requires the development of a conceptual framework that positions the proposed work in relation to the relevant social science field and in relation to how it can contribute to curriculum development that offers enhanced employment chances.



## Introduction

South Africa is a society in the process of deepening post-apartheid democracy and combating historically high levels of unemployment, with the ambition of achieving shared economic growth. In this democratic era, despite many hurdles, there are young Black South Africans who have taken advantage of the available education and work opportunities. But, while access to post-secondary education has expanded at unprecedented levels, access of the country's youth to decent work and livelihoods has remained a national concern – even more so with South Africa's slow economic recovery after the great recession of 2009.

South Africa's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are predominantly attended by marginalised Black African youth, many of whom may have left school early, do not qualify to enter higher education, have limited financial resources for continuing to study and are at high risk of unemployment. Importantly, the challenge in South Africa is greater than in many other emerging economies, with over three million young South Africans disengaged from education and work (Field, Musset & Álvarez-Galvanán, 2014). Failure to integrate this population into the labour market poses a significant threat to social cohesion in the country.

In this environment, JET Education Services (JET) identified an opportunity to positively influence TVET college curriculum change at a critical period during which the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has highlighted the strategic importance of exposure to work-based education/work-integrated learning (WBE/WIL) in the transition of young graduates between college and the labour market. The envisaged intervention is intent on improving the impact of the most populous National Accredited Technical Diploma (NATED) programmes in the TVET basket of qualification offerings and builds on the requirement for students in South African TVET colleges to undergo one or more periods of WBE/WIL as part of their annual programme requirements. The intervention posits exploring the opportunities and options for introducing a work-based values curriculum component<sup>1</sup> linked to WBE/WIL programmes that would enhance the benefits of the work-based learning experience, thereby preparing students more effectively for the workplace and, thereafter, for successfully obtaining and retaining employment.

In preparation for this new approach focusing on student, lecturer and employer values, some exploration of the South African context and the international literature on values related to working and workplaces is necessary: knowing how values are investigated in the literature can offer important intelligence on how to most productively design a values approach to work-based learning. Furthermore, the intervention in mind will require the development of a conceptual framework that positions the proposed work in

<sup>1</sup> 'Component' implies the design of a curriculum element; such an element's duration and weight and how it might be inserted into an existing curriculum cannot be considered in advance of the proposed intervention.

relation to the relevant social science field and in relation to how it can contribute to curriculum development that offers enhanced employment chances.

To this end, JET undertook a literature review as a prelude to designing an intervention that harnesses a work-based values approach to support the TVET social project through strengthening the social capital and employment potential of graduate job-seekers and increasing their chances of finding stable, remunerated employment (Hyland, 2007).

The literature review covers:

- The role of work-based learning in TVET colleges;
- The values approach to work-based learning;
- The South African TVET context in relation to work-based learning;
- Values education in South Africa;
- The acquisition and importance of values;
- Factors that affect work-related values; and
- The relationship between values and employability.

Suggestions for taking the values approach to work-based learning further are presented in the conclusion.

## Work-based learning in TVET colleges

The cardinal principle of including compulsory work experience in the annual programme of activities of all technical and vocational courses on offer in TVET colleges is taking hold in South Africa. The learning opportunities inherent in this activity are taken as a necessity: that students must be required to apply what they have learned from college-based theory and practical activities in a real working environment in order to significantly enhance their vocational and occupational capabilities.

A great deal is learned through participating in the world of work. But students do not necessarily realise the full value of experience in a real working environment on site. Further learning and awareness is brought about through complementary activities that help to frame the workplace experience and guide students towards acquiring greater insight into their identity and role as occupational practitioners. Standard complementary activities to work experience would entail: beforehand – sensitising students about what to expect and look out for as part of preparation; during – requiring students to reflect on their experience as it unfolds; and afterward – encouraging students to extract useful learnings in retrospect that can be practically applied going forward.

As the scale at which South African TVET colleges implement WIL increases, the colleges are responding differently in the way they develop and implement complementary activities: some are responding on a piecemeal basis, while others are taking a more systematic and standardised approach to managing actual work experience. Resource scarcity in terms of personnel and other costs places limitations on what can be achieved. The DHET has not, to the knowledge of the authors of this document, issued a directive on how the complementary activities should be managed or conceptually informed.



Circumstantial evidence suggests that the conceptual underpinnings of complementary programmes are quite varied: some colleges do not appear to have adopted a particular point of departure or are still working towards that end. In other colleges, the complementary programmes are consciously informed by the general principle of improving student employability. This paper is similarly concerned with the challenge of enhancing student employability, but notes that the aim of enhancing employability can be approached through different conceptual lenses, one of which is the work-based values approach.

## The values-based approach

A values approach to work-based learning is offered as a response to the observation that work-based values, whose impact on behaviour has hitherto been underestimated, are insufficiently acknowledged as drivers of workplace behaviour. With this in mind, what is needed is a structured programme of WBE that supports students in exploring their own work-based values, hearing and interpreting employer's behaviours, assumptions and expectations and creatively considering and engaging around mutual acceptable and beneficial arrangements. This experience needs to offer students opportunities to apply their individual values frameworks to making sense of workplace relationships and to provide orientation in making important workplace decisions.

The approach is based on the heightened importance of understanding how work-based values inform behaviour in the current labour market. All work seekers, including the newly graduated, and all employers undoubtedly express values that are pertinent to the world of work. The values that employers hold inform how they select for new hires, how they treat current employees and how they formulate their expectations regarding how employees should behave in the workplace. Likewise, values inform how a worker (in this context, typically a TVET graduate with intermediate level occupational skills) responds to and interacts with different members of the workplace hierarchy from their perspective as intermediate skilled workers or members of teams constituting mainly intermediate skilled workers and their supervisors and managers.

The approach proposed favours adopting a values-based framework that informs the design of a programme that complements and adds value to students' work-based exposure. The aim is to expose TVET students to a structured programme with an embedded process based on work-based values that takes place in conjunction with the schedule of WBE work placements of students in active businesses. The intention is to achieve a conceptual synergy between the activities of the complementary programme and the actual work-based experience. The desired outcome would be TVET students graduating with a maturing understanding of their own values as drivers of their own behaviour and an open and receptive approach to understanding the behaviour and underlying values of

various participants in the workspace, from workers, to supervisors, to managers, to owners and shareholders.

More specifically, it will be proposed that a work-based values framework can provide a structure within which young people can make sense of their work experience in ways that contribute positively to their long-term chances of finding employment, of retaining their employment and even of regaining employment should it be temporarily lost.

Curriculum development and implementation in the field of values education in South African TVET colleges is relatively undeveloped. Early initiatives to initiate a values-based approach in schooling were highly contested. Accordingly, a proposal to conduct a curriculum intervention in the form of a values-based component in a South African public school or college must be supported by an appropriate rationale.

In order to make a convincing case for this approach, an understanding of values as an important facet of the TVET college student's experience must be advanced. Developing the envisaged workplace values component needs to take into consideration (a) what the implications of values for workplace behaviour might be; (b) how to construct a sound conceptualisation of the purpose of and place for work-based values education; (c) what pedagogical approach would be suitable for advancing a work-based values education; (d) how the concept of work-based values articulates with the South African curriculum; and (e) how workplace values are currently expressed in South Africa.

## The South African TVET context

In this section, the main programmes offered in the TVET colleges for which the values-based approach would be relevant are identified. Secondly, the overall student profile at the TVET colleges is presented to illustrate the rising demand for arranging attachments for work-based exposure and the pressure to find a way to make the WBE/WIL model more effective.

### Main programmes offered in TVET Colleges

The main TVET programmes are the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) and the NATED (N1–N6). It must be noted here that the different configurations of these programmes will place limits on how WBE/WIL can be integrated into them. The former is a general-vocational three-year institution-based programme. The latter, for the entire N1 to N6, is structured over a possible six years, during which study time in the institution consists of half of the programme time, while the remainder involves attachment to a workplace. However, many learners opt to only complete N1 to N3 in an engineering field, as in many cases an N2 or N3 is still the preferred qualification in many industries for granting access to an engineering apprenticeship in South Africa. A brief summary of the recent evolution of these programmes is provided below.





Figure 1: Description of levels and qualifications offered by education institutions in South Africa’s National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

NQF level	NQF band	Qualification type	Institutions			Occupational qualifications	
			Universities	General primary and high schools	TVET colleges		
10	Higher Education and Training	Doctoral Degree	PhD				
9		Master’s Degree	Masters Degree				
8		Bachelor Hons Degree; Post Graduate Diploma; Bachelor’s Degree	Hons Degree			OC8	
7		Bachelor’s Degree; Advanced Diploma	Bachelors Degree		NATED N6	OC7	
6		Diploma; Advanced Certificate	Dip		NATED N5	OC6	
5		Higher Certificate	H Cert		NATED N4	OC5	
4	Further Education and Training	National Senior Certificate (NSC)		NSC Grade 12	NCV 4	NATED N3	OC4
3				Grade 11	NCV 3	NATED N2	OC2
2				Grade 10	NCV 2	NATED N1	OC1
1	General Education and Training			Grades 3–9			

} Intermediate skills band

Note: Additional important opportunities, though not accredited, would include various skills programmes.

After 1994, the democratic government inherited the NATED curriculum which operated on a trimester format according to which students elected to enrol for modules that articulated in a programme from N1 (Grade 9) to N3 (Grade 12) and extended to N6 (Advanced Diploma) (Figure 1 above). Alternatively, NATED modules could be taken on a stand-alone basis, and this continues up to the present. Curriculum reform post-1994 placed TVET in the Further Education and Training (FET) band, and the curriculum was designed to fit the Revised Curriculum Statement. The following section, which sets out the scale of graduate production from TVET programmes, shows that the NATED programmes still cater for a very large number of students in full- and part-time study. The NATED programmes are scheduled to be phased out by 2019 and replaced by occupationally based qualifications currently in development by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). Occupational programmes will have to include a practical component and a work-based education component.

In 2011, the NCV, a full-time, four-year general vocational programme, was implemented. The NCV was intended to assist colleges to overcome the legacy of the NATED or N programmes which, it was argued, had limited the scope of

college provision and inhibited the employability of college students. While the NCV was viewed as the basis for future growth and development in college programme delivery, this did not transpire. The NCV was supposed to position colleges to deliver general vocational programmes that prepared graduates for entry into the workplace and address priority skills needs. It was also supposed to provide an alternative pathway for young people who had completed their Grade 9 and wished to follow a vocational career path. Furthermore, the NCV was supposed to provide the equivalent of a vocational matric certificate at Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Finally, the colleges were supposed to offer both the NCV and the NATED legacy programmes. In addition to other problems, this situation strained teaching systems, and NCV recruitment has lagged behind the NATED programmes, which, although they were supposed to be phased out, had their mandate briefly extended. It is of relevance that the NCV’s WBE/WIL programmes differ in duration and design from those of the NATED programmes.

The Occupational Qualifications recognised at the right of the figure (OC1–8) are currently in development by the QCTO. The insertion of an occupational dimension into the



intermediate qualification programmes as reflected in the NQF is intended to support greater confidence in skills demand and supply decision-making by employers, sectoral agencies and government.

## TVET enrolment and employment

### Enrolment

In this section, attention is given to the enrolment demographics and throughput characteristics of TVET students. It is important to be in a position to understand the current and future demand for access to WBE/WIL opportunities and also to appreciate the particular needs of students as they move through their programmes into WBE/WIL placements. These needs will impact on how WBE/WIL programmes are designed in relation to resources available.

The first notable feature is how quickly student enrolment in TVET colleges expanded in the recent five-year period (DHET, 2016). Between 2010 and 2014, TVET college enrolment rose from 358 393 to 702 383, an increase over the period of 95.9%. Year on year enrolment varied, but the biggest single increase in a single year of more than 250 000 – or 64.3% – took place in 2012 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of students enrolled in public TVET colleges from 2010 to 2014**

Year	Public TVET	% change
2010	358 393	-
2011	400 273	+11.7
2012	657 690	+64.3
2013	639 618	-2.7
2014	702 383	+9.8

Source: DHET (2016)

Commitment of the DHET to provide opportunities through the TVET colleges to school leavers is without doubt; and this concentration outweighs headcount increases in other sectors of the post-school system (Table 2). However, the consequences of this scale of increase must be noted: first, the stress on systems of teaching and learning, which might affect quality; and second, the stress on college systems that are supposed to enable or support students and graduates to find work-based experience and employment.

**Table 4: Students enrolled in public TVET colleges by qualification category and population group in percentages, 2014**

Qualification Category	Black African	Coloured	Indian	White	Other	Recon.	Total
NATED N1–N6	87.7	6.0	0.6	1.9	1.2	2.6	100
NCV	91.0	6.0	0.2	0.5	0.1	2.2	100
Report 550/NSC	99.1	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Occupational Qualification	45.0	23.4	0.3	7.0	0.2	24.1	100
Other	2.1	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	96.0	100
Total	83.8	6.3	0.5	1.7	0.8	6.9	100

Source: DHET (2016)

**Table 2: Changing enrolment numbers in the post-school system from 2010 to 2014 (000 000)**

Post-school sector	2010	2012	2014
University (public and private)	0.79	0.95	0.97
Colleges (public and private)	0.33	0.66	0.70
Adult Education (public and private)	0.29	0.31	0.26
Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	2.78	2.95	3.00

Source: Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) website (n.d.)

As alluded to earlier, overall enrolment is concentrated in two qualification streams: the NATED N1–N6 and the NCV, which respectively account for 69.3% and 23.7% of total enrolment; and a work-based values intervention is advocated to contribute to improving the impact of the NATED, the most populous of these programmes. Implementing such an intervention would necessitate anticipating the number of required WBE/WIL placements and assessing the demands on college structures and employers in managing and accommodating placements.

**Table 3: Share of students enrolled in public TVET colleges by qualification category, 2014**

Qualification category	Public TVET Enrolment	%
Nated N1–N6	486 933	69.3
NCV	166 433	23.7
National Senior Certificate & Other qualifications	29 192	4.2
Occupational Qualifications	19 825	2.8
Total	702 383	100

Source: DHET (2016)

Looking at enrolment by population group, Black African students represent the dominant majority in the N1–N6 and NCV groups, accounting for practically nine in ten students, with minor representation of Coloured students and negligible numbers of Indian and White students. It should be noted that many Black African students do not qualify to go to university or are from households where university tuition fees are out of reach. Under these circumstances, it is all the more important that students access study opportunities with meaningful WBE/WIL exposure to maximise their chances of realising decent forms of employment.

**Table 5: Students enrolled in public TVET colleges by qualification category and age group in percentages, 2014**

Qualification Category	<15	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40>	Recon.	Total
NATED N1–N6	-	11.6	52.9	16.3	6.5	3.1	2.0	7.6	100
NCV	-	14.0	55.8	14.5	2.9	0.9	0.4	11.5	100
Report 550/NSC	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	99.8	100
Occupational Qualification	-	5.7	31.3	24.5	15.3	9.6	13.9	-0.4	100
Other	-	8.4	41.9	28.7	13.1	7.4	5.9	-5.3	100
<b>Total</b>	-	11.8	52.5	16.6	6.2	2.9	2.1	7.9	100

Source: DHET (2016)

The age range of enrolment in the NATED and NCV programmes extends from 15 to 29 years of age, with a concentration of just over 50% in the 20–24-year-old age group. Many students in the 15–24-year age group have limited working experience. For example, in 2015, 58.4% of 18–29-year-olds had never worked before (Yu, Kasongo, & Moses, 2016). This again highlights the importance of colleges offering work-based learning experience opportunities.

Of note is that the gender balance of student enrolment in the N1–N3 years favours males in a ratio of 6:4, whereas in the N4–N6 years, female students are in the majority in a 6:4 ratio. Given this strong reversal, the influence of gender on values orientation and how to accommodate any gender-related differences is important to consider in WBE/WIL programme design.

Consideration of the demographic information outlined above will help to anticipate the number of required WBE/WIL

placements or attachments and assess the demands on college personnel and employers in accommodating students. Given the demographics, the preparation for WBE/WIL attachments needs to be of sufficient quality across age ranges. In addition, it must be recognised that these figures need to be disaggregated by location, since rural-based colleges may struggle more to find businesses that can offer the range of WBE/WIL attachments needed.

#### **Completion**

Finally, the completion rates of students must be noted, as there is a substantial discrepancy between those who registered and those who completed. That nearly 70% of NCV Level 4 students, nearly 60% of N6 students and nearly 47% of N3 students were not able to complete their courses strongly suggests that the colleges are experiencing quality challenges in their three biggest programmes.

**Table 6: Students enrolled in public TVET colleges for NATED programmes, by level and gender, 2014**

NATED Level	Female	Male	Total	% F	% M
N1	20 583	36 443	57 026	36.1	63.9
N2	26 063	46 076	72 139	36.1	63.9
N3	18 270	32 227	50 497	36.2	63.8
N4	79 995	53 586	133 581	59.9	40.1
N5	58 851	35 735	94 586	62.2	37.8
N6	43 588	26 893	70 481	61.8	38.2
Reconciliation	na	na	8 623	-	-
<b>Total</b>	247 350	230 960	486 933	-	-

Source: DHET (2016)

**Table 7: Number of students in public TVET colleges who registered, wrote examinations and completed national qualifications, by qualification type and gender, in 2014**

	Registered	Wrote	Completed	Completed as a % of registered
NATED (N3)	44 082	42 244	23 411	53.1
NATED (N6)	58 634	57 014	24 396	41.6
NCV Level 4	24 941	22 176	7 624	30.6
<b>Total</b>	127 657	121 434	55 431	43.4

Source: DHET (2016)



The implication for students of not completing their courses of study is that non-completion makes them less likely to find employment. Nevertheless, having undergone a good quality WBE/WIL programme might improve their employment chances.

### Unemployment

The interaction between unemployment and poverty among young people who have not completed their studies and are under pressure to find work is of great concern. Although gross employment in South Africa has increased since 1994, the pace has not been fast enough to absorb all new entrants into the labour market. Already high unemployment levels that were a legacy of apartheid policy have increased. For example, after the global recession, South African employment rose from 14,2 to 15,7 million between 2009 and 2015. But the 2015 national labour absorption rate of 43,7% was 2,2% below the 2008 pre-recessionary high (Statistics South Africa, 2016, p. 36). Furthermore, gross domestic product (GDP) forecasts for economic growth of between 2% to 3% over the medium term are much lower than the threshold levels above which economic growth may become positively labour absorbing. Formulating and implementing an economic growth path to support and maintain economic and employment growth will take time. The situation that most people entering the labour market must confront is the high risk of unemployment that contributes to poverty, inequality and dependence on social safety nets. Meanwhile, as much as possible must be done in the colleges to improve TVET graduates' chances of finding employment. In this environment, the value of WBE/WIL and placement that is built into TVET qualifications is crucial.

Possession of a qualification is a fundamental benchmark – though not necessarily the only one – that facilitates an employer's selection decision. But qualification levels are also instrumental in determining jobseekers' access to particular job

types. The figure below refers to average unemployment calculated between 1995 and 2012 of cohorts completing grades and education qualifications at different levels in the post-school environment. As can be seen, unemployment outcomes plotted for each qualification occur within a range. Comparison of the range of unemployment per qualification demonstrates that holders of some qualifications are far more exposed to the risk of unemployment than others (Festus, Kasonga, Moses & Yu, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

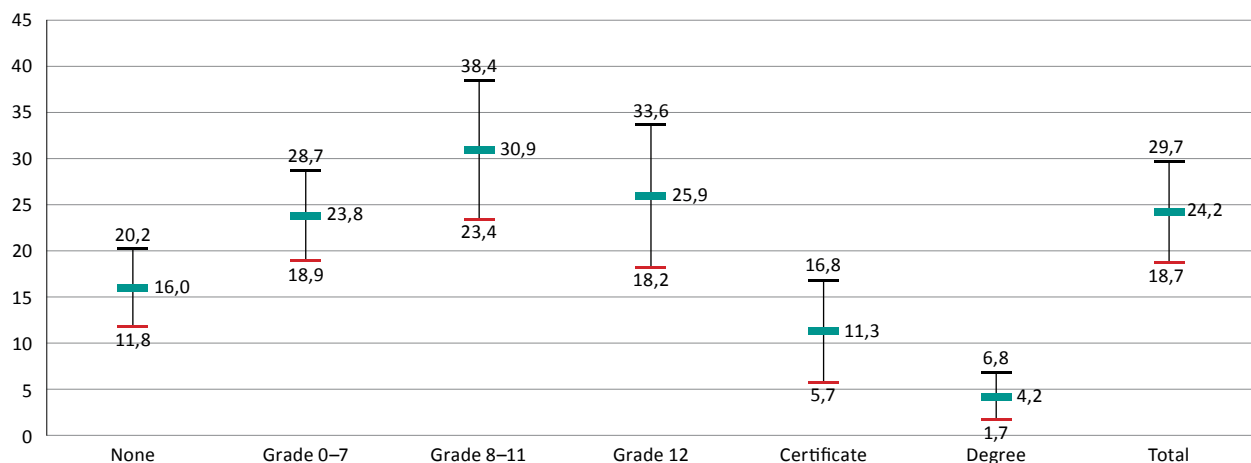
The range of unemployment experienced over the period per qualification or grade shows a clear pattern. There is a steady decline in employment chances from possession of a degree downward to individuals who completed all school grades except Grade 12. This emphasises two aspects: first, that as much as possible must be done to increase completion rates among candidates for the NSC/Grade 12 or its equivalent, particularly the N4, N5 or N6. There is clearly a substantial increase in unemployment for young people who do not complete a post-Grade 12 certificate or diploma; second, students need to access the maximum possible work exposure during their studies. A WBE/WIL attachment that prompts young people to engage with the workplace will create opportunities for self-development and prepare young people better to compete in the job market and keep jobs.

## Values education in South Africa

The evolution of values education in South Africa is briefly narrated in this section to reveal how values have been treated

<sup>2</sup> Based on their data, Festus et al. argue that having a matric – the country's highest secondary school qualification – no longer leads to better labour market opportunities. The unemployment rate of matriculants stood at 17.2% in 1996. Matriculants were 6.6% more likely to find a job than those without matric. By 2015, the unemployment rate of matriculants was very high, at 27.1%. And having a matric only offered a marginal advantage over those without a matric. The unemployment rate for those without a matric was only 2% higher.

Figure 2: Long-run average unemployment between 1995 and 2012, by education cohorts



Note: In this figure, on the horizontal axis, Grade 12 is the equivalent of an N3, and Certificate is the equivalent of an N4 to N6. The 95% confidence interval is constructed by calculating the mean unemployment rate and standard deviations, then applying the 68–95–99.7 rule. Source: Borhat, Cassim & Tseng (2016, p. 315).



and the political and pedagogical challenges associated with a values-based approach. The section provides an overview of the broad field of values in education in South Africa since 1994. This work focused primarily on the contribution of values to school education and curricula. In this period, activities were concerned with broader social values, with limited attention given to values related to the world of work. Nevertheless, it is necessary to locate the proposed intervention in relation to the antecedent values debates. This is done as a basis for making an argument to take forward work-based values in the curriculum as a potentially fruitful space in which graduates from TVET colleges may derive benefit through better preparation for the world of work.

### **Values in the TVET curriculum**

Values daily inform behaviour and attitudes in the workplace. If students are afforded the opportunity to debate and formulate their own work-based values while at college, when they are employed they will be better equipped to achieve their potential by learning from, working with and relating on a personal level to other people at work. Accordingly, students need to become conscious of the workplace as a context where, in addition to the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies, expression of particular work values is appreciated, not only by employers, but by co-workers and supervisors. Achieving this would involve providing young people with the opportunity to digest the issues, understand values they do not necessarily subscribe to and, upon reasonable reflection, internalise values that will guide their choices and behaviour as individuals and as work-seekers.

The South African DHET argues that the main purpose of the TVET colleges is ‘to train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, *knowledge and attitudes* necessary for employment in the labour market’ (emphasis added) (DHET, 2013, p. 11). Clearly, the DHET recognises that attitudes – which stem from underlying values – are a crucial dimension of employability. Institutions of learning in South Africa such as the TVET colleges need to take up the challenge of informing and enabling young people to become familiar with their own values in relation to the work values that are associated with enhanced employability.

The TVET college programme already has some curriculum components that deal with values; these are akin to ‘Life Skills’ programmes offered in the junior and senior secondary phases of South African high schools, but they are limited in scope and depth. Values-based curriculum elements are not formally infused or integrated into other curriculum elements in the TVET colleges. This leaves open an opportunity to contribute to curriculum development, as suggested previously.

### **Politics of values in the curriculum**

It is assumed that whether in formal schooling or through informal learning, children are exposed to values, either explicitly or tacitly. In the literature, researchers have claimed to recognise international trends of increased interest in and practice of values in education since the 1990s (See Cummings,

Gopinathan & Tomoda, 1988; Taylor, 1994). This claim would be difficult to support empirically. However, in national education systems, it is possible to track a government’s interest and the interest of social interest groups (such as religious communities) in implementing values learning and teaching in some form. Indeed, in South Africa, calls for introducing values explicitly into schools have been made in various forums (Solomons & Fataar, 2011). An observation that could be made is that calls for values to be put on – or taken off – the table seem to increase in intensity during times of perceived social, political and economic transition or crisis.

South Africa is a society grappling with its political, economic and social-transition, which is inescapably bound up with values contestation and negotiation. Before 1994, an entrenched system of values based on racism and discrimination had far-reaching consequences for every person in the country throughout their lifetime. Distorted apartheid and colonial values sanctioned racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender and social-class discrimination, with devastatingly corrosive consequences for the whole society.

This observation is particularly relevant to the teaching of values in the education system because schools and other institutions of learning were primary sites through which apartheid values were systematically inculcated. It is hardly surprising that presently, even after 20 years of democracy, the teaching of values can still elicit suspicion and provoke mistrust. The phrase ‘teaching of values’ is deliberately used here to draw attention to how, in the pre-1994 period, values were predominantly transmitted through hierarchical and patriarchal relationships between teachers and the learners, who were viewed as proverbial blank slates upon which their racially coded destinies were inscribed. Emerging from this history, communities will currently ask: What values? Whose values? Serving what interests?

Christie argues that the democratic government’s policies were intended to ‘shift the values and practices of apartheid education into a democratic, rights-based approach to social and economic development’ (Christie, 2001, p. 269). However, in the period immediately after 1994, according to Jansen (2004, p. 801), government was inclined to accommodate a diversity of values, rather than engage in ‘political assertion of preferred values in education and society’.

At the time of the 2001 release of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), government had taken the initiative in respect to values education by introducing a ‘Values in Education Initiative’. Eminent human rights lawyer and then Minister of Education (1999–2004), Kader Asmal, drove a process which included issuing a draft document titled *Values, Education and Democracy* for public comment and convened a conference culminating in the Department of Education (DoE) publication: *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* in 2001 (DoE, 2000; 2001a; 2001b).

It appears that Asmal’s stated ambition, to fashion unity from diversity, was political, personal and also ambitious. He stated: ‘Here was born an idea, a South African idea, of moulding a people from diverse origins, cultural practices, languages, into one, within a framework democratic in character ... without



oppression and injustice' (DoE, 2001a, Foreword). His error was to assume that all citizens should eventually be persuaded to internalise certain values. He had previously declared that: 'Values cannot simply be asserted; it will require an enormous effort to ensure that the values are internalised by all our people' [emphasis added]. That is what we fought for. That is what our people deserve' (DoE, 2000: 4). These words imply that the author assumed *he* should know 'what our people deserve'.

The Minister was sharply critiqued by Jonathan Jansen (2004), who argued that the values endorsed by Asmal and his committee were selective and therefore exclusionary. Jansen highlighted a 'dissonance between the proposed values and everyday life among South African youth' (Jansen, 2004, p. 793) in the *Values Education and Democracy* document as follows:

The single most important flaw ... is that it fails to locate itself within the harsh and unforgiving realities of township schooling in South Africa. Read anywhere, it is a document that would find resonance within Western culture and society. Its writing style, its selection of core values, and its proposed strategies for values education, fit well within a middle-class, two-parent, economically comfortable household in which ... the conduct of open debate, could be comfortably accommodated ... It does not speak to the reality of orphan- and child-headed households in which the sheer demands of survival, physically and economically, require a very different value system than that proposed ... (Jansen, 2004, pp. 792–793)

This juxtaposition of views highlights critical lessons from the early post-1994 South African experience. It is important to start with and understand people's currently held values, acknowledge differences in values and avoid imposing homogenising value 'solutions'. Jansen justifies his argument by reference to how radical differences between rich and poor in the country underlie differences in values. If this materialist interpretation is taken literally, it implies that differences in values can therefore be expunged by changing the underlying conditions. Yet many would probably agree that values cannot be read merely as a reflection of people's material circumstances.

The foregoing analysis suggests that in devising an approach to work-based values, it would be prudent to take account of the themes emerging from recent values-related curriculum initiatives.

## Treatment of values in the curriculum after 2004

We move to the next phase of curriculum change, during which the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Framework – which replaced the Outcomes Based Curriculum 2002 – was progressively phased in, beginning in 2004 with Grades R to 3. A point of departure in tracing how work-related values are treated in the curriculum is to identify statements in the actual

curriculum documents that reveal the extent and depth of the coverage of values and, in particular, of work-related values.

The focus here is on the senior secondary phase which brings learners closer to their transition into further study in technical and vocational education or work. The logical expectation might be that this curriculum phase would give more attention to matters relating to an individual's career choice and working life. From a scan of the curriculum documents, it appears that in Grades 10 to 12, Life Orientation is the only subject to deal with values education in relation to young people's prospective working lives.

A closer look at the Life Orientation curriculum document reveals that work-related values feature only as a small facet of the section entitled, 'Outcome 4: Career and Career Choices' and is intended to prepare learners to 'be successful' by helping them to 'study effectively', demonstrate self-knowledge and 'make informed decisions about subject choices, careers, and additional and higher education opportunities' (DoE, 2003, pp. 10, 13). For instance:

- Grade 10: 'Demonstrating self-awareness and exploring socio-economic factors as considerations in own subject, career and study choices'.
  - Grade 11: 'Demonstrating competencies, abilities and ethics that will assist in securing a job and developing a career'.
  - Grade 12: 'Investigating and reporting on the core elements of a job contract, conditions of service, relevant labour laws and practices, the principles of equity and redress, the value of work and the importance of a work ethic'.
- (DoE, 2003, pp. 27, 32, 36)

The scope of Life Orientation refers mainly to decisions about post-school study, careers and work to be made by learners *before* leaving school. It does not extend at all to how learners might need to apply ethics and values in the workplace. It is clear the Life Orientation curriculum does not adequately address learners' needs to prepare for the reality of working life. The work-based values approach that takes shape in this document will go some way towards encouraging students to engage with each other on how values – including their own – impact on workplace behaviour.

A further significant flaw of the RNCS brought to our attention by Solomons and Fataar concerns its lack of capacity to fully support values education. The authors argue that:

The national curriculum's preoccupation with procedural knowledge ... is conceptually misaligned with the Constitution. ... We would thus argue that the school curriculum should be conceptually aligned to a broader conception of values that combines propositional, procedural and dispositional knowledge orientations. This, we suggest, will open up conceptual space for a critical and active citizenship orientation to values education in our country's schools. (Solomons & Fataar, 2011, p. 230)



The authors warn that ‘the current policy orientations of the government fall short in providing a basis for productive values education in schools’ and ‘that the resolution of these shortcomings is a precondition for a coherent policy for values education’ (Solomons & Fataar, 2011, p. 231). Their understanding is that an emphasis on procedural knowledge means that the curriculum material and process is dominated by an account of the legislative and institutional frameworks leading to a preoccupation with ‘what to do and how to do it’. The result is the neglect of dispositional knowledge or ‘formulating one’s own interpretations and position’ about the world and of propositional knowledge or ‘formulating and expressing ones view’ about the world. It should be evident that values education that goes beyond the transmission of procedural knowledge must be based on both dispositional and propositional knowledge. As will be discussed in more detail in this document, the pedagogical approach to workplace values will emphasise an interpretive approach and involve students in expressing their views and re-formulating their own values and dispositions to work and working.

A small body of research is also bringing to light serious practical challenges with teaching and learning of the school subject ‘Life Orientation’. These include that the subject is viewed to be of low importance relative to other subjects, there are deficiencies in teacher preparation and subject time-allocation is limited. As a consequence, learners’ experience of Life Orientation – including any values education coverage – is likely to have limited success in encouraging learners to come to grips with their values in relation to work (Adewumi, 2015; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Prinsloo, 2007; Rooth, 2005; Van Deventer, 2009).

Lastly, new forms of knowledge relevant to young people growing up in a post-modern world are emerging that need to be incorporated into existing, already crowded curricula. These new forms include global citizenship, sustainability and the impact of technologies on social interaction and working life, currently and in the future. The world of work and work-based values is another realm of knowledge that demands greater attention from school-level curricula.

## Acquisition and importance of values

Any discussion of values teaching and learning must acknowledge that values are acquired from different sources and through different processes that may contradict or reinforce each other. For example, values are expressed and internalised – or rejected, as the case may be – in the family environment, where the occupational status of parents or other role models in the family can influence the behaviour of young people in college and the workplace. Here, social-class differences in attitudes towards working and in how values are allocated to work are relevant.

Values are not only acquired through being purposefully taught. In education institutions such as colleges, students can acquire values through the stated formal curriculum, through interaction with lecturers or through informal unscripted interactions via the ‘hidden’ curriculum. In the TVET colleges,

the formal curriculum, the informal curriculum and the ‘hidden’ curriculum will impact on the values that inform student behaviour outside of class, in class, in practicals and during work-based learning.

The impact of formal or informal exposure to work-related values in TVET colleges also depends on alternative sources of values, including youth culture. Especially in a rapidly transforming society such as South Africa’s, traditional and countercultural values are likely to be propagated in juxtaposition with each other.

We have to conclude that values are inevitably communicated in the curriculum in some form. Accordingly, Chisholm (2002, pp. 8–9) declares: ‘I make no apology for values being in the curriculum. No self-respecting educationist, or teacher, or parent, can claim that the role of education, whether in the family, church or state is value-free’.

For some, values may be legitimately taught according to two assumptions: first, that education necessarily involves transmission of values, skills and knowledge; second, those canonical values are a critical cultural inheritance which should be transmitted from generation to generation through education. Based on these assumptions, education outcomes would support hegemony in favour of the social group in control of such an education process.

Awareness and critical thinking are fundamentally important resources to counter this kind of environment. The Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 put forward their approach as follows:

Curricular content is by its nature never neutral. It is always connected to a social project. This does not mean that its specification should be avoided, however. What it means is that we should be as clear as possible about the social project to be supported. This report is predicated on a curriculum based on the values of social justice, equity and development; one that seeks to foster the values of human rights, anti-racism and anti-sexism, relevance, critical thinking and problem solving.

(Jansen, 2004, p. 795)<sup>3</sup>

The concept of values that would be consonant with this approach is opposed to doctrinal transmission or imposition of values in education institutions and is oriented towards encouraging students to engage in personal values clarification and to voluntarily claim values consonant with their own worldview. Concomitant with this understanding, it is acknowledged that values are artefacts of a cultural process that immerses the individual who, for this reason, may find it difficult to objectively examine or even divest herself or himself of certain values.

In the proposed approach, values education is understood as a process that entails respectful sharing and free exchange of opinions about value positions and the implications of taking such positions. In this sense, it is preferred to refer to ‘values acquisition’, where a student selects values akin to his identity,

<sup>3</sup> Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 was convened and reported back with a report titled *A New Curriculum for the 21st Century*.



rather than values being imposed. This approach subscribes to the argument put forward by Silcock and Duncan (2001, p. 242) that students should be accorded the right and encouraged to voluntarily take a position on their values choice and that, as a result of the process, students might shift their positions rather than simply accept or retain received sets of values.

The 'capabilities approach' offers a useful conceptual framework that accords with the intervention envisaged in this document for tackling values as a means of increasing young people's personal resources to successfully achieve their goals, develop their own occupational skills and identity and secure the skills to successfully maximise their employment time over their careers. In support of this personal trajectory 'a form of education is proposed that would enable students to become aware of the values they hold, and develop them further through fostering critical thinking, practical reason, and access to knowledge, rather than directly imparting values to students' (Vaughan & Walker, 2012, p. 495).

This teaching and learning approach will make demands on the lecturer tasked with facilitating sessions. The lecturer would need to be a sound practitioner of learner-centered methodology. And the challenge for prospective teachers on such a values-based programme will be for them to make explicit their own beliefs about what education is and what the role of the teacher is and their assumptions as to how values should be addressed and what the intended outcomes should be. Accordingly, the facilitators of key sessions in a values-based programme will require training and preparation. Further, these observations bring into consideration the role that theory needs to play in a discussion of values. In the literature, there is a body of opinion that TVET colleges do not consistently advance theory as an important component of teaching and learning (See: Wheelahan, 2007).

## **The relevance of values to work and their impact**

This section engages with the features of research reported in the literature that has investigated either work values (or occupational and career preferences) or work-based values (personal values that inform behaviour in the workplace). The central questions giving direction to this literature review are: How have 'values' been treated in the empirical literature? What aspects of values have researchers chosen to investigate? How have researchers with different disciplinary points of departure made conceptual sense of values? How might the proposed approach benefit from previous work? How can the outcomes of previous studies of values guide the design of future work in this area? Selected features of the literature are highlighted where they cast light on the preoccupations of the proposed approach.

Study of the relationship between values and work goes back at least to the industrial revolution itself. Max Weber's 1904–05 canonical publication *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (first published in English in 1930) made the argument that Puritan ethics and ideas – such as protestant work values (Weber, 1904–05/2001) – influenced the

development of capitalism.<sup>4</sup> The document also draws attention to the influence of religion and culture – including Confucianism – in propagating values that impact on work practices.

The broad term 'values education' encompasses and, in practice, is often seen as having a particular emphasis on education in civic and moral values. Values education is also seen by some as the means to encouraging spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Although the proposed approach acknowledges general human values, it is specifically focused on a cluster of values considered relevant to behaviour in the workplace. This is, of course, a matter of emphasis which acknowledges the existence and influence of broader values in particular situations in the workplace.

## **Why values matter: values and behaviour**

Values matter because they inform motivations and intentions; hence they shape human action in almost any behavioural setting. Barring the contribution of technology, worker behaviour is ultimately the most important input into workplace efficiency, enterprise productivity, competitiveness and innovation. Values are an important predictor of human behaviour. Employers therefore pay close attention to the workplace values that prospective and current employees express.

Several values-related issues are current in public debates in South Africa: democratic values; values of social cohesion; values of accountability; and work values. Although we can periodise the policy, labour market and developmental trajectory of the country, comparatively little is known about continuity or change in the values of young South Africans and less so about work-related values of youth. (In other countries, see: Jin & Rounds, 2012; Johnson & Monserud, 2012).<sup>5</sup> Yet these social phenomena undoubtedly impact on the attitudes of youth to the prospect of occupational employment and of working life.

As relatively durable social and psychological constructs, values reflect what individuals and human groups hold to be important, that inform how they live and work and that define for them what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Values form part of a complex terrain of ideas and are conceptually connected to the following constructs: philosophy; ethics; morality; religion; spirituality; culture; identity; personality; and attitudes – amongst others. In some way, values may be understood as derived from or shaped by some constructs, such as religion; or values may contribute to the formation of some constructs, such as individual identity; or both processes can be present, such as in macro-cultural change.

4 'Work ethic is a belief in the moral value of work'. Collins English Dictionary – Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/work-ethic>. Accessed 18 December 2015.

5 To some extent, the South African Social Survey series managed by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) addresses the domain of values, but so far not through specific youth-oriented projects. By contrast, a substantial literature is evident on the subject in the United States.





The approach to this intervention on work-related values acknowledges that values acquisition is part of the process of individual identity formation (Lloyd, Roodt & Odendaal, 2011). The intervention therefore seeks to make a contribution by creating a process within which students may improve self-awareness of their own work-related values and take the opportunity to clarify these. The approach further acknowledges that values are acquired directly or indirectly from many sources and via many different types of interaction (Furnham, 1987). A young person studying in a vocational college or other educational institution will be exposed to whatever values are expressed in that institution, whether formally or informally. Simultaneously, the student will be exposed to other sources of values in the everyday, out-of-school environment. But very little empirical information or analysis specifically about ‘youth’ or ‘young adult’ values (or more precisely, youth work values) and change in those values is available for South Africa.

Furthermore, values occur in different dimensions. Some have broad application,<sup>6</sup> while others are more specific in focus. We may ask: How are broader general values like ‘peace’ related to context-specific values such as those in the workplace? Some may seek to distinguish between shared or common values such as ‘honesty’ and ‘accountability’, which seem to be particularly highly prized by employers. Are these values separable? This gives rise to two possible scenarios: (a) that work-based values and general values are distinct groups of constructs; or (b) that work-place values are a sub-group of general values (See: Roe & Ester, 1999; Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss, 1999). Findings from an empirical study that set out to explore the relationship between ‘general’ and ‘work’ values among Hong Kong Chinese university students suggest that this relationship is best understood as a combination of (a) and (b) ‘with work values being both a distinct construct to some extent but closely integrated with general values’ (Wong, 2013, p. iv).<sup>7</sup>

### **Distinguishing between ‘work values’ and ‘work-based values’**

At this point it is necessary to make the distinction between the terms ‘work values’ and ‘work-based values’. The former refers to what the individual wants from a job.<sup>8</sup> There are underlying personal needs and lifestyle preferences that individuals experience for which they seek fulfilment through work and which inform their motivations for choosing to work in particular occupations and working environments at given moments in their working lives. In other words, ‘work values’ are closely linked to decisions individuals make about their relationships with the labour market. Or, more specifically, work values form a framework according to which individuals formulate decisions about what study, occupational, career and job opportunities they pass up and what opportunities they take on. Work values

therefore influence individual job satisfaction, commitment and career decision-making. Young people differ in the breadth of choice they have in this respect.

The proposed approach is concerned with work-based values that are foregrounded when employers select workers with *values that fit the jobs that need to be done in their establishments*. ‘Work-based values’<sup>9</sup> refer to what employers are looking for in work-seekers. The employers want to select individuals who bring certain behavioural and attitudinal values to their daily work. These values may include (Loretto, 2015):

- work ethic;<sup>10</sup>
- dependability and responsibility;
- positive attitude;
- adaptability;
- honesty and Integrity;
- self-motivated;
- desire to learn;
- self-confidence;
- professionalism;
- loyalty;
- diligence;
- perseverance;
- (self) discipline;
- (customer) service orientation;
- respect;
- dedication; and
- ability to collaborate.

Personal work-based values centre on a framework according to which individuals conduct themselves and manage their relationships in the workplace. The work-based values of the employer therefore need to be juxtaposed with the job-seeker’s or employee’s work-based values.

All other things being equal, the congruence between values expressed by a work-seeker and the firm are an important factor affecting an employer’s judgement/assessment as to the employability of a work-seeker. Judge and Bretz (1992, p. 261) observe that ‘Organizational work values significantly affected job choice decisions. Individuals were more likely to choose jobs whose value content was similar to their own value orientation’. Nevertheless, perceived complementarity between the values of the new appointee and the new employer before actual engagement can be different to the actual experience of employment between the employer and employee.

Where differences between employer and employee surface about what behaviour is appropriate, the scenario needs to be analysed for the underlying values that inform the respective values of the protagonists. Where differences in values are identified, the capacity and willingness of either or both employer and employee to accede to or negotiate their ‘work-based’ values must be explored. For young entrants to the

<sup>6</sup> Observers may refer to these as global values, but there is some doubt about this claim.

<sup>7</sup> The author suggests a third possibility: that general values are a subset of work values – but this lacks support of established theory.

<sup>8</sup> See Steyn (2010) for a comprehensive South African example of this genre.

<sup>9</sup> Sometimes referred to in the literature as ‘work-based values’ or to a lesser extent as ‘career values’. Conceptual clarity in the literature is limited on account of heterodox use of the same or similar terms.

<sup>10</sup> The relationship between work ethic and workplace values needs further analysis. See: Petty (1995) and for South Africa see Jonck, Van der Walt & Sobayeni (2017b).



labour market, the risk of misunderstanding between employers and workers regarding the rules of engagement is relatively high. This last point is important because it draws attention to age-related differences in work values among the workforce. Differences in work-based values are not limited to the employer–employee divide. Age, gender, status and other characteristics are also associated with differences between workers in the work-based values that they uphold.

To sum up: ‘work values’ reflect what workers want from their occupations (lifestyle, income, working conditions); ‘workplace values’ reflect the work performance values that workers bring to work daily. Individuals will want to select jobs with employers that offer an optimal fit in terms of what they are willing to offer as workers (their workplace values) and what work conditions and benefits they expect (their work values).

Both work-seeker and employer may well be obliged to compromise on their expectations. For instance, in a period of economic decline and poor job chances, ‘changes in economic growth and labour market conditions may lead to changes in work values among people who are actively participating in the labour market’ (Watson, 2003, pp. 177–178). (See also: Jin & Rounds, 2012; Johnson & Monserud, 2012; Kalleberg & Marsden, 2013). As noted, new entrants to the labour market in particular may need time in employment to clarify their personal work-based values that they formed within the confines of their TVET college experiences as students.

## Employability skills and work-based values

### Employability and the labour market

From the 1980s to the present, the relationship between values and work has come to prominence in the context of debates on employability. Employability-related interventions have multiplied, especially since the onset of the great recession. This section considers the concept of employability in relation to work-based values.

In South Africa, apart from graduates of the universities, the balance of young people completing formal, post-school education programmes are graduates of the public TVET colleges and private colleges. South Africa’s labour market is hostile to young school and college graduates, partially because of a scarcity of work opportunities. As has been observed, university graduates have substantially better opportunities/chances to find jobs relative to their brothers and sisters emerging from the TVET colleges. With such a high unemployment rate, competition for jobs is intense. Under these circumstances, employers are in a position to expand their requirements and expect work-seekers not only to be in possession of qualifications, but to have additional marketable attributes as well.

Over time, ‘employability’ has been approached from different perspectives. Interest originated mainly in industrialised countries in the human resources, industrial psychology and recruitment fields. Corporates were interested

in researching how to improve matching between employers and employees – in particular, selecting of candidates whose personality characteristics suggested career stability and low propensity to change jobs. This was to reduce the costs of job turnover and, further, to cut down on loss of investment in human capital with the departure of employees.

Approaching the millennium, employability was identified as a labour market problem external to the corporation and, as some commenters argue, has led to displacement of responsibility for employability from employers to workers. For some analysts, this shift in how employers view their responsibility towards their employees has emerged as the conditions of employment worsen for ever larger proportions of the global workforce. Job security has been under attack internationally, threatening worker expectations of lifetime employment within the same organisation. Non-standard – flexible, contracted, unprotected – types of employment are gaining ground in post-industrial labour markets. Forrier and Sels (2003) argue in their review article that as a consequence *lifetime employability* instead of *lifetime employment* is advanced as the new alternative for ‘protection’ in the labour market. This definition by Hillage and Pollard (1988) gives an indication of how the responsibility for career employment shifts to the individual work-seeker:

employability is understood as an individual’s ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, move between roles within the same organisation, obtain new employment if required and (ideally) secure suitable and sufficiently fulfilling work.

(Hillage & Pollard, 1988, pp. 1–2)

Since the onset of the 2009 recession and its persistent aftermath, debate has intensified about how declining demand and rising unemployment changes the nature of labour market competition. For example, as occupational unemployment increases and the labour queue of work-seekers who hold the requisite qualifications grows longer, employers begin to look for further value-add from their new hires, who need to respond competitively by enhancing their employability. For recruiters, employability is a multi-dimensional concept that offers a more nuanced starting point than assuming that if someone has a qualification they can do the job. In a labour market with a surplus supply of qualified individuals, employers can push from a satisficing to an optimising approach in their hiring.

In reality, ‘better’ or ‘higher’ employability is unlikely to provide the protection needed by new graduates and work-seekers in South Africa. High employability does not guarantee finding a job. Maximising an individual’s own employability will not necessarily lead to employment: success in this is strongly determined by aggregate economic factors, most importantly, the extent of economic growth and concomitant demand for labour at the occupational level.

Furthermore, there is no absolute measure of employability, which refers to the *relative* attractiveness in the market of individual job-seekers to employers:

if you have the right mix of skills, attitudes and behaviours, then you are supposedly **employable**. But, in reality, **employability** is an individual's relative potential to obtain and retain suitable employment within the current labour market context.

(Clarke, 2008, pp. 279–282)

For some employers, employability is perhaps a synonym for 'work-readiness' – nothing more and nothing less. Some may ascribe this viewpoint to a conservative view of employability as the compliance that education institutions are expected to instil in students. For example, Bagnall (2010, p. 878) argues that '[s]uch learning has traditionally been used to instil conservative workplace values of obedience, discipline and conformity'.

It is important to state that the work-based values approach proposed in this document does not subscribe to an instrumentalist view that employability is narrowly about uncritically serving the needs of the employer. Indeed, employers themselves are aware that a compliant attitude will not be sufficient to meet on-the-job performance expectations, especially when it comes to job requirements related to intermediate and higher-level occupations.

## Employability and values

A concise definition of employability could be: 'a set of achievements – skills, *understandings* and *personal attributes* – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations' (Yorke, 2004, p. 8). In this definition, values might tentatively be captured as 'understandings' or 'personal attributes'. However, the fit would be awkward.

Employability is clearly a multi-dimensional concept that can be interpreted in different ways (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). It is easy for people debating employability to have different points of reference. Fine distinctions emerge between various definitions of employability that may incorporate combinations of the following characteristics:

- skills, capabilities, competencies, knowledge (other than the particular technical or academic knowledge and skills associated with a qualification, occupation or specific job);
- 'basic skills' (Draper, 1991);
- 'soft skills' such as team work, communication, interpersonal skills, etc.;
- work experience;
- ability to learn new skills;
- personal networks;
- positive attitude;
- creative, problem-solving orientation;
- commercial awareness;
- understanding and self-awareness;
- self-efficacy beliefs (Yorke & Knight, 2006); and
- values.

The examples of employability characteristics presented above include certain basic and more complex skills. This has led some

writers to refer collectively to 'employability skills', which incorrectly conflates employability with the possession of skills.

The absence of a generally accepted definition of employability means there are few clear conceptual boundaries. Models of employability incorporate different 'sliced and diced' combinations of the list of dimensions given above. Competing versions of employability have prompted researchers to develop typologies of employability (e.g. De Grip, Van Loo & Sanders, 2004; Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004). In another example, McQuaid and Lindsay's 'factors of employability' (2005) refer to the following personal skills and attributes that have been allocated into sub-groups:

- *Basic social skills*: honesty and integrity; basic personal presentation; reliability; willingness to work; understanding of actions and consequences; positive attitude to work; responsibility; self-discipline.
- *Personal competencies*: proactivity; diligence; self-motivation; judgement; initiative; assertiveness; confidence; act autonomously.
- *Basic transferable skills*: prose and document literacy; writing; numeracy; verbal presentation.
- *Key transferable skills*: reasoning; problem-solving; basic ICT skills; basic interpersonal and communication skills; emotional and aesthetic customer service skills.

McQuaid and Lindsay's 2005 typology is offered as an example rather than as a recommended model. The categories constructed by these authors are permeable and provoke questions such as: how are honesty and integrity credited as 'social skills' when they may be referred to as 'values' by others?

Typologies such as McQuaid and Lindsay's include many attributes, creating a problem of establishing which attributes are more or less important. The question then becomes: What is the relative contribution of each characteristic or dimension to overall employability? This is an important issue, especially from the perspective of initiatives that are designed to improve employability. A further aspect up for consideration would be the extent to which employability characteristics can be taught or learned and the effort and time required to acquire them and to practise them

## Perceived employability

Emerging from this review, one of the notable characteristics of the concept 'employability' is that it is difficult to define and therefore difficult to measure. Consequently, employers' perceptions of the employability of job-seekers come into play. Therefore it is important to take into account how race and the institution from which a work-seeker has graduated can inform how employers attribute employability to work-seekers. This is a necessary consideration in the light of research into labour market destinations and employment earnings which confirms that race still influences Black graduates' probability of finding employment. Bhorat and Mayet (2012, p. 17) observe that 'the type of institution attended, the field of study, and possibly



even the quality of the tertiary qualification, are ... crucial determinants of the differential labour market outcomes for African participants relative to non-African work-seekers'. This implies that over and above the quality of a job-seeker's graduation result, employers likely attribute work values and orientations.

In South Africa, there is mounting evidence of longstanding and persistent quality problems in the school system. Arguments have been advanced that the state of school education constitutes a binding constraint on economic and social development (Van der Berg, Spaull, Wills, Gustafsson & Kotzé, 2016). This general background has prompted arguments for taking into account the influence of the quality of basic education on the perceived employability of job candidates. According to Wedekind (2016, p. 2), 'What employers refer to as a "lack of employability skills" relates in large measure to a poor basic education'. The origins of shortfalls in employability among many work seekers seem to be, in the minds of employers, quite strongly associated with shortcomings in school education. Van der Berg et al. (2016) point out that poor learning conditions, including weak teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills, in the schools serving the poorest four quintiles of schools attended by the majority of Black African learners perpetuate 'a cycle of poor educational outcomes for students, further entrenching their poverty and weak labour market status' (Wedekind, 2016, p. 9).

Employers appear to make judgements about job-seekers' employability and to attribute employability to job-seekers based on race and the socio-economic status of the school attended. This means that work on employability must take into account how, in South Africa, employment transactions take place within a labour market and social context that has been historically constructed according to discrimination and characterised by inequality of competition. There have been improvements in social and economic equity in South Africa – for example, the average wage gap between Black Africans and Whites has narrowed since democracy. Notwithstanding these changes, Borhat and Mayet observe that for post-school job-seekers race, gender and age continue to play a significant role in defining labour market outcomes and function as determinants of employment and earnings. Their research results show that, 'given labour demand needs, and a certain level of human capital, race still influences the probability of finding employment' (Bhorat & Mayet, 2012, p. 19).

Bhorat and Mayet make this assertion based on research into employment success rates among higher education graduates. They observe from their analysis that when controlling for type of institution and degree: 'Being African lowers the probability of finding a job relative to being White, and being female lowers the probability in finding employment relative to being male, even when controlling for a range of individual characteristics.' They argue that: 'we do need to understand more about preferences of South African employers as well as their specific decision-making framework when employing individuals, who at first glance appear to be equally certified' (Bhorat & Mayet, 2012, pp. 18–19).

## Values in the transition between the institutional values of the college and of the workplace

In the course of this review, the main preoccupation has been to explore, on one hand, values that young people take with them into the work-place and, on the other, the expectations of employers regarding post-school, in particular TVET, graduate values.

Analysis earlier in the document showed that at the school level, very little attention is given to preparing school students for their transition into the world of work. Colleges have responded to the crisis of unemployment among TVET graduates and early leavers through instituting measures to improve alignment between colleges and workplaces. These measures include growing and reinforcing institutional capacity with respect to providing career guidance and work placement and forming closer relationships with employers with support from the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)<sup>11</sup>.

Most of the discussion has dealt with values of the employer and job-seeker or employee. Limited attention has been given to exploring the role of the college in forming the work-based values of students. For this initiative, focusing on the move between the college and the workplace from a values perspective is essential, because it requires an understanding of the institutional contribution to the transition. In this sense, the point of reference is how features of college institutional values differ from employers' work values. A student who adopts and becomes attached to a college's work-based values may struggle to reconcile the dissonance between the work-based values of the college and those of the employer.

The table below sets out some 'ideal type' dimensions according to which institutional values can differ and is based on numerous visits to colleges, formal meetings with stakeholders and participant observations. This framework is set out as an initial attempt to map work-based value dimensions that are seen to operate informally as a dimension of the 'hidden' curriculum in a college.

What emerges is a scenario according to which teaching and learning conditions in the colleges can reinforce behaviour that may be considered antithetical to commonly observed practices in business enterprises. For example: student discretion regarding being on time is tolerated by the colleges, with low enforcement of sanctions on students who are routinely late or absent; lecturers at colleges tend to have limited work experience and consequently cannot convey occupational values or act as convincing role models. These observations draw attention to students' exposure to forms of

11 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established to increase the skills of the South African workforce in their industrial sector of responsibility and to support the National Skills Development Strategy. The Skills Development Levies Act provided for a compulsory levy scheme to incentivise employers to fund skills development in the workplace and also to support first-time worker entry into the workforce. In this role, SETAs work primarily with employers and skills development and education providers, including the TVET Colleges.



**Table 8: Difference between values implicit in colleges and in business enterprises**

Selected institutional feature	In TVET college	In business enterprise (workplace)
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To the student, the student’s sponsor or funder &amp; to the family/household</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To work-team and employer</li> </ul>
Occupational values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited emphasis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On site immersion</li> </ul>
Type of supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic theoretical</li> <li>Practical simulated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor</li> <li>Manager</li> </ul>
Available role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecturers</li> <li>Lack of theory – practice experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experienced practitioner</li> <li>Supervisor</li> </ul>
Assessment drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam + continuous assessment</li> <li>Episodic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task-based</li> <li>Continuous</li> </ul>
Use of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student discretion</li> <li>Low enforcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly structured</li> </ul>

occupational socialisation and more specifically to occupational values that are expressed in particular occupational communities of practice. The nature of this exposure is likely to differ across occupational study opportunities in the hospitality, commerce and management, engineering, business and services sectors. The extent of exposure to occupational socialisation will also differ, depending on the design of the programme. For instance, apprenticeship programmes uniquely involve combinations of academic study with extended on-the-job training. They can allow employers, institutions and employees to develop common values from the onset to the conclusion of a learning process. These values may differ, depending on the particular organisational milieu in which apprentices work (Wildschut & Ngazimbi, 2012). The work-based values programme envisaged in this document will be focused towards TVET occupational training programmes other than the apprenticeship model.

These observations suggest that the transitional difficulties that students experience relate also to readjusting to a business enterprise institution where boundaries for appropriate values expression and behaviour are more zealously guarded and universalised. These facets will also influence the cultural shock and increased adaptation time for graduates and students entering into businesses on a full-time basis. Some students may find the complexity of this transition even more trying if they do not have access to family members or people in their social network who have related work experience and could provide support in negotiating the work-based values terrain of the employer. A further influence in this scenario can be generational differences in attitudes of students to work (Jonck, Van der Walt & Sobayeni, 2017a).

## Contribution of a work-based values approach to employability interventions in support of TVET student and graduate employment

With low growth and high youth unemployment, a wide array of government programmes support youth employment, including the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the youth wage subsidy (Employment Tax Incentive or ETI). Simultaneously, numerous non-profit and corporate social investment programmes also target youth unemployment. While many programmes that provide or facilitate work experience opportunities are not explicitly designed to develop participants’ employability ‘skills’, other programme models are deliberately structured to raise the potential of young people to find employment through exposing them to such ‘skills’. Employability-focused intervention models vary considerably in their philosophical approach, focus, duration and intensity (e.g. Harambee, International Youth Foundation). Nevertheless, the assumption is that all programmes will inevitably rest on a set of work-based values – a ‘hidden’ curriculum as it were – that informs each programme’s design, activities and processes. The emerging conceptual framework for this prospective intervention rests on an acknowledgement that values frameworks provide important rubrics that inform how individuals engage, communicate and adapt in the workplace.

How a work-based values component may impact positively on a student’s transition to the workplace is shown in the figure below. The figure, which is informed by the outcome of this literature review, illustrates conceptually how a values-based curriculum component may be integrated with work-based experience as part of a WBE/WIL programme in a TVET college. It represents a step in elaborating the envisaged approach of a work-based values intervention.

We begin with reference to an individual located in a social environment. That individual has personal life and career expectations (expressed through personal values) and will be exposed to other expectations in the social and working environment (including other’s values). Working life experiences are accumulated and mediated through the individual’s capacity for self-awareness as she/he develops her/his own work-values framework. The envisaged programme will be structured to support the emergence of participants’ own work-based values frameworks that will empower them to work and engage optimally in the workplace – and also to navigate the labour market.

## Conclusion: Taking the values-based approach forward

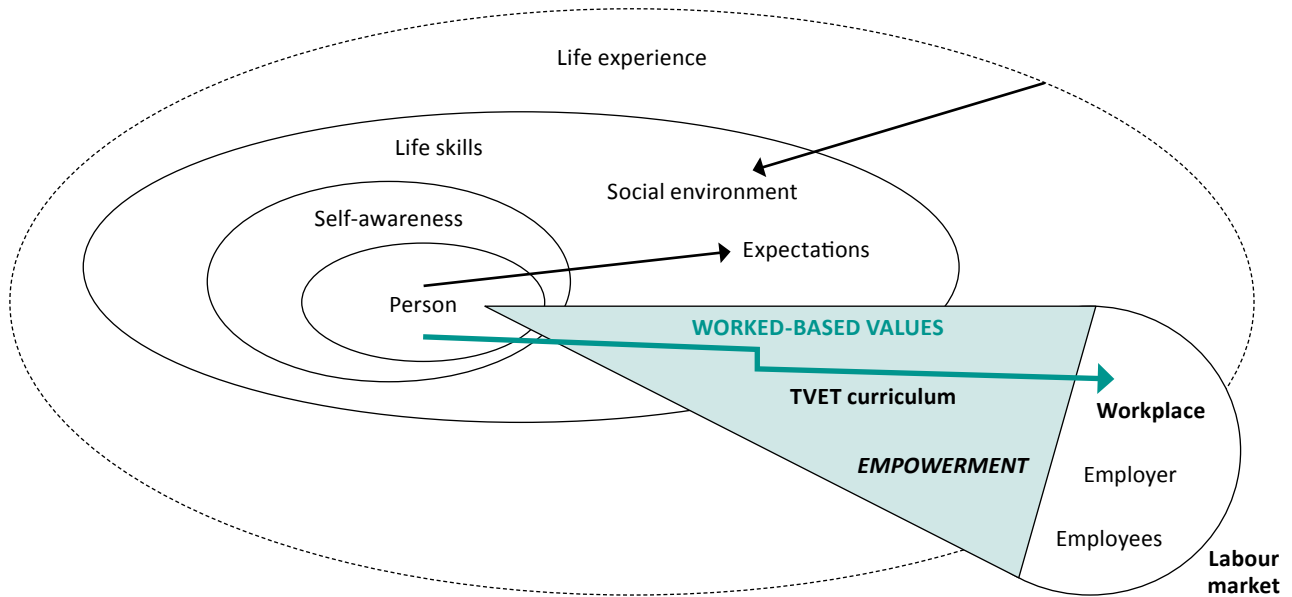
This literature review will be used as a basis for researching and developing a values-based intervention to support young people seeking to improve their chances of finding employment and, having done so, to better apprehend and respond to the challenges of working life. We argue that a



values-based approach has the potential to equip young people with the personal capability to negotiate relationships in the workplace with managers, supervisors and colleagues with confidence. The intention of the envisaged intervention would thus be to empower young people with durable personal capability, going beyond some employability programmes that offer a superficial curriculum containing

competency recipes on 'how to behave' in the workplace that may work in a restricted set of work settings. Instead, young people may benefit more from a systemic programme that addresses values in the TVET context in South Africa, using a pedagogical approach that encourages them to engage in their work environment with 'informed respect, creativity, and responsiveness' (Bagnall, 2010; p. 878).

Figure 3: Illustration of how values-based interactions may be impacted by a values-based curriculum component linked to WBE or WIL





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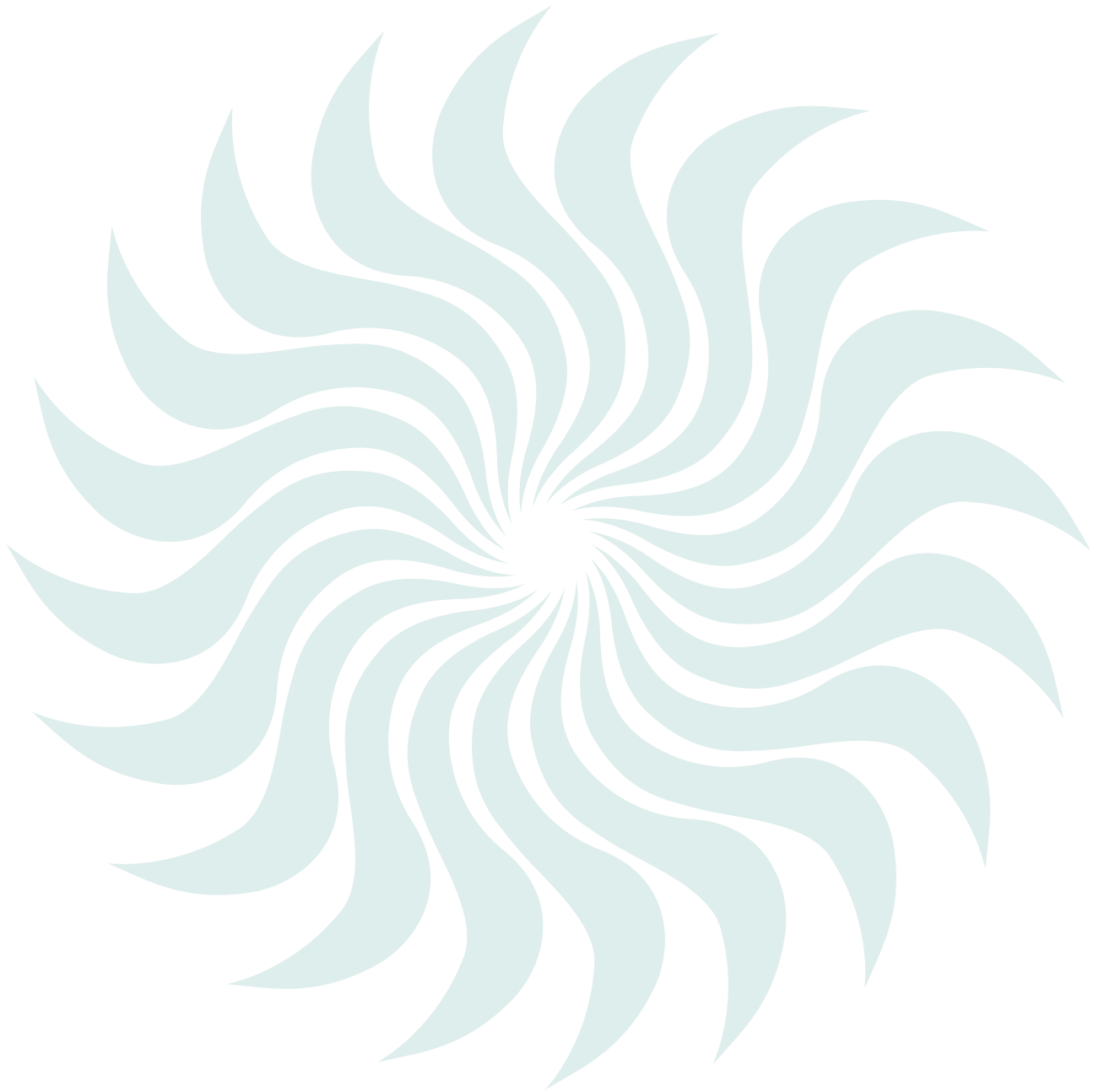


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