

# Vocational Education and Graduate Struggles in the Eastern Cape, South Africa: A Freirean Approach

**Ezekiel Majola**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5887-7134>  
Nelson Mandela University,  
South Africa  
ezexmajox@gmail.com

**Lesley Powell**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3886-2872>  
University of Cape Town, South Africa  
lesleyjpowell@gmail.com

**Christina Jordaan**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4236-3630>  
Nelson Mandela University,  
South Africa  
cagjordan@gmail.com

## Abstract

This article, rooted in Paulo Freire's transformative framework, critically examines Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), challenging the conventional emphasis on powerful knowledge. Instead, it forefronts contextual factors to unravel power dynamics, privilege, and social inequalities within the educational landscape. The primary aim is to engage in dialogues illuminating issues of power and social justice, offering insights to foster more inclusive and equitable TVET practices. Embracing a Freirean lens, the research article actively seeks transformative practices within TVET by emphasising the potential of dialogue, collaboration, and critical consciousness. It moves beyond merely describing students' suffering and disappointment, focusing on the intrinsic aspect of Freirean ideas—the development of consciousness through dialogic processes. By incorporating the voices and perspectives of TVET students, the article aims to construct an alternative conceptualisation of TVET education. The article illustrates how dialogues contribute to developing a counterculture of resistance and struggle, aligning with Freire's theory. It emphasises the transformative power of dialogue in addressing students' lived experiences, struggles, rights, aspirations, and disappointments. This approach aligns with Freire's belief that dialogue catalyses positive change and empowerment in education.



Education as Change  
Volume 28 | 2024 | #15943 | 23 pages



<https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/15943>  
ISSN 1947-9417 (Online)  
© The Author(s) 2024



Published by the University of Johannesburg and Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

**Keywords:** Technical Vocational Education and Training; National Certificate (Vocational); dialogue; participatory action research; employability; South Africa; Paulo Freire

## Introduction and Background

This article delves into the experiences of National Certificate (Vocational) (NC)(V) Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college graduates in the Eastern Cape, specifically exploring the aftermath of their education. Originating from a broader PhD research endeavour titled “Vocational Education and Training at a Crossroads: The Aftermath of the TVET College on Graduates in South Africa” (Majola 2023), this study scrutinises the challenges faced by these graduates and critically examines the implications of graduating with a TVET qualification.

In response to the 2013 White Paper by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), this study interrogates the efficacy of the policy in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by TVET college students. Concerns raised in the existing literature, including works by Powell (2021), McGrath et al. (2020), Ngcwangu (2019), Balwanz and Ngcwangu (2016), Zipin, Fataar, and Brennan (2015), and Van der Bijl and Lawrence (2019), question the policy’s emphasis on economic growth and job creation over the holistic needs of students. The study seeks to challenge the assumptions in this policy framework, advocating for a more profound examination of its implications.

Powell and McGrath (2019) contend that the employability agenda fails to address the intricate capability deprivations experienced by South African youth in low socio-economic urban townships. Powell (2012) further advocates for a human development approach, prioritising people over the economy and highlighting social justice, human rights, and poverty alleviation in skills development and vocational education and training (VET). This study critically examines the White Paper’s approach to addressing challenges faced by TVET college students, aligning with Powell’s (2021) assertion that policymakers inadequately consider the perspectives of those directly affected. While referencing Vally and Motala (2017), it is essential to clarify that their critique differs from Powell’s perspective. Vally and Motala focus more on structural limitations within capitalism and the inherent constraints of market-led economic systems. Unlike Powell’s emphasis on social justice and human rights, Vally and Motala are sceptical of human rights discourses, viewing them as insufficient in addressing the barriers presented by market-driven economic structures. Despite these distinctions, this research maintains a stance that prioritises students’ voices over disconnected policymakers and researchers, ultimately aiming to challenge the existing discourse and foster transformative change with an overarching goal of pursuing social justice in education.

Drawing inspiration from Powell and McGrath’s call for a human development approach, the study aligns with scholars such as Mabunda and Frick (2020), Van der

Bijl and Lawrence (2019), Matenda (2020), and Mitcham (2021), who underscore the challenges faced by NC(V) TVET graduates, particularly in labour market discrimination. The focus shifts towards a social justice-oriented perspective that prioritises the voices of students over distant policymakers and researchers. The study aims to amplify the lived experiences of these graduates to foster transformative change.

Mabunda and Frick (2020) argue that NC(V) TVET graduates face numerous challenges, with labour market discrimination being a significant barrier. Van der Bijl and Lawrence (2019), Matenda (2020), and Mitcham (2021) assert that these graduates, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, encounter biased attitudes from employers who prefer graduates from traditional universities (Mabunda and Frick 2020). Despite their dedication and competence, these graduates often experience marginalisation and limited opportunities (Rogan and Papier 2020). Moreover, inadequate support from the government and private sector compounds their struggles, impeding their access to employment, training, and necessary resources for entrepreneurial pursuits, thereby hindering their ability to break free from the cycle of socio-economic hardship (Mitcham 2021; Papier et al. 2019).

Furthermore, the study extends its foundation from Powell's scholarship, particularly her scrutiny of the purpose of vocational education and training and the role of TVET colleges in establishing meaningful opportunities. This sets the groundwork for the incorporation of the Freirean framework. Drawing from recent articles in *Education as Change* authored by Sinwell (2022) and John (2020), which exemplify the effectiveness of community-based movements and dialogue in driving social change, this article aspires to contribute to the creation of a more equitable and democratic society by engaging TVET students. It highlights the pertinence of Freire's theory in probing the social justice implications within TVET education and endeavours to provide insights that transcend conventional narratives.

To navigate the intricate landscape of TVET education, the article turns to the Freirean approach as a guiding light, placing significant emphasis on critical reflection, dialogue, and social change. This article utilises the concept of praxis, which is central to the Freirean approach, to comprehensively understand the dynamic of issues faced by TVET students, which include employability and social status. It contributes to the ongoing dialogue by engaging the experiences of NC(V) graduates within community TVET.

We integrate the voices and viewpoints of TVET students to propose a new understanding of TVET education. Our study demonstrates how dialogues foster a counterculture of resistance, echoing Freire's theory. By emphasising the transformative potential of dialogue, it addresses students' experiences, struggles, rights, aspirations, and disappointments.

## TVET Colleges, TVET Curriculum, and Students in South Africa

Terblanche and Bitzer (2018), Powell (2014), Akoojee (2016), and Buthelezi (2018) emphasise that the primary mission of South African TVET colleges is to meet the country's human resource needs while addressing social injustices inherited from apartheid. According to Buthelezi (2018), TVET colleges provide vocational education and training focused on specific occupations or careers to enhance employability, earning praise for equipping students with skills needed in skilled trades and addressing skills shortages. Terblanche and Bitzer (2018) state that the NC(V) programmes offered by TVET colleges aim to produce artisans and tackle skills shortages, contributing to the development of a skilled workforce to address South Africa's economic challenges.

In the face of South Africa's persistent challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty, the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) (2014) asserts that a well-functioning TVET system can effectively address these issues. A robust TVET system provides access to high-quality technical vocational education for both young people and adults, enhancing employability and addressing unemployment, poverty, and social inequality. The underlying assumption is that TVET graduates will receive support in securing sustainable livelihoods. This perspective is shared by Allais (2012) and Balwanz and Hlatshwayo (2015), emphasising that the purpose of a TVET system is to create opportunities for individuals to acquire skills, knowledge, and values for lifelong learning. Consequently, it becomes crucial for the curriculum to cater to the needs of learners, industry, and the broader community or society.

### **Critiques of the TVET Curriculum**

Gamble (2006, 2016) and Young and Gamble (2006) have examined the foundation of the TVET curriculum and knowledge in South Africa. They argue that the government's emphasis on economic growth and attracting capital investments has led to the adoption of an outcomes-based education approach. This approach prioritises education based on labour market needs, but it has faced criticism for focusing on specific outcomes or skills rather than the teaching and learning process (White 2018). Additionally, it has been accused of treating TVET education as a commodity in the market, rather than prioritising quality education for students. Consequently, this approach may exacerbate educational inequality by disregarding the diverse needs of students (McGrath et al. 2020).

As a result, education is seen as a commodity for producing skills and knowledge for employers, undermining the potential of public education to be emancipatory. Young and Gamble (2006) emphasise the importance of pursuing powerful knowledge in schools and TVET colleges, originating from the work of educational scholars such as Basil Bernstein (2000) and Michael Young (2008). They highlight the significance of education in providing students with knowledge that fosters critical thinking and transcends their social backgrounds. Young (2008) discusses powerful knowledge as knowledge that equips learners with the language and skills necessary to engage in

various discussions, including those about politics and morality. Maude (2015) further defines powerful knowledge as knowledge that empowers individuals intellectually and offers new perspectives and reliable explanations of the world. Essentially, powerful knowledge underscores the transformative potential of education in empowering learners with the knowledge and skills to navigate and comprehend the world around them (Young 2008).

Gamble (2006, 2020) contends that the current TVET curriculum in South Africa favours abstract, theoretical knowledge over practical, hands-on skills, aligning more with an academic approach. However, this approach can pose challenges for students from working-class backgrounds who may struggle with elaborate language codes. Gamble (2006) suggests that the TVET curriculum should strike a balance by incorporating both conceptual and practical knowledge. While the TVET system must produce job-ready graduates, Gamble emphasises that this should not come at the expense of broader educational objectives, such as critical thinking and intellectual empowerment. To achieve this, the TVET curriculum should offer practical, experiential learning opportunities that equip students with a diverse range of skills for both employability and further education. By doing so, the TVET system can address the needs of the economy while providing students with the powerful knowledge necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Powell's (2014) study sheds light on the dominance of quantitative research in the field of TVET knowledge and curriculum development, which overlooked the perspectives and experiences of TVET students. This limited approach hindered a comprehensive understanding of their learning experiences and impeded the creation of an education system that addresses poverty, inequality, and social justice. While there have been some changes in recent years, with the increased inclusion of qualitative and theoretical work, the body of research centring on student voices in TVET remains limited (Papier and McGrath 2020). This perpetuates social inequalities and reinforces the prevailing ideology, underscoring the need for a transformative education system.

The prevailing understanding of TVET in South Africa is primarily influenced by productivist approaches (McGrath 2012) and the human capital theory (Motala and Vally 2014). Productivism views TVET as a means to produce skilled workers who contribute to the nation's economic growth, emphasising specific occupational training and technical expertise (McGrath 2012). In contrast, the human capital perspective sees TVET as an investment in individuals and society, emphasising the development of skills and knowledge necessary for success in the labour market (Vally and Motala 2017). The dominant approach to TVET revolves around producing graduates who can meet the country's economic needs (Balwanz and Ngewangu 2016; Powell 2021), reflecting a focus on economic priorities. However, it is vital to recognise that this productivity-oriented emphasis overlooks the fundamental aspects of well-being, human development, and social transformation of TVET students (Powell and McGrath

2019). This should be considered long-term objectives in addressing the pervasive challenges of poverty and social inequalities (McGrath et al. 2020).

### Freirean Approach, Advancing TVET Students' Voices

This article embraces the Freirean framework to underscore the pivotal role of student voices in TVET research, drawing on key concepts from Paulo Freire's scholarship. Shaped by his experiences with poverty and social inequality in Brazil, Freire's insights into power dynamics and oppression form the crux of his work (Freire 1970), as highlighted by hooks (1994). Notably, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974), both seminal contributions to education theory, introduce groundbreaking ideas challenging prevailing social relationships in education. The article specifically engages Freirean concepts, including generative themes, which ignite critical reflection and action, and conscientisation. Furthermore, insights from *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (1990) with Myles Horton enrich the discussion on community engagement and participatory learning, key aspects of Freirean pedagogy. Through the application of these concepts, our article seeks to cultivate transformative learning experiences, empowering TVET students to challenge existing social structures and embody the principles embedded in Freire's pedagogy of hope.

Drawing from Freire's educational theory, we place a central emphasis on dialogue, critical reflection, and social change (Freire 1970, 1996, 1974; Freire and Horton 1990). At the core of his theory is the concept of praxis, a fusion of reflection and action, considered crucial for learners to engage with the world critically and transformationally. Adopting Paulo Freire's critical framework to comprehend TVET education, our article diverges from the dominant assumption of powerful knowledge rooted in the Bernsteinian understanding (Allais 2006, 2012; Gamble 2006), and it is driven by a commitment to promote social justice in education (O'Brien 2009). Freire contends that through critical pedagogy, individuals cultivate an awareness of their personal and social reality, facilitating critical engagement (Freire 1970, 14). This approach allows for the prioritisation of student voices, the promotion of critical consciousness, and the empowerment of students to challenge prevailing social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate inequality. Freire's theory provides a framework for understanding TVET education not only as a means of imparting technical skills but also as a vehicle for social transformation and emancipation. By embracing Freire's principles, the article advocates for a pedagogy that fosters critical thinking, encourages dialogue, and empowers learners to become agents of change within the TVET sector.

In the TVET environment, it is essential to recognise and embrace students' social experiences, promoting collaboration among them to facilitate mutual learning from their diverse perspectives. We trust that adopting a Freirean framework would provide a powerful tool for understanding the role of TVET in advancing social justice and human development (Freire 1970, 1974). By highlighting the significance of praxis,

conscientisation, and dialogue, policymakers and government entities can leverage Freire's theory to develop a TVET curriculum and programmes that are deeply connected to human development, equipping students with the agency to sustain themselves even in the absence of formal employment. Fundamentally, Freire asserts that education should equip students with the tools to critically examine the world and devise solutions to their challenges (Freire 1970, 1974). By incorporating these principles into TVET education, students can develop not only technical skills but also critical thinking abilities and a sense of empowerment. This approach fosters a holistic understanding of education as a means of personal and societal transformation, aligning with Freire's vision of education as a tool for liberation and social change.

Global literature has increasingly embraced the utilisation of Freirean theory in understanding TVET. Works by Porres, Wildemeersch, and Simons (2020), Bencze and Carter (2019), Porres (2017), Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) highlight the significance of critical reflection, dialogical learning, and transformative action in TVET (Bencze and Carter 2019). These studies emphasise the importance of creating learning environments that promote critical reflection, collaboration, and active engagement (Porres, Wildemeersch, and Simons 2020). By integrating Freirean concepts, this literature emphasises the nurturing of critical consciousness, dialogical learning, transformative action, and learner empowerment within TVET. These studies emphasise the potential of Freire-inspired pedagogical approaches to address social inequalities, promote critical thinking, and foster active participation and agency among TVET students.

In South Africa, several studies have utilised the Freirean approach to drive social transformation in individuals and communities. For instance, John (2020) examines the application of Paulo Freire's pedagogical framework to address xenophobia, emphasising critical consciousness, dialogue, and empathy as transformative tools. Similarly, Sinwell (2022) explores the implementation of Freire's principles in South Africa, highlighting their potential to empower marginalised communities, tackle social inequalities, and promote post-apartheid transformative education. These studies underscore the importance of critical consciousness, dialogue, and praxis in these endeavours.

In the context of South Africa, the application of Paulo Freire's theory to understand TVET has been limited, yet noteworthy studies have utilised the Freirean approach to critically examine the underlying principles of TVET in the country. Hodkinson (1998) advocates for prioritising critical thinking, creativity, and innovation in TVET to prepare students for a rapidly changing world. Similarly, Wildemeersch (2007), as cited in Jackson (2011), argues for the adoption of the Freirean framework in TVET to facilitate transformative learning for personal and social change. Expanding on this perspective, Ahn, Steenis, and Penuel (2022) emphasise the need for TVET to equip students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes for active participation in democratic and transformative processes. They underscore the importance of a pedagogy grounded in

dialogue, reflection, and critical engagement, moving beyond mere workforce preparation. These scholars stress the relevance of the Freirean framework in the context of TVET, promoting critical thinking, creativity, contextualised learning, collaboration, and social and personal transformation, all crucial elements in preparing students for a rapidly changing world and addressing social and economic inequalities.

This article extends the insights of Ahn, Steenis, and Penuel (2022), Jackson (2011), and Wildemeersch (2007), delving deeper by incorporating a participatory action research (PAR) methodology within the Freirean framework. Aimed at promoting social change, this approach seeks to amplify the voices of TVET students and enhance their empowerment. The article recognises the synergy of PAR and Freire in adult education, supported by Lima (2022), Zhu (2019), English and Mayo (2012), and others. These works underscore the transformative potential of PAR in empowering adult learners to cultivate critical consciousness and take action for societal change.

## Research Process and Data Generation

This study's research process and data generation draw inspiration from Powell's (2012) paradigm shift in TVET policy and research, emphasising a move away from dominant quantitative approaches. The study adopts a PAR methodology, tailored to capture the nuanced experiences and voices of a small cohort of 15 NC(V) graduates in Gqeberha. The data generation process encompassed life narrative interviews and learning cycle group (LCG) meetings. Central to the essence of the learning cycle is its role as a data generation tool and as a mechanism for praxis-oriented exploration (Freire and Horton 1990). The learning cycle facilitates reflective dialogues and critical analyses within the LCG meetings, empowering students to discern and tackle systemic issues. It transcends being a simple portrayal of the study process and method, evolving into a channel for students to actively engage, participate, and advocate for their rights within the TVET system. The primary goal of the LCG meetings was to create a transformative space where participants could engage in reflective dialogue and critical self-evaluation based on Freirean pedagogical principles (Freire 1970, 1974). These sessions aimed to trigger transformative learning experiences rather than gather data through typical focus group dynamics. The primary objective was not merely data generation through group dynamics but to facilitate a transformative learning process inspired by Freirean pedagogy. Participants engaged in reflective dialogue, making sense of their experiences and forming abstract rules to apply in future situations, and contributing to a deeper understanding of TVET education's complexities, aligning with the transformative nature of Freirean praxis.

Unlike traditional focus groups that often emphasise consensus or shared opinions, the LCG meetings encouraged individual critical reflection and diverse perspectives (Freire 1970). Participants collaboratively explored the multifaceted experiences within the TVET sector, engaging in critical dialogue inspired by Freirean ideas (Freire 1974). This approach fostered an environment where participants were actively involved in



evaluating their educational journeys, pondering the value of TVET education, and considering alternative approaches based on their individual experiences.

The collaborative exploration within the LCG meetings aligned with Freirean principles of dialogue and critical consciousness, as outlined in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974). Furthermore, the collaborative nature between one researcher and participants allowed for a democratic detection and direction of the flow of LCG meetings, echoing Freire's emphasis on participatory learning and community engagement (Freire and Horton 1990). This partnership between the researcher and participants empowered the latter to actively shape the discussions, contributing to a richer and more meaningful exploration of TVET education's complexities and potential for transformation. Henceforth, the learning cycle served as a critical tool for gathering information in the study. This section refrains from a redundant restatement of the method and instead focuses on illustrating the method's relevance to the argument of the article, shedding light on its implications.

The PAR methodology, grounded in principles of empowerment and collaboration, stands as a transformative force within TVET research (Freire 1974; Freire and Horton 1990). By prioritising the voices and experiences of TVET students, PAR shifts away from traditional extractivist approaches, focusing instead on human and sustainable development (Powell 2014). This aligns with the central message of Freire's *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974), which emphasises the need for education to foster critical awareness and transformative action.

In embracing the PAR methodology, this article seeks to uncover and interrogate the structural barriers impeding the realisation of TVET students' aspirations. It goes beyond mere description, engaging in the critical examination of systemic issues within the TVET landscape. Through collaborative enquiry and reciprocal relationships, PAR enables a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by TVET graduates.

Moreover, the PAR methodology serves as a transformative lens through which the argument gains depth and relevance. It transcends its role as a procedural aspect of the study, becoming an integral part of the research process. By using PAR to unveil and question entrenched inequalities and injustices within TVET, this article advocates for meaningful change. It prompts a re-evaluation of the TVET landscape, urging stakeholders to address systemic issues and empower students to become agents of change. Thus, the PAR methodology emerges as a catalyst for empowerment and praxis-oriented exploration within the TVET sector. By centring the voices of students and embracing collaborative enquiry, PAR offers a powerful framework for advancing social justice and human development in TVET education.

## Revisiting the Role of Dialogue in the Context of Freirean Theory

### Understanding TVET Students through Dialogue

In examining the lived experiences of NC(V) graduates through the lens of Freire's concept of generative themes, the article seeks not only to expose the external challenges faced by the students. Freirean theory posits that dialogue is not a mere recounting of hardships; it is a transformative process that fosters critical consciousness, a counterculture of resistance, and a pathway to liberation.

Take, for instance, the participants who shared the challenges of growing up in a disadvantaged family:

I grew up in a disadvantaged family, raised by my grandmother and my mother. We didn't have basic needs like food, and there were so many hardships I cannot remember right now, but it was tough. (Participant M, 2021)

My mom wasn't working, and my dad wasn't earning much, so they decided that we should stay with my grandmother, and they would send whatever they could. We didn't have basic needs like food. (Participant S1, 2021)

This dialogue becomes more than just a narrative of struggles; it signifies the participants' evolving consciousness—a realisation that their circumstances demand change and a fervent desire for improvement. Drawing from insights in *We Make the Road by Walking* (1990), which captures dialogues between Freire and Myles Horton, co-founder of the Highlander Folk School, we understand that such narratives are emblematic of Freirean dialogic concepts. Through their exchanges, Freire and Horton emphasise the importance of participatory learning and community engagement in fostering social change.

Drawing from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire's seminal work, we understand the transformative power of dialogue in fostering critical consciousness. The stories of academic hurdles due to resource deficiencies in their high schools provide another lens through which to examine the intersection of external barriers and internalised struggles. Participants attributing their academic setbacks to inadequate resources and substandard education not only highlight systemic issues but also showcase their growing awareness of the structural impediments to their academic success, echoing the themes of critical consciousness discussed in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974).

The participants also shared their diverse motivations, challenges, and aspirations, offering valuable insights into the Freirean issues about dialogic and change processes. The following excerpts from their dialogues illustrate the intrinsic aspects of Freirean ideas, emphasising the development of consciousness:

I said, I did matric, and I failed; I heard about NC(V); otherwise, I was also striving to get my matric so that I could go to university afterwards. I tried returning to my old high school to redo my matric, but they refused. (LCG meeting, 2021)

This participant's narrative reveals the struggle to achieve matric and the barriers encountered, reflecting the oppressive structures within the educational system.

I failed Grade 12 repeatedly when I went to TVET, my objective was to pass and get a qualification equal to matric so that my life would be better because I would get a job or an internship since they used to say that if you have level 4, it's equivalent to Grade 12. (LCG meeting, 2021)

Here, the participant emphasises the transformative potential of education in overcoming repeated failures and the pursuit of a better life through qualifications.

I dropped out while doing Grade 11 because I needed to raise my sister's child, the sister who had passed on. My parents were working on the farm for us to survive, and I was left with the baby because there wasn't anyone to take care of the baby. So that is how I failed Grade 11. When I heard about TVET, it gave me hope about breaking the cycle of poverty in my family. (Participant K, 2021)

In 2016, I heard about TVET and the job opportunities it presents, so for me going to TVET was for a qualification that would bring me a job to end the poverty struggles here at home. I went and registered in 2016 with this hope. (Participant PZ, 2021)

These participants see TVET as a lifeline for breaking free from poverty, highlighting the aspirational power of education.

Through our analysis of the dialogues presented above, the article unveils the multifaceted motivations, challenges, and aspirations of TVET students, capturing the essence of their dialogues as illustrative of Freire's (1970) notions of dialogic and change processes. These dialogues collectively depict the participants' consciousness development, illustrating how their struggles, rights, perspectives, and aspirations form the core of Freirean dialogic processes. The pain, suffering, and disappointment expressed by the participants go beyond mere description, forming a counterculture of resistance and struggle within the transformative journey facilitated by education. In the stories above we also present Participant K's poignant dropout story due to family responsibilities unveiling the stark impact of poverty on education access, resonating with Freire's (1970) concern about recognising dehumanisation. Such a personal story illustrates the power of dialogue in describing the struggle while portraying the participant's evolving consciousness, aspirations for change, and belief in education as a transformative force.

Furthermore, the participants' narratives reflect the vivid picture of their lived experiences, including the struggles they faced due to poverty, inequality, and limited access to quality education. The dialogues go beyond merely recounting the pain and

suffering, encapsulating the participants' agency within these constraints, echoing Powell and McGrath's (2014) perspective. The agency is a testament to their resilience and determination to overcome societal challenges through education.

In this segment, we intended to present a nuanced viewpoint on the dialogical processes within the article. We highlight the potency of dialogue, extending beyond a simple narration of struggles. Its significance lies in unveiling the development of consciousness, expressing aspirations for change, and maintaining a firm belief in education as a transformative force—an aspect firmly grounded in the Freirean perspective. By focusing on these intrinsic aspects, we aim to illuminate the true essence of dialogue as a vehicle for critical consciousness and societal transformation. This perspective invites us to explore not just the external challenges faced by the participants but also the internal processes that shape their responses and aspirations in the face of adversity.

### **Re-evaluating the Impact of TVET Education on Employment Prospects: A Freirean Perspective**

The preceding discussion emphasises participants' motivations for choosing TVET colleges as a pathway to reclaim their compromised humanity, drawing inspiration from Freire's assertion that education can be a tool for empowerment (Freire 1970). The pursuit of an educational qualification, specifically the NC(V) qualification, was viewed as vital for enhancing not only individual lives but also uplifting the prospects of their families. Given these motivations, this segment explores the post-TVET qualification experiences of the participants. The focus is on assessing the disparity between their expectations and the actual employment outcomes following their TVET qualifications.

#### **The Life Encounters of Being a TVET Graduate**

During lively LCG meetings, participants expressed a mix of gratitude for acquiring their NC(V) qualification equivalent to Grade 12 and disappointment with its limited impact on their employment prospects. One participant poignantly encapsulates their sentiments:

So, I don't even regret being an NC(V) graduate, I got my Grade 12 equivalent certificate, which I wanted, but work-wise it has done nothing for me. The problem is that I cannot find work. There is no work, and I have been applying. (Participant NZ, 2021)

These sentiments were echoed in the collective voice of the LCG, reflecting the participants' disillusionment with the NC(V) qualification's perceived failure in securing and enhancing employment opportunities:

I went to TVET college to have my Grade 12 (NQF level 4) and to gain knowledge, but the result was for me to get employed; it is very disappointing that [you] can't get a job

with the qualification that you have hoped it will assist you in getting one. (LCG meeting, 2021)

When we applied and enrolled for Office Administration, we had hopes that after finishing, we were going [to] get an internship, but, I am not disputing the fact that I got my Grade 12 as in my level 4 but am still at home sitting with that qualification, I do not have a job. (LCG meeting, 2021)

The participants expected the NC(V) qualification to enhance job prospects and address labour market challenges. However, considering broader labour market competitiveness and low employability rates among matriculants, as observed by Rogan and Papier (2020), Mabunda and Frick (2020) emphasise the country's high unemployment rate and limited employer awareness of the NC(V) curriculum as hurdles to graduates' employability.

Participants also discussed varied perspectives on NC(V) programmes, emphasising differences in employability. Some qualifications, like NC(V) level 4 Engineering and Tourism, were seen as advantageous for job placement. JET Education Services' research (SSACI, JET Education Services, and NBI 2016) examined employability, offering insights into diverse NC(V) programmes and their outcomes. One of the participants, Participant V, states:

I have also come to [the] realisation [that] studying at a TVET college is a good idea depending on the course a person wants to do because many people went to TVET colleges and are now employed. There are also a lot that are not working depending on their courses. Maybe if I had done another course that is not Office Admin, I would be employed by now. (Participant V, 2021)

Furthermore, Participant K4 had this to say concerning the challenges faced by the NC(V) graduates from the business programmes:

At the same time, I would say that perhaps if I had done Office Admin at varsity, I would be employed by now. Maybe it's not TVET college as such but rather NC(V) business programmes; as long as you have NC(V) qualification from the business programmes, then it's harder for you to be employed compared to someone who may have studied Office Admin up until N6 or maybe even went to varsity. (Participant K4, 2021)

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of empowerment and improved employability from their NC(V) qualifications. Despite initial beliefs that an NC(V) level 4 qualification would open job opportunities, the study revealed it was insufficient for employment. Although participants acknowledged its equivalence to matric, they felt it did not enhance employability or provide access to high-quality jobs for well-being and thriving. These findings support Matenda's (2020) argument that NC(V) students in TVET education lack full empowerment.

## **Freirean Development of Consciousness and Counterculture**

The expressions of gratitude and disappointment exhibited by the participants in the dialogues reveal more than just surface-level frustrations; they hint at a profound evolution in consciousness. According to Freire (1970), authentic dialogue should result in conscientisation, fostering a heightened awareness of one's socio-economic circumstances. Drawing from Freire and Shor (1987), who underscore the transformative potential of dialogue, we can interpret these expressions as pivotal moments of conscientisation, where participants engage in critical reflection, challenging prevailing norms and structures. For instance, when a participant expresses regret over the scarcity of employment opportunities despite obtaining the desired qualification, it underscores a deep-seated understanding of the structural obstacles within the job market. This aligns with Freire's emphasis on the importance of critical consciousness in recognising and confronting oppressive systems (Freire and Shor 1987).

Participant V's realisation regarding the significance of their chosen course at a TVET college influencing employability marks a pivotal moment in consciousness development. This realisation transcends mere acknowledgement of personal experiences and demonstrates an understanding of the broader socio-economic dynamics impacting their prospects. In *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (1990), Freire and Horton emphasise the importance of contextualising education within lived experiences and community realities, which resonates with Participant V's awareness of the socio-economic forces shaping their educational and employment opportunities.

## **The Power of Dialogue in the Context of Freirean Ideas**

The dissatisfaction articulated by the participants regarding the perceived limitations of their NC(V) qualification becomes a focal point for illustrating the potency of dialogue in fostering a counterculture of resistance. Freire (1970) emphasises that dialogue should catalyse disrupting unjust socio-economic and cultural systems. In this study, participants' discontent transforms into a form of resistance, collectively challenging established norms that should ideally transform education.

Furthermore, as participants deliberate on the varying employability prospects associated with different NC(V) qualifications, they engage in a dialogic process that unveils their critical reflections on socio-economic structures. Their realisation that certain courses offer superior employment opportunities signifies an emergent counterculture of resistance against the systemic inequalities entrenched within educational and employment systems.

## **Reconciling Expectations with Freirean Concepts**

While the participants' reflections on their NC(V) qualification may initially appear contradictory to Freire's (1970) concept of empowering education, it is crucial to

interpret their expressions not as a rejection of Freirean ideas, but rather as a plea for a more transformative impact. Their anticipation of being liberated from unemployment aligns with Freire's belief that education should serve as a vehicle for liberation and radical socio-economic change. The participants' disappointment underscores a desire for a more potent transformative effect, one that their education was expected to deliver. Incorporating insights from Freire and Shor (1987) and Freire and Horton (1990) enriches the discussion by highlighting the role of dialogue and community engagement in fostering critical consciousness and collective resistance against systemic injustices.

## Advancing and Creating a TVET Graduate Community

In the ongoing quest to foster a collaborative and supportive environment for TVET graduates, the genesis and progression of the TVET Student Movement Group find their roots in the spontaneous evolution of discussions within the LCG meetings. Functioning as the foundational crucible, the LCG became the space where students engaged in open dialogues, shared experiences, and collectively identified challenges that extended beyond traditional academic boundaries. This initiative evolved into a community where participants could openly share their experiences, collectively address challenges, and mutually uplift one another. Unlike the initial post-graduation phase, this movement instilled a collective consciousness among participants, fostering a community spirit driven by a shared purpose. The group emerged as a vital source of support and solidarity, filling the void left by the absence of understanding and acknowledgement of their post-graduation challenges.

In their own words, they articulated their experiences with poignant reflections:

Pressure, you see, already myself I am depressed of being unemploy[ed] just sitting in the township. So, I get this pressure at home, and my father doesn't understand. I would be happy to be part of a group of people who know what I feel, and we will be able to help each other. (LCG meeting, 2021)

So, most of the time, you now find yourself in the streets with friends because you are running away from being reminded of what you don't have when you are at home. It will be nice when you are to have a group of individuals like this group because no one is tormenting you about your situation, but they will be able to share from their experiences how they are coping, [and] maybe learn from each other. (LCG meeting, 2021)

These expressions highlight the significance of the TVET Student Movement Group as a transformative space, where the participants can reclaim their agency, challenge oppressive structures, and work towards a more just and equitable society. McAteer (2013), Herr and Anderson (2016), Flicker, Maley, and Ridgley (2008), and Tukundane and Zeelen (2015) emphasise the transformative nature of PAR studies, which aim to empower marginalised communities, address pressing challenges, and improve their living conditions.

The participants' reflections underscore the profound significance of finding a supportive community that understands and empathises with their lived realities. They stress the value of being surrounded by individuals who have faced similar trials, and finding fulfilment within the TVET Student Movement Group. The group serves as a space for reciprocal learning, where knowledge freely flows among peers and mutual support thrives. Participants attribute to the group the invaluable ability to express frustrations without fear of reproach, fostering an atmosphere of safety and inclusivity.

In addition, the group transforms into a thriving hub of employment opportunities, enabling members to exchange valuable job prospects. As expressed by the participants:

It would be beneficial to help each other with cases like that. In case someone in this group knows of a vacancy, please post it because I myself don't know. Let us help each other. (LCG meeting, 2021)

The group can assist us [in] Port Elizabeth, with a representative going to employment agencies on our behalf, registering our CVs, and negotiating for us before we even email our CVs. This way, they can start with us whenever they are looking for people to work. (LCG meeting, 2021)

The reflections and appeals expressed by the participants on the work of the TVET Student Movement underscore its role as a vibrant embodiment of Freirean dialogic concepts and transformative change. Drawing insights from Freire and Shor (1987) and Freire and Horton (1990), we can see how the movement serves as a dynamic platform for critical reflection, conscientisation, and collective advocacy among its participants. Through its activities, the movement enables participants to engage in open dialogue, sharing their struggles, aspirations, and disappointments. This dialogue goes beyond a mere exchange of information; it becomes a platform for the development of critical consciousness and the exploration of deeper structural and contextual issues, echoing Freire's emphasis on dialogue as a pathway to conscientisation.

Moreover, the movement serves as a transformative force by providing a supportive community that understands and empathises with the lived realities of TVET graduates. In *We Make the Road by Walking* (1990), Freire and Horton emphasise the importance of community engagement and solidarity in fostering social change. Participants, who have encountered similar trials and tribulations, come together within the embrace of the movement to share knowledge, offer mutual support, and collectively challenge oppressive structures.

This collective consciousness cultivated within the TVET Student Movement empowers participants to address challenges not only as individuals but as a united force advocating for change. It resonates with Freire's notion of critical praxis, where theory and action converge to transform oppressive realities into liberating ones. Additionally, the movement becomes a nexus of transformative change by addressing the post-graduation challenges faced by its members. Beyond the exchange of practical



information, the movement encourages participants to question and challenge the underlying systemic issues that contribute to their struggles. It transcends the immediate concerns of employment and becomes a platform for broader discussions on social justice, humanisation, and the imperative need for structural change within the TVET system, aligning with Freire's vision of education as a tool for liberation and social transformation.

The findings of the article underscore the significance of dialogue and transformative education, as advocated by Freire (1970). Through the lens of *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Freire 1974) and *We Make the Road by Walking* (Freire and Horton 1990), it was revealed that dialogue serves as a pivotal tool for fostering critical consciousness among TVET students. Engaging in dialogue allows students to critically reflect on their social conditions, challenge the status quo, and envision alternative pathways. This transformative education approach emphasises problem-posing methods, encouraging students to question and analyse their realities. By nurturing a critical consciousness through dialogue and transformative education, TVET students are empowered to confront systemic inequalities and pursue meaningful employment opportunities.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has explored the multifaceted landscape of TVET education, shedding light on the experiences and challenges encountered by its graduates through the lens of Paulo Freire's transformative education. Through the facilitation of dialogue, participants in this article were not only able to articulate their grievances and aspirations but also collectively mobilise into the TVET Student Movement. This movement became a platform for advocating change, challenging oppressive structures, and fostering a sense of collective consciousness among participants (Freire 1974; Freire and Horton 1990).

The dialogue within the TVET Student Movement served as a conduit for understanding the challenges faced by TVET students, providing a space for critical reflection and conscientisation. By engaging in open dialogue and sharing their experiences, participants gained a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers that hinder their educational and career aspirations. This process aligns with Freire's notion of transformative education, wherein dialogue leads to critical consciousness and the subsequent pursuit of social change.

Moreover, the articulation of students' frustrations and the identification of shortcomings within the TVET system catalysed a counterculture of resistance. Participants' dissatisfaction with the perceived limitations of their education highlighted the need for structural reforms within the TVET sector. This counterculture, fuelled by dialogue and critical reflection, echoes Freire's emphasis on challenging unjust socio-economic and cultural systems to effect transformative change.

While this article has endeavoured to apply the Freirean approach in practice, there remains uncertainty about how participants were encouraged to engage in critical reflection and conscientisation, and how the true power of dialogue was portrayed. Future research should aim to address these uncertainties by providing more concrete examples of methodologies and strategies employed to facilitate transformative learning experiences. By doing so, we can further elucidate the practical application of the Freirean approach within the context of TVET education, thus enhancing clarity and effectiveness in promoting social justice and empowerment among TVET students.

## References

- Ahn, J., E. Van Steenis, and W. R. Penuel. 2022. "The Work of Improvement". In *The Foundational Handbook on Improvement Research in Education*, edited by D. J. Peurach, J. L. Russell, L. Cohen-Vogel and W. Penuel, 29–46. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Akoojee, S. 2016. "Developmental TVET Rhetoric In-Action: The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training in South Africa". *IJR/VET: International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training* 3 (1): 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.13152/IJR/VET.3.1.1>.
- Allais S. M. 2006. "Problem with Qualification Reform in Senior Secondary Education in South Africa". In *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education*, J. Gamble and M. Young, 11–45. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Allais, S. M. 2012. "Will Skills Save Us? Rethinking the Relationships between Vocational Education Skills Development Policies, and Social Policy in South Africa". *International Journal of Educational Development* 32: 632–642.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.01.001>.
- Balwanz, D., and M. Hlatshwayo. 2015. "Re-Imagining Post-Schooling in Sedibeng: Community-Based Research and Critical Dialogue for Social Change". *Education as Change* 19 (2): 133–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2015.1085615>.
- Balwanz, D., and S. Ngcwangu. 2016. "Seven Problems with the 'Scarce Skills' Discourse in South Africa". *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30 (2): 31–53.  
<https://doi.org/10.20853/30-2-608>.
- Bencze, L., L. Carter, A. Groleau, M. Krstovic, R. Levinson, J. L. Martin, I. Martins, C. Pouliot, and M. Weinstein. 2019. "Promoting Students' Critical and Active Engagement in Socio-Scientific Problems: Inter-Trans-National Perspectives". In *Bridging Research and Practice in Science Education: Selected Papers from the ESERA 2017 Conference*, edited by E. McLoughlin, O. E. Finlayson, S. Erduran and P. E. Childs, 171–188. Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17219-0\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17219-0_11).
- Bernstein, B. 2000. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique*. Revised ed. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

- 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): 364–383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2018.1437062>.
- Dale, J., and E. J. Hyslop-Margison. 2010. *Paulo Freire: Teaching for Freedom and Transformation: The Philosophical Influences on the Work of Paulo Freire*. Vol. 12. New York: Springer Science and Business Media.
- DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training). 2013. *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System*. DHET: Pretoria. <https://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Latest%20News/White%20paper%20for%20post-school%20education%20and%20training.pdf>.
- English, L., and P. Mayo. 2012. "Adult Education and Social Movements: Perspectives from Freire and Beyond". In *Learning with Adults: A Critical Pedagogical Introduction, International Issues in Adult Education*, Vol. 8, 109–130. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-768-4\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-768-4_11).
- Flicker, S., O. Maley, A. Ridgley, S. Biscope, C. Lombardo, and H. A. Skinner. 2008. "e-PAR: Using Technology and Participatory Action Research to Engage Youth in Health Promotion". *Action Research* 6 (3): 285–303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750307083711>.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. 1974. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. 1996. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P., and M. Horton. 1990. *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Freire, P., and I. Shor. 1987. *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-18574-0>.
- Gamble, J. 2006. "Theory and Practice in the Vocational Curriculum". In *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education*, edited by J. Gamble and M. Young, 87–103. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Gamble, J. 2016. "From Labour Market to Labour Process: Finding a Basis for Curriculum in TVET". *International Journal of Training Research* 14 (3): 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14480220.2016.1254367>.

- Gamble, J. 2020. "'Occupation', Labour Markets and Qualification Futures". *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 74 (2): 311–332.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2020.1760336>.
- Herr, K., and G. L. Anderson. 2016. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. 3rd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Hodkinson, P. 1998. "Technicism, Teachers and Teaching Quality in Vocational Education and Training". *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 50 (2): 193–208.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13636829800200045>.
- hooks, b. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- HRDC (Human Resource Development Council of South Africa). 2014. *TVET Colleges in South Africa: Pathways Workstream*. Pretoria: HRDCSA.
- Jackson, S., ed. 2011. *Lifelong Learning and Social Justice: Communities, Work and Identities in a Globalised World*. Leicester: NIACE.
- John, V. M. 2020. "Tackling Xenophobia through Dialogue: A Freirean Approach". *Education as Change* 24: 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/6534>.
- Lima, L.C. 2022. "Adult Learning and Mainstream Education Discourse: Revisiting Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*". In *Remaking Communities and Adult Learning*, edited by R. Evans, E. Kurantowicz and E. Lucio-Villegas, 19–36. Leiden: Brill.  
[https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004518032\\_002](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004518032_002).
- Mabunda, N. O., and L. Frick. 2020. "Factors That Influence the Employability of National Certificate (Vocational) Graduates: The Case of a Rural TVET College in the Eastern Cape, South Africa". *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* 3 (1): 89–108. <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.14426/jovacet.v3i1.127>.
- Majola, E. 2023. "Vocational Education and the Relentless Struggles of TVET Graduates in South Africa: A Freirean Approach". PhD diss., Nelson Mandela University
- Matenda, S. 2020. "Experiences of Women Students in Engineering Studies at a TVET College in South Africa". *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* 3: (1): 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.14426/jovacet.v3i1.128>.
- Maude, A. 2015. "What Is Powerful Knowledge and Can It Be Found in the Australian Geography Curriculum?" *Geographical Education* 28: 18–26.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1085994.pdf>.
- McAteer, M. 2013. *Action Research in Education*. London: Sage.

- McGrath, S. 2012. "Building New Approaches to Thinking about Vocational Education and Training and Development: Policy, Theory and Evidence". *International Journal of Educational Development* 32 (5): 619–622. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.04.003>.
- McGrath, S., L. Powell, J. Alla-Mensah, R. Hilal, and R. Suart. 2020. "New VET Theories for New Times: The Critical Capabilities Approach to Vocational Education and Training and Its Potential for Theorising a Transformed and Transformational VET". *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 74 (4): 575–596. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2020.1786440>.
- Mitcham, A. J. A. 2021. "The NC(V) Qualification, Internships, and Work Readiness. The Case of a TVET College in the Western Cape". MEd diss., University of the Western Cape. <https://etd.uwc.ac.za/handle/11394/8394>.
- Motala, E., and S. Vally, S. 2014. "'No One to Blame But Themselves': Rethinking the Relationship between Education, Skills and Employment". In *Education, Economy and Society*, edited by S. Vally and E. Matola, 1–25. Pretoria: UNISA Press.
- Ngcwangu, S. 2019. "Skills Development and TVET Policies in South Africa: The Human Capabilities Approach". In *Handbook of Vocational Education and Training: Developments in the Changing World of Work*, edited by S. McGrath, M. Mulder, J. Papier and R. Suart, 259–271. Cham: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94532-3\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94532-3_4).
- O'Brien, T. 2009. "Worker Generated Issues, Critical Dialogue, and Praxis: A Freirean Approach to Developing Social Change Projects". PhD diss., University of St. Thomas.
- Papier, J., and S. McGrath. 2020. "Growing the TVET Knowledge Base in the South: South African Postgraduate Output, 2008–2018". *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* 3 (1): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.14426/jovacet.v3i1.129>.
- Papier, J., L. Powell, T. McBride, and S. Needham. 2019. "Tracing the Pathways of NATED Programme Graduates through TVET Colleges and Beyond". In *Post-School Education and the Labour Market in South Africa*, edited by M. Rogan, 165–184. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Porres, G. T. 2017. "Beyond Qualification: The Issue of Emancipation in the Pedagogy of Vocational Education and Training". PhD diss., KU Leuven.
- Porres, G. M. T., D. Wildemeersch, and M. Simons. 2020. "Revisiting Rancière's Concept of Intellectual Emancipation in Vocational Educational and Training Practices". *Sisyphus: Journal of Education* 8 (3): 23–40.
- Powell, L. 2012. "Reimagining the Purpose of VET—Expanding the Capability to Aspire in South African Further Education and Training Students". *International Journal of Educational Development* 32: 643–653. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.01.008>.

- Powell L. 2014. “Reimagining the Purpose of Vocational Education and Training: The Perspective of Further Education and Training College Students in South Africa”. PhD diss., University of Nottingham.
- Powell, L. 2021. “Planning for Freedom: From Human Capital to Human Capabilities”. *Journal of Education* 84: 85–105. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i84a05>.
- Powell, L., and S. McGrath. 2014. “Exploring the Value of the Capability Approach for Vocational Education and Training (VET) Evaluation: Reflections from South Africa”. In *Education, Learning, Training: Critical Issues for Development*, International Development Policy No. 5, edited by G. Carbonnier, M. Carton and K. King, 126–148. Geneva: Graduate Institute Publications, Boston: Brill-Nijhoff. <https://doi.org/10.4000/poldev.1784>.
- Powell, L., and S. McGrath. 2019. “Capability or Employability: Orientating VET Toward ‘Real Work’”. In *Handbook of Vocational Education and Training*, edited by S. McGrath, M. Mulder, J. Papier and R. Suart, 369–392. Cham: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94532-3\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94532-3_12).
- Rogan, M., and J. Papier. 2020. *A Baseline Study on the Destination of TVET College Graduates to Strengthen Employment Promotion in South Africa*. Pretoria: DHET. <https://www.gtac.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Baseline-Study-on-the-Destination-of-TVET-College-Graduates-to-Strengthen-Employment-Promotion-in-South-Africa.pdf>.
- Sinwell, L. 2022. “Teaching and Learning Paulo Freire: South Africa’s Communities of Struggle”. *Education as Change* 26: 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/9368>.
- SSACI, JET Education Services, and NBI. 2016. *Tracer Study of the Transition of Students from TVET Colleges to the Labour Market*. Pretoria: Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative (SSACI), JET Education Services, National Business Initiative (NBI). <https://www.ssaci.org.za/images/NCV%20Tracer%20Study%20Report%202016.pdf>.
- Terblanche, T., and E. Bitzer. 2018 “Leading Curriculum Change in South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges”. *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* 1 (1): 104–125. <https://doi.org/10.14426/jovacet.v1i1.16>.
- Tukundane, C., and J. Zeelen. 2015. “Using Participatory Action Research to Improve Vocational Skills Training for Marginalised Youth in Uganda: Experiences from an Early School-Leavers’ Project”. *International Journal of Training Research* 13 (3): 246–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14480220.2015.1102468>.
- Vally, S., and E. Motala. 2017. “Education, Training, and Work under Neoliberalism in South Africa: Toward Alternatives”. *Education as Change* 21 (3): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.17159/1947-9417/2017/2998>.

- Van der Bijl, A., and M. Lawrence. 2019. "Retention and Attrition among National Certificate (Vocational) Civil and Construction Students in South African TVET". *Industry and Higher Education* 33 (2): 127–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422218800649>.
- White, J. 2018. "The Weakness of 'Powerful Knowledge'". *London Review of Education* 16 (2): 325–335. <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.16.2.11>.
- Wildemeersch, D. 2007. "Social Learning Revisited: Lessons Learned from North and South". In *Social Learning: Towards a Sustainable World*, edited by A. Wals, 99–116. Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers. [https://doi.org/10.3920/9789086865949\\_008](https://doi.org/10.3920/9789086865949_008).
- Young, M. 2008. "From Constructivism to Realism in the Sociology of the Curriculum". *Review of Research in Education* 32 (1): 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X07308969>.
- Young, M., and J. Gamble, eds. 2006. *Knowledge, Curriculum and Qualifications for South African Further Education*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Zhu, Y. 2019. "Can Participatory Action Research 'Empower' Participants in Adult Educational Studies? A Marxist-Feminist Analysis". *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* 31 (1). <https://cjsae.library.dal.ca/index.php/cjsae/article/view/5454>.
- Zipin, L., A. Fataar, and M. Brennan. 2015. "Can Social Realism Do Social Justice? Debating the Warrants for Curriculum Knowledge Selection". *Education as Change* 19 (2): 9–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2015.1085610>.