

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITY  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Cynthia Nthabiseng Modise, student number 2019383641, thus certify that the mini-dissertation I have submitted to the University of the Free State's Centre for Development Support, South Africa, is a reflection of my work towards a Master's degree in Development Studies. This is the only university to which this mini-dissertation has ever been submitted. This mini-dissertation represents my initial attempt at a Master's degree.

I know plagiarism – submitting someone else's ideas without that person's consent, recognition, or citation – will result in severe consequences from the Free State University. I certify that the text and references list adequately cite the concepts I gleaned from the writings of other authors. I further affirm that the sources have been appropriately credited. The source's name, the year of publication, and the appropriate page numbers are included in the text following the reference guidelines.

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**Mrs CN Modise**

**June 2023**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training and scholars describe the role of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETC<sup>1</sup>s), a gap still exists regarding how CETC<sup>1</sup>s carry out their duties in society. The aim of this study was to address this gap by exploring the participants' perspectives on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s value their contribution to addressing the challenges and needs of local communities. The Capability Approach (CA) was employed as the analytical framework in this study to examine the societal impact of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in South Africa. Data were collected from research participants through semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. The findings of the study indicate that students perceive CETC<sup>1</sup>s as economic agents that facilitate their employability or engagement in self-employment. The CA highlights the importance of considering the resources provided to students and how their conversion factors influence their functionings in successful efforts to enhance CETC<sup>1</sup> education. The findings suggest that the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s is to provide students with opportunities for intellectual advancement and the ability to evaluate what is relevant to them. However, it is crucial to be mindful of CETC<sup>1</sup> education, particularly in light of the participants' expressed valued capabilities and functionings, encompassing societal and economic values. Although CETC<sup>1</sup>s enhance students' skills, their valued capabilities are constrained by classroom size, financial limitations, and curricular concerns. Based on the empirical findings, the study argues that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) should enhance the theoretical and practical understanding of CETC<sup>1</sup>s' role. This would require CETCs to introduce democratic educational concepts to strengthen student voices; expand CETC's curriculum to include sustainable livelihood strategies; work with technical and vocational colleges and universities to coordinate curricula and ensure quality; and rethink college policies to help students more effectively navigate the institutions systems. In addition, by resolving infrastructural issues, limited classrooms, low student funding, and a lack of alignment between CETC and local community requirements, these CETCs should be able to better recognise the societal function of CETC<sup>1</sup>s. Such initiatives might improve student welfare and societal welfare while promoting the economic advantages of CETC<sup>1</sup>s.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ABET</b>	Adult Basic Education and Training
<b>AET</b>	Adult Education and Training
<b>CA</b>	Capability Approach
<b>CDI</b>	Community Development Initiative
<b>CDWP</b>	Community Development Workers Programme
<b>CETC<sup>1</sup></b>	Community Education and Training Colleges
<b>CETC<sup>2</sup></b>	Core English Textbook Course
<b>CETCAC</b>	Community Education and Training College Administration Centre
<b>CFET</b>	College of Further Education and Training
<b>CLC</b>	Community Learning Centres
<b>CWP</b>	Community Works Programme
<b>DHET</b>	Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EPWP</b>	Expanded Public Works Programme
<b>HBC</b>	Home-Based Care
<b>JTC</b>	Junior Technical Certificate
<b>MTT</b>	Ministerial Task Team
<b>NASCA</b>	National Senior Certificate for Adults
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Employment, Education or Training
<b>NICE</b>	National Institute for Community Education
<b>NPC</b>	National Planning Commission
<b>NSC</b>	National Senior Certificate
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PALC</b>	Public Adult Learning Centres
<b>PMG</b>	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
<b>PSET</b>	Post-School Education and Training
<b>SDIP</b>	Service Delivery Implementation Plan
<b>SETA</b>	Sector Education and Training Authority

<b>SIDP</b>	State's Infrastructure Development Programme
<b>TVET</b>	Technical Vocational Education and Training
<b>UMI</b>	Uganda Management Institute
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>WP-PSET</b>	White Paper on Post-School Education and Training

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

Community colleges have traditionally been regarded as a means to address diverse challenges, including skill shortages and underdevelopment (Beach, 2012). Raby and Valeau (2018) argue that community colleges serve as a viable alternative to universities, offering a conducive learning environment that enhances employability for the next generation of students. They provide programmes for young individuals who are not in education, employment, or training, as well as those actively seeking employment. The only enrolment requirements for these institutions are that individuals should be at least 18 years old and possess the cognitive ability to benefit from the instruction provided (Wolhuter, 2011). In South Africa, the focus of this study, each province houses a Community Education and Training College (CETC<sup>1</sup>) and multiple satellite campuses where teaching and learning take place (Land & Aitchison, 2017).

In 2015, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) established at least one CETC<sup>1</sup> in each of the country's nine provinces, along with 2,795 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) or campuses (Simkins, 2019). The increasing number of young individuals who are not employed, in education, or training, coupled with the limited options offered by Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), set the stage for the conversion of PALCs to CETC<sup>1</sup>s (Land & Aitchison, 2017). Despite the introduction of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in South Africa, significant investments are still required to optimise their performance (Simkins, 2019). Due to inadequate funding for student accommodation, transportation, and meals, students face challenges in meeting these additional educational costs, making CETC<sup>1</sup>s prohibitively expensive and inaccessible for students from low-income households (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021).

In contrast, between 2010 and 2017, traditional universities and technical institutions received nearly 86% of the tertiary education budget, while Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges received just over 14% (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2019). During this period, no funding was allocated to CETC's for the implementation of the anticipated new model (Simkins, 2019). As a result, CETCs have experienced a high rate of student attrition and failure, struggled to find qualified lecturers, and were unable to improve their working conditions (Sheppard, 2017). Therefore, the South African government must provide adequate funding for CETC's to function optimally and dispel the stigma of poor performance that plagued its predecessor, the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) system during the apartheid era (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021).

Nzimande (2014) highlights the significance of CETC<sup>1</sup> policies and practices as the foundation of a democratic society that prioritises realising people's aspirations and well-being. Simkins (2019) states that the primary objectives of CETC's are to address skill development needs and enhance educational standards for individuals. However, since 2015, CETC's have encountered various challenges, including insufficient staffing, funding, and difficulties in finalising and implementing new study programmes that align with community needs (Simkins, 2019).

The lack of uniformity in the CETC<sup>1</sup> sector and unequal funding distribution across CETC's nationwide make it arduous to effectively design and implement non-formal programmes in local communities (Sheppard, 2017). Moreover, CETC<sup>1</sup> funding remains a significant hurdle in the face of South Africa's persistent issues of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Ncobela, 2020). Nonetheless, CETC's must enhance students' capabilities and functionings in order to fulfil their objective of promoting employability (Baatjes & Chaka, 2012).

The report from the ministerial task team has played a pivotal role in shaping the roles and responsibilities of CETC's, subsequently reflected in the 2013 White Paper for Post-

School Education and Training, which now serves as the official mandate for CETC's (Land & Aitchison, 2017). Although the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training effectively outlines the functions of CETC's, there is limited information on how these institutions execute their duties. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the contributions of CETC's to societal needs through students' perspectives. Specifically, the study focuses on gathering the experiences of CETC<sup>1</sup> students at a campus in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa to uncover their views on the practical functionings of the institution.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

While the South African National Development Plan projects an enrolment of one million students in CETC's by 2030, there are currently 3.5 million unemployed, uneducated, or underemployed South African youth, with half of the population living in persistent poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The CETC's are expected to cater to these not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), as outlined in the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training. Wolhuter et al. (2015) suggest that many young individuals from low-income families face various socio-economic challenges, including difficulties in passing their matriculation examinations due to social factors. CETC's are seen as platforms for equipping NEETs with skill development initiatives to enhance their knowledge and employability (Land & Aitchison, 2017). Additionally, the annual presentation of grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results by the Minister of Basic Education sparks debates on the quality of the education sector and students' ability to complete their studies (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021). Consequently, students who do not complete grade 12 contribute to the expansion of the NEET population, and CETC's are expected to provide them with second-chance opportunities to improve their education levels and enhance their employability (Sheppard, 2017).

Simkins (2019) reports that during two meetings held in May and August 2018, the Parliamentary Committee on Higher Education (PMG), responsible for overseeing the management of CETC's, reviewed performance reports from CETC's throughout South

Africa to assess their progress in accordance with the provisions of the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training. The PMG expressed concern about the sluggish development of CETC<sup>1</sup> infrastructure, particularly inadequate classrooms, as well as issues related to student accommodation, transportation, and allowances. National senior representatives from CETC<sup>1</sup>s highlighted the need for support to address low student enrolments, reductions in adult education and training (AET) literacy programmes, high student absenteeism, and insufficient funding to implement all programmes outlined in the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (Simkins, 2019).

Wiseman (2012) argues that CETC<sup>1</sup>s have the potential to assist NEET individuals in finding rewarding careers. Despite their importance, there has been limited research on the functionings of CETC<sup>1</sup>s to fulfil their mandates, particularly studies drawing from the students' perspectives, as this study aims to do. Therefore, this study intends to bridge this gap by collecting the experiences of CETC<sup>1</sup> students to gain insights into how these colleges fulfil their responsibilities in addressing societal challenges. According to DHET (2012), CETCs should promote lifelong learning, provide chances for skill development in local communities, and enhance people's social, personal, and professional lives. CETCs strive to support community organisations, municipalities, enterprises, and individuals in addition to assisting people in cooperating to grow and strengthen their local communities (Land & Aitchison, 2017).

### **1.3 Research questions**

The main research question guiding the study is: How does the CETC<sup>1</sup> contribute to addressing the needs and challenges of local communities?

The secondary research questions are the following:

1. How do students understand the value of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in addressing individual and society's challenges?

2. Which valued capabilities and functionings have students developed through their CETC<sup>1</sup> education?
3. Based on students' experiences, how can CETC<sup>1</sup>s enhance youth capabilities, and address societal needs?
4. How can the Capability Approach (CA) contribute to understanding CETC<sup>1</sup> in enhancing individuals and the broader societal well-being?

#### **1.4 Aim and objectives of the study**

The aim and objectives of this study are highlighted in this section.

##### **1.4.1 Aim**

This study aims to explore how CETC<sup>1</sup>s can contribute to addressing individual and society's challenges. In doing so, the study aspires to make a case for how these CETC<sup>1</sup>s can improve students and the local community's well-being by drawing from students' perspectives.

##### **1.4.2 Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To explore how students understand the value of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in addressing individual challenges
- To identify the valued capabilities and functionings of students through CETC<sup>1</sup> education
- To investigate student opinions about how CETC<sup>1</sup>s enhance their capabilities and functionings, including how they address societal needs

- To investigate how the CA can contribute to understanding CETC<sup>1</sup> roles in enhancing individuals and the broader societal well-being

Realising these objectives will enhance acquiring new information about CETC<sup>1</sup> student experiences in this study area. The study used the CA to find the answers to the research questions.

### **1.5 Justification and significance of the study**

As previous research indicates, a growing body of evidence suggests that CETC<sup>1</sup>s can contribute to addressing societal challenges and meeting community needs (see also Wolhuter et al., 2015). Furthermore, Katusiime (2014) argues that the value of CETC<sup>1</sup>s should be defined in a broader sense, encompassing not only economic factors but also the well-being of individuals and society at large. However, fewer studies have focused on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s specifically address societal challenges and fulfil their role in enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities. Additionally, the literature has paid less attention to the contribution and discourse surrounding CETC<sup>1</sup>s, while studies by Wolhuter (2011), Matenda (2020), and Katusiime (2014) predominantly explore the roles of universities and TVET colleges. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by drawing from the perspectives of CETC<sup>1</sup> students to make a case for how CETC<sup>1</sup>s can enhance the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. The White Paper highlights that CETC<sup>1</sup>s should offer government-driven and funded activities to meet community needs (DHET, 2013). In order to better support individual and community needs, CETC<sup>1</sup>s should adopt a holistic approach to skill development, providing learning opportunities beyond the acquisition of hard and soft skills (Sheppard, 2017). Land and Aitchison (2017) emphasise the importance of non-formal programming that focuses on local economic and community development opportunities.

The Ministerial Task Team on CETC<sup>1</sup>s in 2012 identified two distinct groups, namely adults and the NEET, that require increased access to first- or second-chance learning and lifelong learning opportunities (Land & Aitchison, 2017). According to Statistics South

Africa (2016), 18.8 million South Africans aged 20 and above could benefit from CETC's. Within this group, 1.7 million individuals have not received formal education, 3.5 million have not completed primary school, 1.6 million have completed primary school, and 12 million have only completed grade 12 (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Therefore, it is evident that the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training underscores the role of CETC's and emphasises the importance of education in addressing societal issues (DHET, 2013). The National Skills Development Plan, as highlighted by Land and Aitchison (2017), recognises the significance of CETC's in fostering economic growth within a developing country such as South Africa. This study contributes both empirically and theoretically by foregrounding students' voices to examine whether CETC's fulfil their responsibility in enhancing the well-being of students and society at large.

Consequently, the study's conclusions and recommendations offer valuable insights to CETC<sup>1</sup> stakeholders, suggesting appropriate and contextually relevant initiatives that ensure equal access to opportunities for students and the freedom to pursue lives aligned with their individual and community values. Additionally, the study provides a platform for students to share their experiences at CETC's. As evident from the findings, each student's voice, along with the collective opinions, is crucial in shaping the understanding that supports and shapes the discourse around CETC's, intending to advance both individual and societal well-being.

## **1.6 Outline of the study**

This study is structured into five chapters.

### Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a concise overview of the study's aim, objectives, problem statement, and research questions. Additionally, the justification and significance of the study are discussed.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter conducts a comprehensive review of the existing literature concerning the contribution, evolution, and functions of CETC's in various global contexts, with examples from the Global North and South. However, no direct comparisons are made. This chapter aims to establish a solid understanding of CETC's as a foundation for making a case within the South African context. Furthermore, the chapter explores the adoption of the CA as the analytical framework for this study.

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The focus of this chapter is to outline the methodology employed in the study. It elaborates on the research design and methodology, providing details on the data collection and analysis procedures implemented to address the research questions.

## Chapter 4: Findings of the Study

This chapter presents and discusses the findings derived from the study, addressing the research objectives. It encompasses an in-depth exploration of the research outcomes based on the data gathered throughout the investigation.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this concluding chapter, the findings are thoroughly examined and related to the aim of the study. Moreover, recommendations are provided based on the results to address the identified issues or challenges. The chapter offers insights and suggestions for future actions or improvements.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter provided an introduction and background to the study. This chapter undertakes a comprehensive examination of the relevant literature pertaining to the subject. One institution that has gained prominence in the global higher education landscape is the Community Education and Training College (CETC<sup>1</sup>) (Raby & Valeau, 2009). Its success on a global scale has served as an inspiration for many other countries, particularly South Africa (Wolhuter, 2011). Community colleges in the Global North and South play a significant role in nurturing youth skills and facilitating job creation (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021). Therefore, the chapter commences by discussing the historical context of community colleges in the Global North and South. Additionally, it examines the history of community colleges in South Africa, while the latter part of the chapter focuses on the conceptual framework employed in this research.

While the South African Government's White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (WP-PSET) and various scholars (Land & Aitchison, 2017; Sheppard, 2017; Simkins, 2019) aptly describe the role of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETC<sup>1</sup>s), there is limited understanding of their operational practices. By concentrating on the perceptions of CETC<sup>1</sup> students, this study aims to address this knowledge gap and gain a deeper understanding of how CETC<sup>1</sup>s respond to community challenges and needs in a developing country such as South Africa. The next section will present the conceptualised role and historical background of community colleges in the Global North.

## **2.2 The role of Community Education and Training Colleges in the Global North**

The establishment of community colleges in the United States of America (USA) can be traced back to 1901 with the founding of Joliet Junior College, a bridging programme between Joliet High School and the University of Chicago (Morest, 2013). In the American context, community colleges were primarily aimed at expanding opportunities for adults to pursue post-secondary education through two-year Associate Degrees that could serve as a pathway to university studies (Gaviria, 2012).

As highlighted by Mfenyana (2018), the objective of AET in the USA was to enhance access to further and higher education for marginalised and minority groups. The period between the 1950s and 1971 witnessed a significant expansion of community colleges in the USA, driven by the need to provide access to post-secondary education and promote social mobility (Raby & Valeau, 2012). Community colleges gained recognition for their ability to introduce innovative educational systems tailored to meet the specific needs of local communities. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) adopted the American model as a global standard, leading to the successful establishment of a network of community colleges in 36 European countries by 1999, with a focus on workforce education based on the USA college model (Raby & Valeau, 2012).

By that time, the USA boasted a total of 654 community colleges, accounting for 40% of all higher education institutions (Raby & Valeau, 2012). A Presidential Commission on community colleges was pivotal in creating an extensive and inclusive post-secondary education system in the USA, attracting marginalised and vulnerable individuals who faced financial barriers and strict admission requirements imposed by selective and elite higher education institutions (Raby & Valeau, 2009). Former US President Barack Obama further aimed to increase community college enrolment by setting a target of enrolling 5 million students by 2020 (Raby & Valeau, 2012). The international track record of community colleges showcases several commendable aspects. For instance, community colleges in the USA play a significant role in providing vocational education (Raby & Valeau, 2012). In fact, vocational education currently accounts for 54% of all degrees and

certificates awarded by community colleges (Cohen, 2009, p. 42). Additionally, these colleges offer remedial instruction in areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, study skills, and English proficiency to support non-native English speakers in developing the necessary skills for their academic progress (Raby & Valeau, 2012).

Raby and Valeau (2013) assert that community colleges offer significant advantages to students who cannot afford university tuition fees and rely on student support services. Acting as feeder institutions for universities, community colleges provide an opportunity for students to enhance their academic subjects and credentials (Wolhuter, 2011). Raby (2009) notes that community colleges in the US primarily cater to students who need to improve their grades to meet the requirements of technical colleges and universities. Moreover, students pursuing a four-year bachelor's degree can complete their initial two years of post-secondary education at these colleges (Raby, 2009).

According to Janis (2013), community colleges are well-positioned to provide lifelong education while addressing the specific needs of the surrounding communities. Raby and Valeau (2013) further suggest that community colleges offer multicultural and intercultural training to benefit the diverse student body. Students from low-income backgrounds often utilise community college education to enhance their knowledge and skills to meet the demands of potential employers (Janis, 2013).

Wolhuter (2011) emphasises that community colleges are renowned for their wide range of academic and service offerings, including specialisations in arts, vocational, and technical education programmes. Community colleges provide short-term, part-time courses, as well as elementary and adult education, including occupational programmes tailored for individuals seeking employment in commerce, technology, or vocational fields (Raby & Valeau, 2013). DeBard and Rice (2009) confirm that community colleges in the US also offer educational opportunities to students of all ages who are ineligible for university enrolment (DeBard & Rice, 2009).

Mfenyana (2018) posits that the resolution by the OECD enabled the sharing of practices and the establishment of partnerships between the US and Canada on international projects. This facilitated the expansion of the American model of community colleges, which extended to Canada as well. Community colleges have a long-standing presence in Canada, located across the border from the US (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2010).

In the 1960s, Canadian provinces began incorporating the community college model into their higher education systems to address the academic needs of individuals who were unable to pursue studies at universities and to meet the demand for skilled technical professionals (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021; Wolhuter et al., 2015). In 2009, Ontario had approximately 24 community colleges for applied arts and technology (Raby & Valeau, 2012), and since 1967, around 48 post-secondary institutions have been operating in Quebec (Wolhuter, 2011). Canadian community colleges exhibit robust economic, social, cultural, and political characteristics (ACCC, 2013).

Raby and Valeau (2012) postulate that Canadian community colleges have established themselves as counter-hegemonic forces by fostering intimate relationships with local communities. These colleges also have a history of promoting indigenous knowledge systems for the same purpose. Similar to the US, community colleges in Canada offer diverse educational programmes and practical certificates in vocational fields, such as agriculture production, construction, and landscaping (Gaviria, 2012). These programmes facilitate self-employment opportunities, particularly for youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Gaviria, 2012; Gregorutti, 2012; Ncobela, 2020; Smith, 2019).

In many countries, such as Canada, policymakers believe that providing adequate financing to community colleges will enhance students' attraction and retention, ultimately increasing their social mobility and enabling them to move from lower to middle classes (Smith, 2019). Wolhuter et al. (2015) highlight that Canadian community colleges have expanded their range of courses, certification options, and involvement in international partnerships. This expansion is evident in the diverse programme offerings, including

programmes aimed at assisting students in transitioning from high school to community college and beyond (Wolhuter et al., 2015). Moreover, the practice of credit transfer across higher education institutions in Canada is supported by higher education authorities (LeSage et al., 2014).

Furthermore, in Canada, there is an interesting phenomenon of university graduates turning to community colleges to pursue job-related education (Smith, 2019). The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (2010) states that community colleges provide an opportunity for typical high school students to enrol for several years before graduation. Compared to international students, individuals deciding between academic and vocational degrees have an advantage when it comes to employment prospects (Wolhuter et al., 2015).

Mfenyana (2018) observes that the success of US community colleges in facilitating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for students led to other countries adopting the American community college model. Raby and Valeau (2012) suggest that countries such as New Zealand embraced the US community college model, adapting it to their own contexts with a focus on lifelong learning. Another example is Japan, where in 1949, the traditional three-year professional schools were transformed into two-year community college programmes, following the US model. These institutions played a crucial role in providing a trained workforce during the post-World War II reconstruction period (Lam & Vi, 2009).

Community colleges have successfully addressed unemployment challenges in various developed nations in the Global North (Gaviria, 2012; Gregorutti, 2012; Oesch, 2010). However, Wolhuter et al. (2015) highlight that despite their successes, community colleges also face several limitations. There is a prevailing worldwide tendency to view vocational education as inferior, which affects the perception and fate of community colleges (Oesch, 2010). Furthermore, aligning the worlds of education and work remains an ongoing challenge that no country or education system has fully resolved. As a result, community colleges are not a cure-all solution, and factors such as poor national

planning, corruption, and economic instability can contribute to unemployment among community college graduates (Wolhuter et al., 2015).

While community colleges have the advantage of adaptability compared to other forms of higher education, they can still face challenges in responding quickly to changing contexts and demands due to historical inertia (Lam & Vi, 2009). Sheppard (2017) asserts that universities greatly advance innovation and creativity through their academic endeavours, research, collaboration, and access, whereas Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges provide both occupational and vocational training. Like community colleges, universities and TVET colleges, arguably, also provide programmes for young individuals who are not in education, employment, or training, and those actively seeking employment (Sheppard, 2017). Additionally, while community colleges are generally more cost-effective to maintain than universities, they still require operational costs and significant capital investment for infrastructure development, which may pose challenges for developing countries (Wolhuter et al., 2015).

Community colleges in the Global North make significant contributions to skills development and job creation among youth. Governments in these countries actively establish and support community colleges to achieve these objectives. The literature on Community Education and Training Colleges in the Global North provides valuable insights into the conceptualised role of CETC's, which is relevant to this study. Consequently, this study aims to explore how community colleges in South Africa, as a developing country, can perform given the contextual differences from developed nations in the Global North. The following section discusses the evolution and perceived role of community colleges in the global South, drawing examples from sub-Saharan Africa.

### **2.3 The role of community colleges in the Global South**

Like many countries worldwide, Africa has adopted the community college model from the United States (Raby & Valeau, 2012). For instance, in Zimbabwe, community colleges gained popularity after the country gained independence from British colonial rule in 1980

(Mpondi, 2009). The demand for university spaces in Zimbabwe exceeded the available capacity, prompting the introduction of community colleges as additional higher education institutions to accommodate the growing number of students seeking university education (Wolhuter et al., 2015). The late President Robert Mugabe's administration expanded educational opportunities and repositioned the higher education sector for socio-economic benefits (Mpondi, 2009).

Community colleges in Zimbabwe also provided an opportunity for students who had left school early to fight for independence to complete their studies (Raby & Valeau, 2012). These colleges offered flexible tuition plans and provided options for daytime or evening programmes to cater to the needs of working students (Wolhuter, 2011). In addition to contributing to increased literacy rates, community colleges in Zimbabwe produced artisans with specialised skills (Mpondi, 2009). Remedial classes in reading, writing, arithmetic, study skills, and English proficiency were also available to students who needed to improve their grades to graduate from high school and pursue further education (Wolhuter, 2011). Popular courses offered at these community colleges included carpentry, home economics, and remedial education for high school subjects (Wolhuter et al., 2015). Upon completion of their studies, graduates were expected to work for the colonial authority (Mpondi, 2009).

The adaptability of Zimbabwean community colleges and their responsiveness to local community needs is another notable advantage (Raby, 2009). An example of this adaptability is the Linkage Model developed in the country, which emphasises the incorporation of business and industry skills into the curriculum design to ensure that the skills taught at community colleges are valuable to employers and industries (Mpondi, 2009). Community colleges in Zimbabwe have a reputation for providing post-secondary education at a lower cost compared to traditional forms of higher education, such as universities, and they are geographically accessible to local communities (Wolhuter et al., 2015). Mpondi (2009) affirms that community colleges have proven their effectiveness in providing remedial education, enabling students to tackle complex subjects and improve their grades to meet the enrolment requirements of universities and polytechnic colleges.

Wolhuter et al. (2015) argue that community colleges in Zimbabwe play a crucial role in providing education to individuals with limited educational backgrounds and those seeking economic stability. These colleges focus on courses that align with the needs of local communities, including entrepreneurial training (Mpondi, 2009). However, Wolhuter et al. (2015) acknowledges that community colleges are not always the most effective means of equalising access to higher education. Limited access to community colleges exacerbates competition and socio-economic inequality in the country. Furthermore, corruption and mismanagement within the government have significantly impacted the community college system in Zimbabwe (Wolhuter et al., 2015).

In Uganda, Raby and Valeau (2012) highlight the efforts to improve access to education for underserved students and align training with the economic and social realities of the country. New public and private community college institutions, including business colleges, technical schools, farm schools, and community polytechnics, have been established (Raby, 2009). While enrolment in community colleges in Uganda has been steadily increasing, the majority of the demand for higher education remains concentrated in traditional university-type institutions (Jacob et al., 2009). Community colleges in Uganda only reach a fraction of the unmet demand for post-primary and post-secondary education (Raby & Valeau, 2009).

According to Jacob et al. (2009), Uganda has numerous community colleges that contribute significantly to the country's human resource development. These colleges vary in size, ranging from small private institutions with only a few rented classrooms to larger campuses with thousands of enrolled students. The role of community colleges in Uganda, as noted by Raby (2009), is to equip individuals with marketable skills that contribute to social and economic development, poverty eradication, and improvement of people's quality of life. Raby further explains that this economic-focused approach is evident across colleges nationwide and is well-received by students. Some community colleges, such as the Uganda Management Institute (UMI) in Kampala, offer outreach courses and short training programmes to serve employed individuals in rural regions of Uganda (Jacob et al., 2009). The flexibility of community college courses has also

provided working-class adults with the opportunity to pursue higher education and enhance their skills while maintaining employment and supporting their families (Raby & Valeau, 2009).

Raby (2009) suggests that certain community colleges function as community polytechnics and pro-poor vocational training institutions targeting youth who are not in employment or education. These colleges provide various skills development initiatives through vocational training and modular instruction. Jacob et al. (2009) proposes that colleges offer skills development to highly talented graduates holding a Junior Technical Certificate (JTC) to facilitate their transition to other higher education institutions. Students can progress from community polytechnic colleges to Vocational Technical or Training Institutes. After completing the institute, individuals can further their studies at a Technical College to pursue an Ordinary Diploma in technical courses (Raby, 2009; Jacob et al., 2009).

While the operationalisation and perceived role of community colleges may differ in other countries, Uganda and Zimbabwe serve as starting points for considering how CETC's can contribute to addressing societal challenges. Community colleges now exist in the higher education systems of Uganda and Zimbabwe (Jacob et al., 2009; Mpondi, 2009). This literature study suggests that community colleges in the global South serve as a means of promoting social justice in higher education (Mpondi, 2009). Community colleges in these countries have made higher education accessible to underrepresented, marginalised, and excluded groups who would otherwise face barriers in other higher education institutions (Raby & Valeau, 2012). Wolhuter et al. (2015) emphasise that the openness of community college entrance requirements, their geographic proximity to disadvantaged students, relatively low cost, and comprehensive mission have facilitated the enrolment of disadvantaged individuals.

While these examples cannot be generalised to the role of CETC's in all countries, they provide an underlying understanding that even in sub-Saharan Africa, the community college model has existed to cater to the education of students from disadvantaged

backgrounds. These colleges can provide the education necessary to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed for employment. However, the biggest challenges faced by community colleges in developing countries are high levels of inequality, poor economic growth, and, to some extent, elevated poverty levels.

With the potential role of community colleges in addressing community challenges, my study contributes to the existing literature by further exploring how CETC<sup>1</sup>s can enhance the well-being of students and society as a whole, drawing insights from the students themselves. The following section examines the evolution of community colleges in South Africa, the context in which this study is situated.

## **2.4 The History of South African Community Education and Training Colleges**

In South Africa, CETC<sup>1</sup>s have a long-standing history, with ABET serving as the foundation and context for their establishment (Sheppard, 2017). Land and Aitchison (2017) explain that the establishment of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in South Africa replaced the previous ABET centres that existed during the Apartheid era. ABET, which denied black individuals access to education and opportunities for advancement, excluded the majority of black South Africans from its benefits (Sheppard, 2017). Therefore, community colleges have played a crucial role in providing skills training and education for all individuals, including those who have been historically marginalised. The Green Paper on Further Education and Training (DHET, 2012) supports this goal by emphasising the acquisition of market-related qualifications and skills for unemployed youth in South Africa within the current CETC<sup>1</sup> framework (Land & Aitchison, 2017).

Under the Continuing Education and Training Act No. 16 of 1996, numerous adult learners were enrolled in public adult learning centres known as PALCs (DHET, 2012). In line with the 2015 National Policy on Community Education and Training Colleges, developed by the DHET and approved by the Minister of Higher Education in July 2015, the DHET gained the authority to convert PALCs into CETC<sup>1</sup>s (Land & Aitchison, 2017; Sheppard, 2017; Simkins, 2019). A total of 3 279 PALCs were successfully converted into

Community Education and Training College Administration Centre (CETCAC) clusters, each under the leadership of a principal (Land & Aitchison, 2017). These CETCAC clusters are supported by approximately 2 795 CLCs or campuses that serve as satellites across the country, and there are approximately nine CETCs<sup>1</sup>, one in each province (Land & Aitchison, 2017; Simkins, 2019).

Raby and Valeau (2012) argue that community colleges play a crucial role in instructing and equipping future generations with the necessary skills and training for employment and success. CETC's aim to address the needs of disadvantaged individuals who have faced educational barriers due to historical and contemporary societal challenges and economic constraints (DHET, 2013). They also strive to cater to the requirements of youth who are not engaged in education, employment, or training (referred to as NEET) (Land & Aitchison, 2017).

## **2.5 South African Community Education and Training Colleges**

As previously mentioned, the DHET in South Africa introduced Community Education and Training Colleges (CETC's) in response to significant policy changes in higher education and training aimed at addressing the country's skills development needs (Land & Aitchison, 2017). In 1998, the publication of a Green Paper on Post-Secondary Education (DHET, 2012) marked the introduction of CETC's as the third tier of higher education institutions, which were expected to operate as transparent organisations similar to TVET colleges (DHET, 2012; Land & Aitchison, 2017; Sheppard, 2017).

The 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, which succeeded the Green Paper, recognised the potential of CETC's to address the educational needs of individuals who had previously been denied access to quality education in South Africa due to the apartheid system (DHET, 2013). The White and Green Papers outlined clear plans for the future development of CETC's and their role in serving individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole (DHET, 2013; Sheppard, 2017).

Land and Aitchison (2017) posits that CETC's policy and practises should be based on the ideals of a democratic society that sees enhancing people's quality of life as the main goal of its educational operations. Sheppard (2017), who agrees with Land and Aitchison, asserts that a national CETC<sup>1</sup> system for South Africans should be based on the principles of an inclusive democracy and give people the resources they need to actively participate in establishing the conditions for their academic and professional success as potential students, workers, and citizens.

Based on the 2013 White Paper on Post School Education and Training, all South Africans should have access to opportunities for lifelong learning, career progression, social development and democratic education that ensures students have the flexibility to choose and govern their educational courses. When conceptualising CETC's as a replacement for PALCs, the South African Department of Higher Education and Training took into account a variety of theoretical concepts (Land & Aitchison, 2017). After the Ministerial Task Team (MTT) on CETC<sup>1</sup> s made its recommendation, community colleges (also known as CLCs or campuses) were included as CETC<sup>1</sup> service delivery sites (DHET, 2012). The MTT advised CETC's to examine concepts of community development and provision-related concerns, particularly programme requirements, access, governance, staffing, delivery venue, method of learning and teaching, and funding (Baatjes & Chaka, 2012).

A sustainable livelihood concept must be at the centre of CETC's community development approach, according to Land and Aitchison (2017). The sustainable livelihoods strategy for reducing poverty is built on three principles (Krantz, 2001): The first is the realisation that there is no causal relationship between the two because everything depends on how successfully those who are less fortunate can make use of the rising economic opportunities, even though it is feasible that eradicating poverty necessitates economic development. The second conclusion is that poverty, as it is understood by the poor, encompasses various factors additional to low income, including bad health, illiteracy, a lack of social services, and an overall feeling of helplessness and vulnerability.

Wolhuter (2011) notes that South African CETC<sup>1</sup>s have effectively supported academically at-risk students by facilitating their transition to TVET institutions or universities after completing their CETC<sup>1</sup> studies. However, South Africa urgently needs CETC<sup>1</sup>s to address the prevalent inequality and skill shortages (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021). While the roles of South African CETC<sup>1</sup>s have been outlined above, their practical functioning remains unclear. To bridge this gap, this study aims to investigate students' experiences to gain insights into how CETC<sup>1</sup>s contribute to the addressing needs and challenges of local communities.

Raby (2009) argues that the community college model is most successful in countries that meet specific conditions: a) market forces create a demand for post-secondary institutions that produce skilled technicians to support technological, vocational, and industrial development; b) adult and continuing education is recognised as post-secondary education; and c) post-secondary education is associated with social and economic mobility. However, it is important to note the potential risk of perpetuating Northern hegemony in Southern countries, as many community colleges in the South are established through collaboration agreements with institutions in the United States (Wolhuter et al., 2015).

Finally, it is acknowledged that policies and projects aimed at improving the condition of the poor should involve them in the planning process because they frequently know their circumstances and needs the best (Sheppard, 2017). A CETC<sup>1</sup> strategy based on sustainable livelihoods would accept that individuals have developed and used coping mechanisms, capabilities, skills, and knowledge despite challenges given the possibility that CETC<sup>1</sup> might play a significant role in society (Land & Aitchison, 2017). People rely on the local knowledge and resources they have access to, including experts and well-known individuals, to navigate the difficulties and uncertainties of daily life (Kotze, 2010).

In the following section, the CA will be discussed as the theoretical and conceptual framework for examining how CETC<sup>1</sup>s can address the societal needs.

## **2.6 The Capability Approach**

This section discusses the theoretical foundations of the study. The research adopts the CA as a conceptual and analytical framework to examine how CETC's can address the needs of the community. According to Robeyns (2017), the CA is a normative approach to human well-being that emphasises individuals' actual capabilities to pursue lives that they have reason to value. Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and philosopher, is primarily associated with the CA as he first formulated it in the 1980s. The CA has been widely utilised in human development, such as by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as a more comprehensive and inclusive alternative to strictly economic indicators such as per capita gross domestic product (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009). In this study, the CA facilitated the understanding of why students choose CETC's, the capabilities and functionings they value, the opportunities available to them in CETC's to enhance these functionings, and how contextual factors impact their ability to convert college resources into functionings. The subsequent section delves into the components of the CA and their relevance to this study.

### **2.6.1 Components of the Capability Approach**

The following sub-section delineates the components of the CA that are pertinent to this study.

#### **2.6.1.1 Conversion factors**

As defined by Robeyns (2017), conversion factors determine the extent to which an individual can transform resources into functionings. In other words, conversion factors mediate the relationship between commodities and the realisation of specific beings and doings (Robeyns & Morten, 2023). Conversion factors can be categorised into three types. Personal conversion factors are intrinsic to the individual, such as gender, physical condition, age, and personal abilities. Social conversion factors encompass contextual

variables such as social norms, traditions, practices, and government policies. Environmental conversion factors emerge from an individual's natural or built environment, including aspects such as weather and environmental degradation (Robeyns & Crocker, 2010). The tripartite classification of conversion factors underscores the need to consider not only the resources individuals possess but also their personal characteristics and the environmental conditions they inhabit (Crocker, 2008; Crocker & Robeyns, 2010; Robeyns, 2017). Conversion factors, therefore, assist me in understanding not only the perspectives of students and graduates but also the factors that influence their conceptualisation of the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s.

#### 2.6.1.2 *Capabilities*

Capabilities refer to an individual's genuine opportunities to achieve what they value. They represent the freedoms or opportunities to realise desired functionings (Conradie & Robeyns, 2013; Robeyns, 2011). In other words, Nussbaum (2011) emphasises that capabilities are the answer to the question 'what is this person able to do?' Understanding capabilities will be useful in this study to understand whether CETC cultivates capabilities and which capabilities it cultivates in relation to addressing the challenges of society.

#### 2.6.1.3 *Functionings*

Functionings are mainly defined as the various things a person may value doing or being (Sen 1999). In other words, functionings are the achieved outcomes that makeup people's well-being. For instance, functionings entails being knowledgeable and possessing awareness, having a qualification for employment purposes, and possessing critical thinking skills (Robeyns & Morten, 2023). Exploring functionings will help comprehend the valuable achievements and experiences that students aim to attain through CETC<sup>1</sup>s, as well as how CETC<sup>1</sup>s contribute to their pursuit of what they have reason to value.

#### 2.6.1.4 *Well-being*

In CA, wellbeing is conceived as the end and result which can be achieved by expanding people's freedom. Well-being pertains to the freedom and capability individuals have to make choices that lead to happiness, health, comfort, and a sense of satisfaction in life. It encompasses their sense of purpose and the degree of control they feel (Alkire, 2016). This study applies the concept of wellbeing to understand the contribution of CETCs.

#### 2.6.1.5 *Aspirations*

Aspirations, as discussed by Hart (2016), are future-oriented and driven by conscious and unconscious motivations. They reflect an individual or group's commitment to a specific trajectory or endpoint. Examples of aspirations include completing training to become a lawyer, doctor, leader, or mentor. Understanding aspirations within the framework of the CA will shed light on the goals and aspirations that students and local communities strive to achieve, and how CETC's can support and enhance those aspirations.

In conclusion, the CA distinguishes itself by emphasising the ethical significance of individuals' capabilities to achieve lives they have reason to value. This sets it apart from human capital approaches, which focus solely on objective well-being or access to resources for a fulfilling life (Robeyns, 2017). The collection of valuable beings and doings defines an individual's capacity to lead a good life. The CA, pioneered by Sen in economics, encompasses both specific and general aspects of development (Robeyns & Morten, 2023). It provides a framework for considering individuals' positions and what they can be and do with their personal, material, and social resources rather than solely focusing on the resources they possess and assuming equal benefits for everyone (Robeyns, 2017). Therefore, institutional programmes and strategies, such as CETC's, must facilitate students' achievement of the capabilities and functionings they have reason to value (Robeyns & Morten, 2023).

The next chapter will discuss the research methodology employed in this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature relevant to this study. This chapter presents the methodology and research design employed in the study. It includes a discussion of the data collection procedures, research setting, population sample, ethical considerations, and study limitations. The selection of the research design and data collection methods addressed the primary research question: How does CETC<sup>1</sup> contribute to addressing the needs and challenges of local communities? Additionally, the following sub-research questions were considered:

1. How do students understand the value of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in addressing society's challenges?
2. What valued capabilities and functionings have students developed through their CETC<sup>1</sup> education?
3. Based on students' experiences, how can CETC<sup>1</sup>s enhance youth capabilities, and address societal needs?
4. How can a study on CETC<sup>1</sup>s using the CA contribute to understanding CETC<sup>1</sup> practices in enhancing individuals and the broader societal well-being?

A qualitative methodology was adopted, employing a case study approach. The chapter also explores the data collection tools and their application during data gathering, as well as addressing ethical issues and the study's limitations. In this study, the term "participants" refers to both students and college staff, as it captures the notion of active and equal conversation between the researcher and the respondents (Matenda, 2020).

### **3.2 Research design**

A qualitative research design was employed for this investigation. Qualitative research seeks to explain social phenomena in order to understand the social context in which we live and the underlying causes of why things occur as they do (Hansen, 2006). In the context of this study, qualitative research methodology is appropriate as it aims to explore and understand how CETC<sup>1</sup>s address societal challenges based on students' perspectives. This qualitative research involves asking "why" and "how" questions to gain insights into the lived experiences of the individuals under study (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

A significant advantage of qualitative research is that they facilitate in-depth examination of complex situations within a specific setting, such as the assessment of how CETC<sup>1</sup>s can enhance the well-being of individuals (Rashid et al., 2019). Unlike quantitative research methods that rely on numerical data to explain social realities, qualitative methods assist researchers in understanding the perspectives of research participants (Matenda, 2020). The study utilised in-depth interviews with participants and sought input from college staff regarding the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in local communities, thus informing and supporting the students' views on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s contribute to addressing the challenges faced by these communities.

### **3.3 Case study**

According to Yin (2012), a case study refers to the examination of a particular local context within defined parameters, such as a specific place and time, in order to formulate and test hypotheses (Creswell, 2013). Simons (2009) emphasises that case studies explore the uniqueness and individuality of a particular case. Conducting a case study involves selecting a topic that allows for in-depth analysis in a natural setting, using multiple sources of information (Bryman, 2012). In this study, a case study was employed at a campus located in the Northern Cape Province. The selection of this campus was based on its high student enrolments and its operating hours from 09:00 to 16:00, which

facilitated convenient interviews and data collection within a specific timeframe. Unlike other CETCs in the province that operate in the afternoon from primary schools, this campus has its own building. By focusing on the Diamond City Campus, the researcher was able to gather student perspectives on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s address local community challenges and needs. Case studies provide a comprehensive examination of a specific subject in a particular context, utilising diverse data sources (Yazan, 2015).

### **3.4 Sampling**

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to select the participants. Purposive sampling, also known as judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers rely on their judgement when selecting participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The study participants included a sample of fifteen students and three college staff to enhance the perspectives of the primary student participants, totalling twelve individuals (Bryman, 2012). The three-college staff, consisting of two male lecturers from the campus and one female staff member from the provincial head office, participated in discussions. The two lecturers represented a subset of the five lecturers responsible for teaching and learning at the campus where the study was conducted. Only two lecturers were included in the sample due to the campus manager's bereavement and the need for the remaining two lecturers to continue teaching in accordance with the CETC's academic schedule.

The three college staff participants had between 2 and 10 years of teaching experience in CETC<sup>1</sup>s, with expertise in ABET, second chance, and learnership programmes, as well as knowledge of CETC<sup>1</sup> management. It was believed that these lecturers possessed extensive knowledge and understanding of CETC<sup>1</sup>s, enabling them to provide insights into the policies and programmes governing CETC<sup>1</sup> education and their impact on society. The years of experience of the college staff participants in the CETC<sup>1</sup> sector played a crucial role in their understanding of policy changes, improvements, and challenges within this sector. Their valuable inputs were broad and highly informative.

Twelve students were selected for the study, comprising an equal number of males and females from the campus. The criterion for selecting these students was their length of time at the campus, ranging from 12 to 24 months. It was assumed that these students had a greater understanding of the institution compared to newly enrolled students. The sample was based on the students' years of study, experience, and knowledge about the CETC<sup>1</sup> sector. As the campus offered three formal programmes, namely ABET levels 1-4, matric second chance programmes (National Senior Certificate – NSC and National Senior Certificate for Adults – NASCA), and learnerships (DHET, 2016), the student sample encompassed all three programmes to ensure a diverse representation of student experiences across the CETC<sup>1</sup>.

For instance, the 12 student participants consisted of three students enrolled in ABET level 4, five students in grade 12, and four students in the computer and digital science learnership. The selection of students was guided by their programme choices and adherence to the entry requirements of each programme. This ensured that the sample encompassed the perspectives of students from different academic programmes within the CETC<sup>1</sup>. The interviews conducted with these students covered various topics, including their motivations for joining the CETC<sup>1</sup>, their experiences at the institution, their perceptions of the CETC<sup>1</sup>'s role in addressing societal challenges, and their suggestions for strengthening the CETC<sup>1</sup> system.

It is important to emphasise that the researcher only contacted the campus manager at the “Diamond City” campus in Tsantsabane Municipality after obtaining ethical consent from the Free State University Ethics Committee (Appendix A) and approval to conduct the study at the designated campus from the higher education and training department (Appendix B). With the assistance of the campus manager, a research information session was organised, which included college staff and students present at the campus on the day of the interviews. The session began with an introduction by the campus manager, followed by a concise explanation of the research goals. During this session, volunteers who expressed their willingness to participate in the study were recruited.

### **3.5 Data collection procedure and instruments**

This section outlines the data collection instruments and procedures employed during the study.

#### ***3.5.1 Data collection instruments***

Two semi-structured interview guides were developed, one for college staff and another for CETC<sup>1</sup> students, to gather data in response to the research questions (see Appendices D & E). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person at the participants' CETC<sup>1</sup> campus. This data collection method involves asking questions based on a predetermined theme framework. However, as noted by Bryman (2012), the questions can be further refined or better formulated. The semi-structured interviews allowed for the utilisation of participants' insights as a valuable source of information for the investigation (Mkwanazi, 2017). A total of 15 participants took part in the interview sessions, which lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. These interviews yielded valuable data pertaining to the research questions.

#### ***3.5.2 Data collection process***

Contact with the participants was initially established on July 18, 2022, at the "Diamond City" campus in the Northern Cape Province. The five-day interview sessions were then scheduled to take place from July 20 to 22, 2022. Each participant was allocated a time slot ranging from 45 to 60 minutes. Therefore, three participants were interviewed per day over the course of five days. A total of fifteen participants, consisting of twelve CETC<sup>1</sup> students and three college staff members, were interviewed. As highlighted by Bryman (2012), interviews generally involve asking questions and attentively listening to the responses provided by the interviewees.

Moreover, it is crucial for both the participant and the interviewer to engage in honest and emotionally invested conversations, particularly when interacting with young individuals. These interviews served as a vital means of gaining an understanding of human experiences (Bryman, 2012). Participants in this study expressed their opinions and shared their experiences, making significant contributions towards addressing the research questions and bridging the gap in the existing literature regarding how CETC's contribute to the challenges and needs of local communities. The saturation effect was not observed, as each participant's experiences were unique and complemented the data collected (Matenda, 2020).

### ***3.5.3 Data transcription and interpretation***

Among the 12 students interviewed, three requested that the interview questions be read in Setswana, and an additional two requested them in Afrikaans to better understand and feel more comfortable responding. Consequently, I directly translated the interview questions from the student interview guide into Setswana for three participants and into Afrikaans for the other two. The remaining nine students and three college staff participants were comfortable with English as the medium of the interview.

### ***3.5.4 Data analysis***

Data analysis involves the interpretation of relevant data obtained from sources such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, and conveying what the data reveals in a meaningful manner (Caudle, 2004). All semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcription and analysis of all interviews were conducted by the researcher. Thematic analysis was used to organise and examine the transcriptions. While the interview questions were initially organised into themes, multiple rounds of coding were employed to identify codes and identify emergent themes.

The research questions guided the process of data analysis, resulting in the emergence of a set of themes and sub-themes. To ensure consistency and accuracy, the coding was checked and cross-checked multiple times. Within the themes and sub-themes, participants' motivations for joining CETC<sup>1</sup>, their experiences at CETC<sup>1</sup>s, and the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s were identified. The components of the CA played a crucial role in aligning the identified themes with the study's theoretical framework. These emergent themes provided support for the interpretation of the data. Key elements of the data analysis process included coding the collected data, categorising it into major themes, and presenting the themes and sub-themes in a table format. This comprehensive investigation of the participants' perspectives will be presented in subsequent chapters.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

To ensure compliance with ethical research requirements and prioritise the well-being of participants, the necessary ethical measures were implemented throughout the study. Prior to conducting interviews at the CETC<sup>1</sup>, the University of Free State ethics committee approved the data collection instruments, including the interview guides for CETC<sup>1</sup> students and staff, the consent form, and the permission letter for third-party approval. The study was conducted with adherence to moral principles, evident in the study design, methodology, analysis, findings, and presentation.

Before the interviews, participants were informed that the research was solely for academic purposes and that they should not expect any financial gain or compensation. The researcher maintained introspective and reflexive ideals throughout the interview sessions (Matenda, 2020). Open and honest communication with participants regarding the research goals was emphasised to mitigate any potential harm or unforeseen risks. Participants were made aware that the primary purpose of the study was to collect data for the researcher's Master's degree studies.

Pseudonyms were used during the interviews and recordings to protect participants' identities and maintain confidentiality. The researcher ensured that interview sessions

were scheduled at convenient times for participants. The informed consent forms were discussed and signed by participants, indicating their voluntary participation in the study. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences. In semi-structured interviews, it is crucial to foster an empathetic listening environment, refrain from passing judgement, and ensure the well-being of participants (Bryman, 2012).

During the interviews, the researcher refrained from interrupting participants, using derogatory language, or making statements that could be harmful. Each participant's unique responses were respected, and the researcher avoided imposing personal views. Participants were given the opportunity to freely express their perspectives, and their autonomy and dignity were upheld during the study and analysis of the results. Anonymity and the enhancement of human dignity were prioritised, as emphasised by Mkwanazi (2017). Participants were continuously informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that their names would not be included in the research report or field notes. Only pseudonyms of the CETC<sup>1</sup> and participants would be used in the research report.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the methodology and design employed to examine the experiences of students at Diamond City CETC<sup>1</sup>. The rationale for adopting a case study approach and a qualitative methodology was expounded upon. The ensuing sections of the chapter encompassed data analysis, ethical considerations, and study access, which encompassed ethical considerations pertaining to the research method and study. Consequently, pivotal in addressing the research questions were the inquiries delineated in the interview guide and the constituents of the CA. Engaging with a cohort of CETC<sup>1</sup> students and college personnel proved to be a rewarding endeavour.

The next chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter discussed the research methodology used in this study. This chapter presents the findings of the study, aiming to address the research questions outlined in the previous chapter. The initial section of this chapter examines the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the CETC<sup>1</sup>, including gender, age, and academic programme. Furthermore, profiles of three college staff members are provided. Subsequently, the justifications of students for enrolling in the CETC<sup>1</sup>, their experiences within the institution, and the societal impact of the CETC<sup>1</sup> are outlined. The study's contribution to research is discussed, along with its limitations, followed by recommendations and a conclusion. The present study utilises the CA to investigate how CETC<sup>1</sup>s contribute to addressing community challenges. According to Katusiime (2014), the CA represents a normative perspective on human well-being, emphasising individuals' ability to lead lives of value rather than merely their freedom or legal entitlement to do so.

#### **4.2 College staff**

Although the primary focus of the study does not involve the college staff, their insights have been incorporated to complement the students' perspectives from an educational standpoint. The researcher conducted interviews with three college staff participants (two males and one female) from Diamond City Campus, all of whom were qualified lecturers. One of the lecturers possessed additional managerial experience and responsibilities. The lecturers taught ABET levels 1 to 4, as well as grade 12 students and learnership participants at this campus.

### 4.3 Student participants

Table 1 presents a summary of the students' demographic information. Gender and age emerged as significant factors in the demographic composition of CETC<sup>1</sup> students, with the majority being female. Furthermore, the former ABET education primarily catered to adult learners, particularly males employed in the mining industry, focusing on literacy and numeracy skills.

**Table 1: CETC<sup>1</sup> student profiles<sup>1</sup>**

Name	Gender	Age	Academic programme
1. Sam	M	18	ABET level 4
2. Otlotleng	M	21	ABET level 4
3. Amanda	F	24	ABET level 4
4. George	M	20	Matric second chance – rewrite
5. Mdoda	M	21	Matric second chance – rewrite
6. Makantoro	F	19	Matric second chance – rewrite
7. Lesley	M	24	Matric second chance – rewrite
8. Olwethu	F	24	Matric second chance – rewrite
9. Lesetedi	M	24	Learnership programme
10. Sandra	F	29	Learnership programme
11. Molefe	F	31	Learnership programme
12. Kebogile	F	31	Learnership programme

All 12 student participants were enrolled at Diamond City College. The researcher conducted interviews with six female students and six male students. According to the college staff participants, the gender distribution within the CETC<sup>1</sup> campus population was predominantly female, accounting for 62.5%, while males constituted 37% (DHET, 2017). Ensuring gender equity remains a priority in South Africa, as both women and men should have equal opportunities and benefits to achieve their desired well-being. However, the representation of males in CETC<sup>1</sup>s is comparatively lower than that of

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<sup>1</sup> The pseudo name of CETC<sup>1</sup> student participants is used.

females. Hence, the gender representation of the study participants (50/50) does not fully reflect the student population of the campus.

#### 4.4 Overview of identified themes

The collected data were categorised into themes and sub-themes that emerged during the process of data analysis. Accordingly, the researcher identified three main themes: aspiration to join the CETC<sup>1</sup>, student experiences, and understanding of the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s. These themes encompassed a total of 10 sub-themes. Theme one consisted of four sub-themes, theme two comprised two sub-themes, and theme three included four sub-themes. Table 3 provides an overview of the themes and their corresponding sub-themes.

**Table 2: Themes and sub-themes identified from the collected data**

Themes	Sub-themes
Aspiration to join the CETC <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jobs</li> <li>○ Business/entrepreneurship</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Safe space               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Peer pressure</li> <li>○ Stigma/judgement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Completing studies and acquiring qualifications</li> <li>• Pathways to other Higher Education institutions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ TVET</li> <li>○ Universities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Student experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valued capabilities and functionings</li> <li>• Conversion factors               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Environmental factors                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inadequate number and size of the classroom</li> <li>▪ Distance from college</li> <li>▪ Inadequate number of lecturers</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Themes	Sub-themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shortage of textbooks and teaching materials</li> <li>○ Social conversion factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social class</li> <li>▪ Financial means</li> <li>▪ Family influence</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Personal factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Age limit</li> <li>▪ Language</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Understanding the role of the college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathways</li> <li>• Employability</li> <li>• Improvement of education</li> <li>• Enhance national goals (economic growth)</li> </ul>

**4.4.1 Aspiration to join the CETC<sup>1</sup>**

According to Hart (2016), aspirations encompass emotionally charged depictions of how individuals envision their destinies, considering their current circumstances and the lessons derived from the past, as reflected in the present. The predominant perspective among CETC<sup>1</sup> students revolved around their aspiration to secure employment upon successful completion of their studies. Aspirations can also encompass the desire to maintain an existing situation (Hart, 2012). Regardless of their specific CETC<sup>1</sup> curriculum, students consistently emphasised their eagerness to obtain employment and expressed confidence in the potential of CETC<sup>1</sup>s to facilitate their career prospects post-graduation.

Lesetedi articulated his aspirations for employment in the following statement:

*I joined the college to obtain my computer and digital studies learnership qualification. Many of us here need a job because our families are poor. I obtained my grade 12 qualification here at the CETC<sup>1</sup>, and now I am doing a learnership to*

*get knowledge in computer space because it will be easier to find a job with this skill.*

Lesley also stated that he enrolled in the CETC<sup>1</sup> to obtain a grade 12 credential that will assist him in finding employment or transferring to another higher education institution to specialise in professional courses that will help him find employment more quickly:

*I came to the college a few years after failing grade 12. At that time, I did not want to study but searched and found temporary employment in a mine. Although I managed to get an odd job, I was unsuccessful in obtaining stable employment. I had a short-term job throughout 2018 and 2019. Since the Covid-19 outbreak in 2019, I lost my contract; I have never been employed again. I thus arrived at the CETC in 2022 and registered myself. I only need to pass three grade 12 subjects to get my certificate and decide my job prospects.*

Kebogile was more forthcoming about the reasons she decided to join the CETC<sup>1</sup>. She stated her intention to formalise her hairdressing business by leveraging her qualifications and skills:

*I passed grade 12 at the CETC<sup>1</sup> in 2022 and am now a computer and digital studies learnership student. I am doing this to gain business management knowledge and skills. I want to be an entrepreneur and employ people in my community.*

Similarly, Sandra mentioned that she enrolled in the college because she had been unable to secure employment after completing her Diploma in Human Resource Management:

*I have a diploma in human resource management which I obtained from a TVET college in the province. I also have a grade 12 certificate. I need help finding employment because these qualifications prove futile in creating livelihood opportunities for me. Therefore, I came to the CETC<sup>1</sup> to do the computer and digital*

*studies learnership, which offers computer skills that will not give me employment but will enable me to employ others in my internet and printing business.*

While the students claimed their primary motivation for enrolling in CETC<sup>1</sup> was to secure employment, it is worth noting that there were additional factors influencing their decision. A discernible variation emerged regarding the rationales behind students' choice of CETC<sup>1</sup> education. As previously indicated, some individuals cited the college as their sanctuary, explaining their decision to join. For example, Sam mentioned that he enrolled in the college as a means of distancing himself from negative influences and the peer pressure exerted by former associates involved in drug use:

*The college benefits people like me who struggled to quit drugs independently and the pressure from fellow drug users who largely contributed to my problems with drug relapse. Since I have been at college, I have never reverted to drugs. I continue to focus on improving my life to have a future.*

Olwethu's assertion aligns with Sam's account. She recalls how a friend initially introduced her to dagga, or marijuana smoking, which jeopardised her aspirations of completing grade 12. Faced with this setback, she made the decision to prioritise her education and enrolled in college after enduring a prolonged period of struggle at home:

*I decided to leave school before completing grade 12 because I smoked dagga daily. My teachers offered me counselling because they felt I could do well in grade 12. However, their efforts fell on deaf ears because I could not quit smoking due to the influence of my peers. I also dropped out of school. After deep reflection, I registered at the CETC<sup>1</sup>, knowing I would be in a new and safe environment.*

Students also cited the issue of stigma and judgement as one of their motivations for attending college. In order to evade the stigma, Molefe disclosed that she departed from the school where she had become pregnant and subsequently enrolled in the college after giving birth:

*After exiting my former school during pregnancy and giving birth afterwards and had to resume my education. I could not return to my former school because the environment was hostile towards me. I became the topic for the school, and I was subjected to stigma and judgement. Therefore, I decided to join the CETC<sup>1</sup> to further my studies.*

Students also mentioned their decision to join the CETC<sup>1</sup> with the purpose of studying, completing their coursework, and obtaining a certificate. Amanda explicitly stated her enrolment in the college with the goal of completing her ABET coursework and attaining the ABET Level Four certificate:

*I joined CETC<sup>1</sup> to complete ABET so that I could improve my education. I dropped out of school after failing on several occasions. I aim to complete and pass ABET level 4, which will enable me to do the adult matriculation course and later enter another institution where I can study further.*

Otlotleng said that he also joined the college to do ABET:

*I joined the CETC<sup>1</sup> to complete the ABET course. I came here because I struggled to read and write, and now I believe that I will pass, complete my studies and achieve my qualification.*

While some students enrolled in the CETC<sup>1</sup> to pursue ABET level 4, others did so in order to retake grade 12 courses and attain the NSC, enabling them to transfer to other higher education institutions. Makantoro, who joined the CETC<sup>1</sup> with the intention of improving her NSC results, expressed the following:

*I enrolled in the CETC<sup>1</sup> to rewrite three courses (Accounting, Economics and Business Studies). I always wanted to attend a university, so I was sad I failed the grade 12 examinations. However, since I started at the CETC<sup>1</sup>, my comprehension*

*of these subjects has improved significantly. I want to study Political Science at the University of Witwatersrand if I obtain the required results that match the entry requirements for this course at the university.*

In addition, Mdoda stated his enrolment in the CETC<sup>1</sup> with the objective of completing his grade 12 studies and subsequently advancing to the Cambridge Firefighting College in Cape Town:

*After failing my matriculation exams, I enrolled at the CETC<sup>1</sup> to retake the three subjects I did not pass. Hence I came to enrol at the CETC<sup>1</sup> for extra classes in preparation for the examinations. I aim to study further at Oxford College in Cape Town to become a professional firefighter.*

The study revealed that the students recognised the significance of attaining a qualification or certificate, acknowledging its numerous advantages. These benefits encompassed facilitating employment opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship, and enabling transfers to other institutions of higher education. The findings provided evidence that the computer and digital studies learnership equipped certain students with business and entrepreneurial skills. Correspondingly, participants believed that this learnership would enhance their employability, as computer proficiency is in high demand within South Africa. Likewise, students undertaking the same course explained that the learnership equipped them with typing skills beneficial for future applications in clerical and administrative roles. Moreover, ABET and grade 12 students alike expressed the belief that CETC<sup>1</sup> education serves as a pathway towards future employability.

In addition to acquiring qualifications, students offered diverse personal motivations for enrolling in the CETC<sup>1</sup>, as revealed through their responses. Some students cited seeking a safe space free from peer pressure, judgement, and societal stigma, while others joined the CETC<sup>1</sup> to broaden their awareness and knowledge through college programmes. The study's results further indicated that students aspired to complete their studies in order to fulfil admission requirements for further education at TVET colleges and universities.

Moreover, students expressed their desire to attain ABET level 4, a prerequisite for registering for the National Adult Senior Certificate (Amended) qualification offered by the CETC<sup>1</sup>. The students' remarks consistently reflected the belief that CETC<sup>1</sup>s possess the potential to assist them in navigating the challenges of finding employment and overcoming societal obstacles.

#### ***4.4.2 Valued capabilities and functionings***

This section focuses on the students' valued competencies, particularly their experiences at the CETC<sup>1</sup> encompassing teaching and learning, extracurricular activities, as well as their overall experiences both inside and outside the classroom. To streamline the students' responses regarding their classroom experiences, the researcher specifically inquired about their academic programmes and their level of engagement in the learning process. Students provided detailed accounts of the subjects covered in their classes, the methodologies employed in their learning, and the challenges they encountered during their educational journey. Overall, the responses indicated that completion of studies and attainment of a qualification from the CETC<sup>1</sup> could potentially enhance students' prospects of securing employment opportunities.

Moreover, during their elaborations, students frequently emphasised the significance of obtaining a grade 12 certificate, particularly in relation to expanding their employment options within the informal sector, where such a qualification serves as a primary requirement. This observation was most pronounced among students who highlighted their struggles in finding employment without a grade 12 certificate. While many student participants expressed the belief that CETC<sup>1</sup>s possess the capacity to facilitate their employment prospects (by enhancing their skill sets), they also identified certain challenges that need to be addressed or improved within CETC<sup>1</sup>s. For instance, Kebogile articulated the following insights regarding her learning experiences at the CETC<sup>1</sup>:

*The CETC<sup>1</sup> caters for many young people who dropped out of school, especially those who cannot find employment due to a lack of proper education and skills. I was also one of these students, and I came to the college to gain knowledge and awareness of computer and digital studies and how to earn a living with this qualification after completing my studies.*

George further mentioned how his comprehension of mathematics has improved to the point where he occasionally lectures his classmates. He made the following comments:

*I never did mathematics in school, but I enrolled on mathematics here at the CETC<sup>1</sup>. I am glad I did that because my lecturer is so good in this subject, and he made me fall in love with mathematics. I now excel not only in mathematics but also in tutoring other students who struggle with maths.*

Otlotleng complained that ABET studies mainly focus on theory and gaining entry to qualify for grade 12 studies. He further alluded to the need for ABET to include skills courses that could help them acquire portable skills or economic opportunities:

*I am learning literacy and numeracy in my ABET programme to help me acquire my ABET level four certificate. Afterwards, I will do the adult national senior certificate to get a grade 12 certificate. However, our province is rich in agriculture, mining and solar opportunities. The college must allow us to do these courses. Getting employment in these opportunities or even doing business for these companies will be easy.*

Adamantia clarified that while she is studying for her ABET exams, she also emphasises the things she learns from her classmates outside of class:

*Although I came to learn about ABET studies, I am also gaining knowledge about our society, culture and various social values from my daily interactions with my college mates. I especially learned about caring for others. I am so grateful for having come here and meeting such caring people.*

Sam agreed with Adamantia and talked about how he had learned to avoid passing judgement on and assuming the worst about other people:

*Since I joined the college, I noticed that some students need help comprehending the course content. I am learning that I should not judge others and be compassionate for those who struggle in class because the curriculum is complex. I abused drugs in my old school because I was frustrated and could not understand my subjects. Everyone helps one another to understand and pass the course content.*

The responses from Lesetedi also reflect his opinions on the life skills education that CETC<sup>1</sup> offers:

*Apart from doing the main subjects in computer and digital studies learnership, I am also learning about life skills education, such as cultivating good habits, being able to communicate with others, learning to develop good interpersonal skills, learning to solve problems, learning to think critically and learning to become creative and live a healthy lifestyle.*

The students responded to interview inquiries by presenting instances of their involvement beyond class participation. Additionally, they highlighted the assistance provided by the College of Further Education and Training (CFET) in facilitating their understanding of and familiarity with their study programmes. It was noted that the college placed significant emphasis on aiding students in completing their education to obtain credentials that would enhance their employment prospects. Some students expressed their enthusiasm for studying subjects such as mathematics, which had not been included

in their previous school curriculum. They attributed their newfound passion for the subject and their ability to assist other students struggling with it to the guidance of CFET lecturers.

Regarding the students' experiences outside the classroom, they explained how they have developed an understanding of how to support one another, thereby promoting respect and refraining from making judgements based on individual struggles. This also entailed their capacity to address the diverse socio-economic needs of others. Additionally, students mentioned acquiring life skills that contribute to the development of effective interpersonal, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and innovative abilities.

Overall, students expressed that CFET's primary focus lies in providing classroom instruction and learning opportunities that enable them to gain awareness and knowledge necessary for obtaining qualifications and certificates crucial for securing employment. Nonetheless, while some students have already achieved certain capabilities, such as caring for one another, most are still engaged in their studies and have not yet attained full employability. Table 3 provides a concise overview of the identified capabilities and their corresponding descriptions, derived from the students' interview responses and explanations, in line with the theoretical framework of the study. This table outlines the capabilities valued by students, which they believe will contribute to their desired well-being.

**Table 3: Students valued being and doings**

<b>Capability</b>	<b>Description</b>
To be able to qualify for economic opportunities (seeking employment or self-employment)	Being able to gain qualifications for economic opportunities
To be able to gain knowledge and awareness (knowledge to read and write, knowledge in numeracy/mathematics, computer)	Being able to gain knowledge and awareness (being to read and write, knowledge in numeracy/mathematics, computer)
To be able to care for and respect others (not judging them)	Being able to care for and respect others
To be able to solve the problems of others	Being able to solve others' problems
To be able to gain critical thinking skills	Being able to have critical thinking skills

These are the doings and beings that correspond to the capabilities above:

- Possessing qualifications for economic opportunities
- Being able to gain knowledge and awareness
  - Possessing knowledge and awareness about computers
  - Possessing information on how and where to apply for jobs
  - Being able to gain knowledge in literacy
  - Being able to read and write
- Possessing problem-solving skills
- Possessing critical thinking skills

In addition to the capabilities and functionings identified by the students, college staff members also highlighted additional capabilities that students can acquire through their education at the CFET. Mr Dippenaar, for instance, emphasised the significance of nurturing students' critical thinking abilities, as this would remind them of their community's needs and their responsibility to contribute to addressing various societal

issues. He further elaborated on the role of CFETs in fostering students' development of critical thinking skills:

*Our annual marketing programmes provide communities with information about the college programmes. We also want to reintroduce debates and excursions to improve students' understanding of issues beyond the classroom. However, we have yet to fully roll out this initiative due to financial inadequacies and staff shortages.*

Similarly, Mr Mavuso emphasised the importance of critical thinking and the need for CETC<sup>1</sup>s to roll out such programmes:

*It is crucial to provide programmes that produce critical thinkers who can help solve complex problems in society. At the moment, we solely concentrate on academic projects that have funding. To remind students that education is not just for individuals but should also benefit society, we must encourage them to develop communist thinking skills. If properly nurtured, I think this communist perspective would remind students to become part of the solution in their communities.*

The comments from the college staff emphasised CETC's need to nurture students in order to gain knowledge and awareness, enabling them to become critical thinkers capable of resolving societal problems.

#### **4.4.3 Conversion factors**

The next sub-section will examine students' challenges in the Core English Textbook Course (CETC<sup>2</sup>) (or conversion factors as detailed in Chapter 2) and their influence on students' aspirations for attaining their cherished well-being. With regard to students' CETC<sup>1</sup> challenges, this section explores the utilisation of resources by students to

achieve desired functionings. In this context, Sam expressed his CETC<sup>1</sup> challenges in the following manner when asked about them by the researcher:

*My challenge is that we are many in the classroom, about sixty students with one lecturer. The chairs and tables need to be increased to cater for all of us in class. We are also cramped in the class because there needs to be more space to move around. We also need more textbooks. We have to share all these resources, and it is a problem.*

Sandra concurred with Sam when she made these comments:

*Our class comprised too many learnership students, and we now had to be divided into two groups. Even so, there is much noise when students speak because the two classrooms are split with drywall. That often results in noise from both classes and sometimes it is tough to hear what the lecturer says during lectures. Sometimes the lecturer has to wait for the following day to continue with lecturers she could have done immediately had it not been for classroom shortages.*

Molefe, in her response about the CETC<sup>1</sup> challenges, made these comments about infrastructure:

*Although CETC<sup>1</sup> education is free and accessible, the classroom shortages and sharing of classes are setbacks. It cannot be that the Minister or the government called on unemployed students to join the colleges and then failed to provide classrooms for them. We have to swap classes, often dismissing classes early just to accommodate other students. These problems negatively affect our education and cause a high failure rate.*

Olwethu also mentioned that she is often absent from college because she does not always have transport money:

*Since 2021, when I initially registered in the college, I have experienced ongoing problems with transport funding, which has resulted in a large absence rate. My sister and I share housing, food, and clothing, which she funds with her salary. However, she needs help so she can cover the cost of the taxi and help me. I need help with my studies because I have to make up time for missed classes. I should also work on the fact that I have to redo my grade 12 classes. I will have to wait longer to finish my degree before I start working and providing for my family.*

The students' responses highlight the issue of inadequate funding for the Core English Textbook Course (CETC<sup>2</sup>) to accommodate the expansion of additional programmes (such as non-formal programmes), procure class furniture and teaching materials, and provide student transportation and accommodation. The students express frustration that despite their need to attend classes, they are often compelled to vacate due to a queue of other students waiting to utilise the same classrooms.

As per the students' accounts, the insufficiency of classrooms and the high student-to-lecturer ratio at the CETC<sup>1</sup> adversely affect the teaching and learning process. The proximity of classrooms amplifies noise levels, further impeding lecturers' ability to cover the curriculum within the allocated time. Consequently, the students state that their classwork is frequently delayed, resulting in a notable number of students experiencing periodic academic failure. According to the students, these challenges are responsible for some students' prolonged duration at the CETC<sup>1</sup> rather than a deliberate choice to graduate earlier and improve their living conditions through employment. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, the students acknowledge the supportive and encouraging nature of their teachers, as well as their assistance in pursuing academic goals. Makantoro commends the teachers for their warm and helpful demeanour, expressing the following sentiment:

*Even though I struggle with accounting and economics subjects that I came to repeat at the CETC<sup>1</sup>, the college manager secured a teacher from a nearby high school who frequently assists me during scheduled classroom engagements. Our*

*lecturers also give us past examination papers and answers to repeat what we learned during our study intervention programmes.*

Letlotlo concurred with Makantoro when he made these remarks:

*Although we have large class sizes, our lecturers can recognise and recall quiet people. For example, whenever my lecturer saw I was silent in class, she would always call to see if I was all right. On the weekends, we receive additional tutoring and counselling. The fact that our lecturers repeat and explain the subject after the class is another reason I prefer their teaching methods.*

Mdoda stated these concerns:

*Living without student bursaries has been challenging; not always knowing where to turn or whom to contact for help is frustrating. Most of us come from low-income families; therefore, we cannot afford to buy food, pay for healthy meals, or pay for basic hygienic requirements. It is even worse for female students who frequently miss class because they cannot buy sanitary towels. Alcohol and drug abuse among family members also affects students' learning processes.*

The students observed that their lecturers often employ innovative approaches such as conducting extra lessons and creating duplicate copies of textbooks to address the challenges posed by classroom shortages. Molefe shared that she consistently catches up on missed coursework, even if she has had to leave class earlier. The availability of textbook duplicates for supplementary home study provides her with solace. She expressed the following sentiment:

*My lecturers usually gave us the page numbers or chapters on which the lecture was based, so we could read those chapters at home and ensure we understood the lecturers. Even though I do not have a physical textbook, I am happy to have*

*a copy of the one I use to reference the content taught in class. Unlike books, I am not required to return the photocopies at the end of the year.*

Despite the mentioned infrastructure challenges, this study identified several facilitating factors, as indicated by the comments of Makantoro and Letlotlo, that contribute to students' positive teaching and learning experiences. The participants emphasised the importance of creating a supportive college environment and highlighted the respectful demeanour of their lecturers as key enabling factors. Additionally, the provision of supplementary classes to compensate for missed content and the lecturers' efforts to ensure that students had access to necessary textbooks were identified as potential solutions to address classroom shortages. The students expressed particular appreciation for the attentiveness of their lecturers and their frequent inquiries about individual needs.

For instance, George shared his experience of facing financial hardship due to his uncle's job loss, which left him alone in a distant location with inadequate funds to cover his college expenses:

*I had serious financial difficulties during my first year at the CETC<sup>1</sup>. My uncle, who brought me to Postmansburg, lost his job in the mines and left for Free State, leaving me without a place to stay or money. I also required food and supplies for my care. As a result, I discontinued my studies for the remainder of the year and lost an entire year. If I had a bursary, things would have turned out better.*

In the preceding paragraphs, the students have extensively discussed their ongoing financial challenges, expressing their discontentment regarding the absence of bursaries. They have highlighted the need for clarification on the exclusion of Core English Textbook Courses (CETC<sup>2</sup>s) despite being part of the tertiary education system's third tier. Furthermore, the students have reported that students in universities and TVET institutions receive personal care assistance or a student allowance to cover unforeseen expenses. George's case serves as an illustration of the difficulties faced by students

aspiring to receive bursaries. These comments underscore the pressing need for the government to allocate increased funding to education, including CETC<sup>1</sup>s.

In addition, the students have acknowledged the influence of personal conversion factors by discussing the impact of the CETC<sup>1</sup> curriculum and pedagogical practices on their learning experiences. In this context, they have voiced their dissatisfaction with the current emphasis on theoretical knowledge in the CETC<sup>1</sup> curricula, expressing a desire for a shift towards a greater focus on practical application and experiential training to develop essential skills. Regarding this issue, Otlotleng shared the following perspective:

*If I had the power, I would have ensured the CETC<sup>1</sup> provided the artisan training programmes required for our community's regional mining, solar, and red stone industries. Additionally, I would ensure that the CETC<sup>1</sup> offers courses in agricultural skills because this industry is very large and might profit from these talents if the college provides them. The fact that students must complete adult grade 12 before studying a career-related course wastes their time because there are no skills courses in ABET courses.*

The computer and digital studies students expressed their satisfaction with engaging in practical training under the leadership of this programme. However, they voiced concerns about the quality of the practical instruction provided and emphasised the need for the Core English Textbook Course (CETC<sup>2</sup>) to offer opportunities for students to repair college computers as part of their training. Additionally, the students revealed that they undertake miscellaneous computing tasks in the local community to support their academic pursuits. Other students also shared their perspectives on the significance of practical instruction and elaborated on the specific benefits they derive from such training. Sandra, for instance, conveyed the following statement:

*The little practical training on computers does not allow us to apply what we learn. If we were placed or attached to a company where we work on computers, we would learn a lot. Though the CETC<sup>1</sup> learnership is helpful, I believe there is much*

*more to learn about computer studies in a practical workspace than in the classroom. So, I would have given this course 90% practical experience and 10% theory.*

Similarly, Molefe made the same point:

*The CETC<sup>1</sup> should have a computer laboratory to ensure we have enough practical work exposure. For example, we could be used to do computer installations, software updates and repairs of the entire department as part of our practical training. Why do you offer students a course but want to avoid using their service? I am just thinking.*

Kebogile concurred with Molefe and said this:

*I always wonder why the CETC<sup>1</sup> is not allowing us to do all the computer-related activities here at the college if our learnership is meant to help us make a livelihood from computers. We can also consider becoming entrepreneurs because that will create an income for individuals and communities.*

As per the statements provided by the students, practical learning holds the potential to enhance their economic prospects. Alongside the discussion on the balance between practical and theoretical knowledge, several students expressed their aspirations for curriculum revisions and the inclusion of vocational programmes. It is crucial to note that when the students referred to finding employment through their education, they were specifically referring to the attainment of an NSC or its equivalent at NQF level 4. This qualification represents the highest level of educational attainment offered at the campus where the study was conducted. Among the students, seven highlighted that the NSC would enable them to secure entry-level positions as general or clerical workers. Additionally, five students mentioned that the NSC would serve as a steppingstone for them to transfer to TVET colleges or universities. According to the students' feedback, it is evident that the CETC<sup>1</sup> programmes do not necessarily align with occupational

programmes that provide practical skills. This sentiment is captured by George's response, which exemplifies the students' perspective:

*The South African 2030 National Development Plan requires CETC's to focus on producing critical and scarce skills in municipalities and service sectors, but our campus or CETC<sup>1</sup> does not offer occupational and non-formal courses. We do not have any options regarding artisan training or occupational and vocational courses.*

In the same way, Olwethu had this to say:

*CETC's must offer us entrepreneurial skills courses so that we can learn how to start and manage small business ventures. These courses form part of non-formal education programmes that the college must implement.*

While students expressed a keen interest in engaging in non-formal programmes offered by the Core English Textbook Course (CETC<sup>2</sup>) and acquiring occupational skills training, they also acknowledged the importance of the existing theoretical courses provided by the CETC<sup>1</sup>. These theoretical courses are deemed significant as they equip students with essential foundational knowledge necessary for practical application. According to the capabilities approach (CA), which emphasises the need for resources tailored to individual and contextual circumstances, the objective of CETC's is to enhance students' freedoms by removing conversion factors that may hinder their well-being (Nussbaum, 2011).

Furthermore, participants raised concerns regarding the potential impact of age restrictions on their future employment prospects. They highlighted age limitations imposed on internship opportunities, bursaries, and certain employment positions in South Africa. For instance, Molefe expressed her apprehension as she has recently turned 31 and must complete a 12 to 24-month internship. Molefe highlighted the

challenge associated with such programmes, as there is an age requirement of 35 years and below for both internships and bursaries. Molefe conveyed the following remarks:

*I am currently 31 years old, and truth be told, if I want to study further, I stand the chance of not being offered a bursary because of age restrictions. In other words, if one is above 35 years old, chances of getting a bursary or internship are slim. What will happen to people like me who are still doing learnerships? Will I even get a job? All is unclear because there need to be policy changes to address our current anxiety about life after CETC<sup>1</sup>.*

On the other hand, Otlotleng mentioned using English as a medium of teaching and learning in class, which puts him at a disadvantage compared to students who have English as their mother tongue. However, he also stated that the lecturers are helpful in translating the content to make it simpler to understand:

*I need help with our lecturers, which are taught in English. I am a Motswana, and I believe it would have been easier to understand CETC<sup>1</sup> subjects if they were taught in Setswana. However, our lecturers try their best to translate the lectures into Setswana. There is also no room to choose the programmes I want to do because the CETC<sup>1</sup> makes those decisions.*

The remarks provided by the students offer significant insights that should capture the attention of policymakers, particularly considering the role of Core English Textbook Courses (CETC<sup>2</sup>s) in enhancing individuals' educational attainment and employment prospects or facilitating their transition to higher education institutions. A noteworthy concern raised by Molefe revolves around the issue of age. It is essential to acknowledge that CETC<sup>1</sup>s enrol students of all age groups. However, Molefe highlights the potential challenges associated with age limitations in terms of securing employment opportunities, accessing internships, or obtaining bursaries for further studies.

On the other hand, Otlotleng raises a critical issue related to the use of English as the medium of instruction in classrooms. This places students whose first language is not English at a disadvantage compared to those who are fluent in the language. Otlotleng also mentions that the college offers three predetermined academic programmes set by the DHET. Consequently, students have limited options and are unable to pursue their preferred fields of study. This situation underscores the necessity for the provision of translators or teaching assistants to assist Setswana-speaking students. Furthermore, Otlotleng indicates that lecturers make efforts to interpret lectures in the vernacular to aid students' comprehension of the content.

In this section, the researcher has highlighted the conversion factors that influence students' experiences in college, based on the students' valued capabilities and functionings as revealed through the collected data. Drawing from the participants' comments on their CETC<sup>1</sup> experiences, the researcher has summarised the conversion factors in Table 4, which encompass environmental, social, and personal aspects. These three categories of conversion factors have been further classified into inhibiting and enabling factors.

**Table 4: Conversion factors impacting CETC<sup>1</sup> students' college experiences**

<b>Conversion factors</b>	<b>Inhibiting factors</b>	<b>Enabling factors</b>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversion factors                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Environmental factors                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inadequate number of classrooms (student and lecture ratio)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture support and friendly attitude.</li> <li>• Teaching and learning material.</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial means                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distance from college (lack of student transport or accommodation)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teaching and Learning Curriculum (theory-based instead of practical skills and limited curriculum choices)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business</li> <li>• Side hustles</li> </ul>
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturer support with the translation of content</li> </ul>

The sub-section that follows addresses the understanding of the role of the CETC<sup>1</sup>.

#### ***4.4.4 Understanding of the role of the college***

This section explores the students' comprehensive understanding of the role of community colleges, with a specific focus on the Core English Textbook Courses (CETC<sup>2</sup>s). The students articulated various perspectives regarding the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s. They highlighted that CETC<sup>1</sup>s provide them with valuable information and awareness about college programmes, enabling them to obtain certificates and qualifications that enhance their employability, entrepreneurial prospects, or facilitate their transfer to higher education institutions such as universities or TVET colleges. These student responses

indicate that CETC's contribute to the development of human capital, which in turn supports the country's economic progress. The students expressed gratitude for the education they receive from their respective CETC's, acknowledging the role played by these institutions in their lives. They also cited examples of peers who had successfully obtained their grade 12 and learnership certificates, attributing their achievements to the interventions provided by CETC's. The students stressed that CETC's have the potential to facilitate their employment prospects and make a significant contribution to the nation's economic prosperity. For instance, Kebogile expressed the following remarks concerning the role of the CETC<sup>1</sup>:

*The mission of CETC's is to provide educational opportunities, such as the learnership in computer and digital science I am completing at the college. I am studying how to create business plans and professionally manage my company's finances. Once I acquire this qualification, I can operate my hair salon professionally and employ others.*

Makantoro expressed similar sentiments to Kebogile:

*Many young people are unemployed because most need the proper knowledge or a grade 12 certificate. The college targets those young people to give them a second chance to improve their knowledge and education. With grade 12, getting a job as a cleaner is easier because I have seen most advertisements for posts stating grade 12 as a minimum requirement.*

With the statement mentioned above, Makantoro emphasised how CETC's can help students find employment and improve their economic status, both for themselves and for the country where they will be registered as employees providing services. Lesley also mentioned that he believes the CETC<sup>1</sup> will contribute to his future job-seeking endeavours.

*The CETC<sup>1</sup> can help me acquire grade 12, which will help me get jobs that require grade 12. For instance, I lost an opportunity to become permanently employed as a general worker in the local mines because I do not have a matric certificate. Depending on the outcomes of my examinations, I will look for a job and do my university studies through correspondence.*

In the same vein, a college staff member, Mr Mavuso, confirmed that the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s is to ensure that students improve their education level, acquire knowledge, and gain qualifications to aid them in finding employment.

*The role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s is to offer skills to youth, and the National Development Plan target aims to enrol one million students by 2030. There is also an emphasis on a need for CETC<sup>1</sup>s to align their educational offering to local businesses and community needs. CETC<sup>1</sup>s focus on offering people qualifications to help them find jobs and improve the country's economy.*

Based on the responses of these participants, CETC<sup>1</sup>s are cited for their potential to contribute to economic development opportunities for individuals, communities, and the country as a whole. Meanwhile, George aspires to further his studies at the Free State University. For him, the role of the CETC<sup>1</sup> is to assist in improving his grade 12 subjects so that he can meet the enrolment requirements to study law:

*I came to the CETC<sup>1</sup> to repeat and improve the subjects I failed in grade 12 to meet the scoring system of universities. My dream has always been to become a lawyer. The CETC<sup>1</sup> tutors helped me throughout my studies and exam preparation. After completing my university studies, I will work in my hometown and country where I can pay taxes, which will also help students like me.*

Lesetedi agreed with George that CETC<sup>1</sup>s offer individuals an opportunity to improve their results in order to meet the requirements of other higher education institutions, as he expressed it in the following statement:

*Although I do not plan to study further at a TVET college or university, I might have it once my results reflect a bachelor's pass. I am doing the computer and digital studies learnership. One thought is to study computers at the University of Sol Plaatje or apply for a clerical administration job locally if I cannot get a bachelor's pass.*

The responses of these students were further confirmed by Ms. Mfino, a college staff participant, who had the following to say:

*There are memorable stories to tell about the CETC's. For the past five years that I have been at the college, I have seen many students, especially the grade 12, rewrite ones managing to pass with excellent marks. I know of students pursuing a Bachelor in Education degree at the Sol Plaatje University in our province.*

These comments undoubtedly suggest that CETC's serve as a bridge between TVET colleges and universities, as demonstrated by the examples of students who aim to transfer to universities and colleges after rewriting and achieving bachelor's passes in their NSC examinations through CETC's. Other students also highlighted the role of the college in fostering knowledge and awareness. For instance, Amanda mentioned that CETC's provide skills to individuals with lower levels of education:

*I came to the CETC<sup>1</sup> to complete to improve my education because I dropped out of school when I was a young kid. I am doing ABET level 4. My three years at the CETC<sup>1</sup> have also been informative, and I managed to pass the courses I did over this period. I also like the fact that the campus is close to my house.*

Amanda's feedback highlights that CETC's offer students convenient opportunities to acquire awareness and knowledge of ABET programmes, as these colleges are located in communities near their homes. Sam also emphasised the role of CETC's in providing awareness and knowledge dissemination:

*I dropped out of school in grade 8 because my friend and I were involved with drug abuse. I am now here at the college doing ABET level 4. I am very grateful. I also managed to learn English because I have been in an Afrikaans medium school all my life. I can read, write and communicate in English much better than before I came to college.*

Based on the participants' comments, the objective of Core English Textbook Courses (CETC<sup>2</sup>s) encompasses providing knowledge and awareness of CETC<sup>1</sup> academic programmes, with a focus on the potential for economic benefits and employment assistance. Furthermore, CETC<sup>1</sup>s serve as a crucial link between TVET colleges and universities. Participants noted that CETC<sup>1</sup>s play a vital role in equipping individuals with relevant skill development programmes to meet basic job requirements, thus facilitating economic opportunities.

Moreover, some students expressed the need to further their studies at TVET colleges and universities in order to advance their careers and enhance their professional expertise before seeking employment in specialised industries. The participants believed that the comprehensive information provided by CETC<sup>1</sup>s is essential in assisting them to secure employment based on their qualifications and aspirations. In summary, the students described three primary roles of CETC<sup>1</sup>s: firstly, as engines for economic development by preparing students for future employment opportunities; secondly, as providers of knowledge and awareness; and thirdly, as pathways for future education at universities and TVET colleges.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The study findings shed light on the students' perspectives regarding the contribution of Core English Textbook Courses (CETC<sup>2</sup>s) to society. This chapter serves as a foundational exploration of the students' perceptions regarding the significance of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in the South African context. The initial section of the findings focuses on the

students' motivations for enrolling in CETC<sup>1</sup>s, highlighting their desire to acquire education, credentials, and certificates that would enhance their employment prospects. Some students also mentioned that CETC<sup>1</sup>s provide an opportunity to improve their grade 12 scores, thereby meeting the admission requirements for entry into TVET colleges and universities. By examining the students' objectives and driving forces behind choosing CETC<sup>1</sup>s, this study acknowledges the importance of considering their abilities and commendable achievements. In terms of the students' valued capabilities and functionings, they emphasise that CETC<sup>1</sup>s facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and awareness about college programmes and curricula, enabling them to obtain certificates and qualifications that contribute to their employability and entrepreneurial endeavours. Others highlight that CETC<sup>1</sup>s help them enhance their qualifications to meet the admission requirements for TVET colleges and universities, where they intend to pursue further studies.

Furthermore, participants express their opinions about the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s, emphasising their significance in improving educational attainment and providing the necessary knowledge and qualifications to secure employment. As mentioned in Chapter 2, CETC<sup>1</sup>s in South Africa are expected to offer educational opportunities to address the increasing number of youth who are NEET, thereby addressing the country's rising youth unemployment rate (DHET, 2013). However, the precise execution of CETC<sup>1</sup>s' societal role remains unclear. This study adopts the CA to examine how CETC<sup>1</sup>s address the challenges and needs of local communities by prioritising the perspectives of CETC<sup>1</sup> students.

The chapter that follows will provide conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The penultimate chapter presented the findings of this study. This final chapter will provide conclusions and recommendations of this study. Based on a comprehensive examination and analysis of the study data, the researcher has derived multiple findings and recommendations intended for policymakers, academics, curriculum developers, and scholars operating within the Community Education and Training College (CETC<sup>1</sup>) sector.

#### **5.2 Re-examining the aim and research questions**

As previously mentioned, various scholars (Land & Aitchison, 2017; Sheppard, 2017; Simkins, 2019) and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) have effectively described the role of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETC<sup>1</sup>s). However, there remains a gap in understanding how these CETC<sup>1</sup>s fulfil their societal role. Additionally, while some studies by scholars (such as Land & Aitchison, 2017; Sheppard, 2017; Simkins, 2019) have explored the role of CETC<sup>1</sup>s, less is known about students' perspectives on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s can contribute to their well-being and that of society, which this study aims to address.

To examine how CETC<sup>1</sup>s address societal challenges and needs, this study adopted the CA. Considering students as key stakeholders and beneficiaries of CETC<sup>1</sup>s, the study focused on their views to gain insights into how CETC<sup>1</sup>s function within society. The objective was to provide students with a platform to voice their opinions and understand their perspectives on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s impact society, if at all. Therefore, within the CETC<sup>1</sup> context, the CA assisted in identifying students' valued capabilities and functionings, exploring available opportunities to support their achievement, and examining conversion

factors that facilitate or impede the realisation of desired functionings within the CETC<sup>1</sup> environment.

The following main research question guided the study:

- Research Question: How does the CETC<sup>1</sup> contribute to addressing the challenges and needs of local communities?

The sub-questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. How do students understand the value of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in addressing society's challenges?
2. Which valued capabilities and functionings did students develop through their CETC<sup>1</sup>?
3. Based on students' experiences, how can CETC<sup>1</sup>s enhance youth capabilities, and address societal needs?
4. How can a CA contribute to clarifying how CETC<sup>1</sup>s impact student and societal well-being?

The key findings for each research question are summarised in the section that follows.

### **5.3 Overview of the study's findings**

While the White Paper on Post-Secondary Education and Training, as well as scholars, have outlined the purpose of CETC<sup>1</sup>s, this study aimed to explore students' perceptions of how CETC<sup>1</sup>s contribute to addressing local community challenges and needs. The participants' responses are outlined below.

### **5.3.1 *The contribution of the CETC<sup>1</sup> to addressing societal needs and challenges***

Questions 1, 3, and 4 aimed to gather students' perspectives on how CETC<sup>1</sup>s fulfil their responsibilities in addressing the needs of local communities. The study's findings indicate that CETC<sup>1</sup>s are perceived as drivers of economic growth, producing a skilled workforce that benefits both individuals and industries. Possessing relevant knowledge and skills increases job prospects and improves job status, resulting in personal and national economic advancement.

Now, the researcher discusses the study's findings based on participants' responses, beginning with students' reasons for enrolling or accessing CETC<sup>1</sup>s. The primary motivation for most students was to further their education, complete their studies, and acquire qualifications or certificates that enhance employability or support entrepreneurial endeavours. While students encountered no difficulties in gaining admission to CETC<sup>1</sup>s, they expressed a desire for a wider range of academic programmes to choose from, enabling them to pursue their preferred fields of study rather than being limited to what CETC<sup>1</sup>s currently offer. They emphasised the importance of CETC<sup>1</sup>s implementing non-formal programmes that focus on providing practical skills aligned with the specific needs of local communities and businesses.

Regarding students' experiences within the CETC<sup>1</sup> classrooms, participants appreciated the theoretical academic programmes they received. However, they highlighted the need for CETC<sup>1</sup>s to introduce additional programmes that specifically address societal challenges or local community issues near the campuses. Apart from the limitations of the CETC<sup>1</sup> curriculum and the lack of practical training, three out of the twelve participants expressed concerns about the use of English as the medium of instruction. Nevertheless, these students also acknowledged the commendable efforts made by lecturers to provide translations, which they greatly appreciated. They praised the lecturers for going the extra mile to ensure their understanding of lectures and course content.

While students appreciated their lecturers' warm demeanour and teaching methods, they expressed concern about the absence of work placement opportunities due to the limited availability of occupational programmes. However, students acknowledged that the theoretical training they received equipped them with knowledge and skills that would enable them to obtain a recognised certificate, facilitating their entry into the job market or further studies beyond the CETC<sup>1</sup>.

Despite these challenges, students remained optimistic that the academic programmes offered by the CETC<sup>1</sup> would enhance their prospects of securing employment or transferring to other higher education institutions in line with their career aspirations. Although the CETC<sup>1</sup> did not provide comprehensive practical workplace courses, students expressed gratitude for the learnership programmes offered by the college.

One major challenge highlighted by students was the absence of external work placements, with limited opportunities for relevant practical experience within the CETC<sup>1</sup> premises. Nevertheless, students mentioned that they were able to apply their acquired skills by engaging in small business ventures to generate additional income to cover extra expenses associated with their CETC<sup>1</sup> education.

Regarding their experiences outside the classroom, participants mentioned that their interactions with fellow students, friends, and neighbours fostered a sense of caring for one another's needs and developed their problem-solving abilities. Students also emphasised the importance of demonstrating respect, compassion, and refraining from making judgements. Moreover, participants strongly expressed their desire for a dedicated CETC<sup>1</sup> building that would symbolise the identity and presence of <sup>1</sup>, similar to the buildings of TVET colleges or universities.

The issue of classroom shortages and large student-to-lecturer ratios emerged as a significant hindrance to the learning and teaching process for students. Students also highlighted the disruptive noise in classrooms that hindered their ability to hear the lecturer clearly. Additionally, students expressed challenges related to the lack of

accommodation, transportation, catering, and student allowances, privileges that are provided to students in TVET colleges and universities.

The unequal distribution of bursaries was a concern raised by students, as they believed it would alleviate issues of absenteeism, improve study completion rates, and reduce failure rates. Participants emphasised the importance of adequately addressing the infrastructure needs of educational institutions, including sufficient classrooms and office space. Although there were concerns about the shortage of learning and teaching materials, such as textbooks and teaching aids, students appreciated their lecturers' efforts to provide copies of textbooks for their assignments, assessments, and exam preparations.

The data also revealed how students overcame these challenges by problem-solving and caring for one another's needs, as many students persevered and continued their study programmes. Despite the challenges faced at CETC's, students maintained their belief in the potential of CETC's to facilitate employment opportunities. It is evident from this information that students' experiences at CETC's encompassed both positive and negative aspects, and students demonstrated their adaptability and resilience in overcoming obstacles.

Another finding pertains to the role of CETC's and their impact on societal challenges. The analysis of students' valued capabilities and accomplishments indicates the potential contribution of CETC's to individuals and society at large. For instance, when students expressed that the CETC' would enable them to acquire qualifications for future employment, it signifies that CETC's can assist students in generating personal income and contributing to the country's economic growth. Therefore, CETC's should strive to expand students' capabilities by addressing negative conversion factors and creating an environment where students can thrive.

Based on the empirical findings, the study argues that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) should enhance the theoretical and practical understanding of CETC's role by introducing the following interventions:

1. Introduce democratic educational concepts to strengthen student voices.
2. Ensure that access to CETC's provides opportunities for students to choose from a diverse range of academic programmes, including practical and occupational courses, to maximise their participation in local economic opportunities.
3. Expand CETC's curriculum to include sustainable livelihood strategies
4. Collaborate with technical and vocational colleges and universities to coordinate curricula and ensure quality.
5. Enhance students' prospects for prosperity by expanding their job opportunities or fostering entrepreneurship, as financial benefits are crucial for both individuals and the overall development of South Africa. Moreover, prioritise educational curricula that produce graduates capable of effecting positive change in society.
6. Rethink college policies to help students more effectively navigate the institutions systems.
7. Address the quality of education in CETC's through significant investments in infrastructure, provision of student bursaries, and allocation of resources to address transportation, meals, and student allowances.

#### **5.4 Contribution of the study**

Scholars such as Wolhuter et al. (2015), Land and Aitchison (2017), Sheppard (2017), and Simkins (2019), as well as the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, have highlighted the responsibilities and benefits of South African CETC's. However, there is limited knowledge about how CETC's fulfil their societal roles. This study aims to address this gap by examining students' perceptions of how CETC's carry out their societal duties. By focusing on the contributions of CETC's to society, this study adds to the existing body of knowledge, which has predominantly focused on other educational levels such as TVET colleges and universities.

This study stands out by employing the CA as a conceptual framework to explore how students understand the benefits of CETC<sup>1</sup>s for themselves and the community. The CA, as proposed by Ingrid Robeyns (2017), aims to address various concerns raised by Sen regarding the evaluation of well-being. It acknowledges the complexity of life and advocates for comprehensive assessments that consider all relevant factors rather than oversimplifying the evaluation process. Sen identified several limitations with existing approaches, highlighting the need to move beyond a narrow focus on achievement and consider other aspects of human development. Nussbaum (2011) argues that evaluating individuals' progress should encompass a broad range of practical considerations.

Therefore, the CA emphasises the importance of understanding the resources available to CETC<sup>1</sup> students and their specific needs, as well as the conversion factors that facilitate the realisation of desired functionings (Robeyns, 2017). Within the CETC<sup>1</sup> context, it is crucial to identify the valued functionings that students aspire to achieve, explore the opportunities available to them, and examine the conversion factors that enable the transformation of resources into meaningful outcomes. Through the application of the CA, this study aimed to uncover the valued doings and beings of CETC<sup>1</sup> students.

The researcher's study contributes valuable insights to the existing knowledge base on CETC<sup>1</sup>s as drivers of economic development and facilitators of skills acquisition within the higher education landscape. Furthermore, the researcher offers a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the delivery of the CETC<sup>1</sup> curriculum in a conducive learning environment, fostering quality teaching practices, and promoting the overall well-being of both individuals and society.

These recommendations provide guidance for CETC<sup>1</sup> education policies and practices, focusing on specific interventions. Firstly, there is a need to prioritise the provision of adequate infrastructure, including classrooms and other essential facilities, to support effective teaching and learning. Secondly, there should be a concerted effort to redesign CETC<sup>1</sup> academic courses in alignment with the needs of students, local communities, and

various industries and businesses. This ensures that graduates possess the relevant skills and knowledge required to contribute meaningfully to a thriving economy. Lastly, CETC<sup>1</sup>s should be positioned as educational institutions that nurture graduates who not only prioritise their personal interests but also demonstrate a strong sense of social responsibility and commitment to the broader society.

The findings of this study also hold implications for education policies, particularly in relation to CETC<sup>1</sup>s. It highlights the importance of government allocating sufficient funds to the education sector, including CETC<sup>1</sup>s, to support their effective functioning and enable the implementation of necessary improvements. By considering these recommendations and aligning policies with the study's findings, policymakers can foster an environment that enhances the role and impact of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in society. This report will be made available through a policy brief that will be delivered to the Department of Higher Education's research unit which already signalled its interest in the study and the need for me to share the findings.

## **5.5 Study limitations and future study areas**

The researcher acknowledges certain limitations in this study and suggests areas for future research. It is important to note that the findings of this study reflect the perspectives and experiences of a specific group of students who participated in the research and may not fully represent the views of all CETC<sup>1</sup> students in South Africa. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct additional research involving students from other CETC<sup>1</sup>s across the country to gain a broader understanding of their opinions and experiences.

Furthermore, to build upon the current findings, a follow-up study with a larger sample size could provide additional insights into the topic. Such a study would enable a more comprehensive exploration of the research area. In addition, future research should also consider the perspectives of policymakers and CETC<sup>1</sup> staff members. Their insights

would provide valuable information regarding the function, rationale, and implementation of policies developed for CETC<sup>1</sup>s.

The study identified conversion factors that restrict students' freedoms. To address this gap, further research should focus on how students adapt to these conversion factors and explore potential strategies to mitigate their impact. Additionally, given that age limitations were raised as a challenge by participants, future research could examine how the higher education sector can support students who exceed the age limit and transition out of the CETC<sup>1</sup> system after reaching the age of 35.

By addressing these limitations and conducting additional research in these areas, a more comprehensive understanding of CETC<sup>1</sup>s and their impact on students and society can be achieved.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in promoting student and societal well-being:

1. CETC<sup>1</sup> policymakers should consider expanding the curriculum and introducing non-formal academic programmes and sustainable livelihood approaches, as recommended by the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. These programmes should be aligned with the needs of local needs to increase students' employability and their participation in local economic opportunities. It is essential to cultivate critical thinking skills and instil a sense of social responsibility in students, prioritising the interests of society over individual gain.
2. To accommodate the projected increase in CETC<sup>1</sup> enrolments to meet the target of one million enrolments by 2030, adequate infrastructure must be provided. This includes addressing the current challenges of insufficient facilities, such as student accommodation, transportation, meals, and student allowances. By ensuring that

students and lecturers have access to suitable facilities, conducive learning and teaching environments can be created.

3. To improve curriculum delivery and address lecturer shortages. Expanding the lecturer workforce will enable them to dedicate sufficient time to address students' academic needs and ensure that each student receives education at a pace and standard that enhances their overall development. Additionally, investing in teacher development opportunities will bridge the content knowledge gap among lecturers and enable them to adapt to curriculum changes and advancements in the CETC<sup>1</sup> sector.

By implementing these recommendations, CETC<sup>1</sup>s can enhance their capacity to facilitate student learning, promote employability, and contribute to the well-being of individuals and society at large.

## **5.7 Final word**

This study sought to capture the perspectives of CETC<sup>1</sup> students regarding the contributions of CETC<sup>1</sup>s to addressing the challenges and needs of local communities. The findings from the students' experiences indicate that CETC<sup>1</sup>s have the potential to empower and enhance students' capabilities and functionings, thereby facilitating their employment prospects and overall well-being. However, the study also identified certain conversion factors that act as constraints, necessitating the need for CETC<sup>1</sup>s to address them to enhance student and societal well-being. In conclusion, this research provided a practical, complex, captivating, and unique individual research experience. While the research outcomes have successfully achieved the intended research goal, they have also raised several areas that warrant further investigation, such as incorporating the viewpoints of policymakers and conducting comparative studies across different CETC<sup>1</sup>s. It is expected that the conclusions drawn from this study will inform policy considerations and actions taken by various stakeholders to ensure the competitiveness, success, and responsiveness of CETC<sup>1</sup>s in South Africa to meet the needs of local communities.

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