

**Motivation and emotional praxis: A collaborative autobiographical narrative  
of TVET college students from lower socio-economic backgrounds**

by

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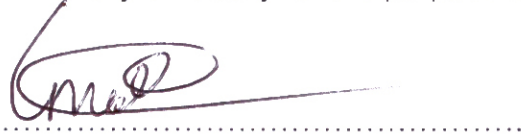
**[JUNE 2020]**

## Declaration

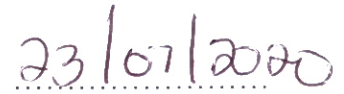
I, Motai Collins Dumisani Morgan, declare that the thesis, Motivation and Emotional praxis: A collaborative autobiographical narrative of TVET college students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, submitted for the qualification of Master's in Higher Education Studies at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.



SIGNED



DATE

Faculty of Education

22-Nov-2018

Dear **Mr Collins Motai**

Ethics Clearance: **Motivation and emotional praxis: a narrative study of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Collins Motai**

Department: **School of Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)**

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With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/1606**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully



Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa  
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## CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

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### TITLE

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## **Abstract**

In this qualitative study, I focused on understanding the role of emotions in promoting social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges. The study also looked at the possibility of decolonising TVET colleges by focusing on emotional experiences and enhancing learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Consistent with Zembylas's critical emotional praxis theory, the participants collaboratively shared their stories of emotions encountered in their spaces, and created a collective biography based on emotional experiences, decolonisation, social justice and learning motivation. The collective biography revealed that there are certain emotions and practices that should be taken into consideration when lecturers are working with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges.

## **Keywords**

Emotional praxis; emotions; lower socio-economic backgrounds; decolonisation; social justice; learning motivation; collaborative autobiography; collective biography

## **Dedication**

*Firstly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom and dad. I want to thank them for their continuous love and support, which made me strive for excellence in everything that I do. Through their advice I learnt that once I begin something I must never give up until I reach the finish line.*

*I also want to dedicate this work to my students; through their support and trust I was empowered to become a better person. I also realised that through their voices I also found my voice.*

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## **List of acronyms**

- TVET (Technical Vocational Educational Training)
- NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme)
- NEHAWU (National Education Health Allied Workers Union)
- DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training)
- SAFETSA (South African Further Education and Training Student Association)
- CGO (Career Guidance Officer, an officer at TVET colleges that assists students with career choices and counselling)
- SACE (South African Council of Educators)

# Chapter 1. Orientation

## 1.1. Introduction

I grew up in a South African township in the years just after apartheid, and 20 years later, I have observed that many black families in South African townships are still affected by poverty. The economic inequality that apartheid created along racial lines is still visible today in a democratic South Africa. Leibbrandt, Finn and Woolard (2012:19) maintain that income inequality has increased in South Africa from 2003 to 2008 among different races, the majority of which black people, to a point that most of them now depend on social grants for survival. Leibbrandt et al. (2012:20) highlight that there is a direct link between getting out of poverty and getting an education. I am a lecturer at a TVET (Technical Vocational Educational Training) college from a lower socio-economic background. However, I currently form part of the middle class. Being from a lower socio-economic background was difficult for me as a university student, and I experienced a lot of challenges, including financial instability. I think it is important to look at how poverty has affected students from lower socio-economic backgrounds with regard to their learning motivation and in terms of social justice at institutions of higher learning.

The main aim of the study is to understand how emotional praxis (practices and theory) can assist us in engaging in a critical understanding of emotional experiences and its link to education and social justice. I use the term “socio-economic status” as defined by Williams (in Taylor and Yu 2009:4) as one’s position in terms of one’s access to wealth. Taylor and Yu (2009) further state that, in South Africa, socio-economic status is measured according to person’s ability to afford certain things, which can be determined by the kind of job they hold. According to a report by Africa Check (2018), this measurement of poverty is called the poverty line, and the proposed minimum wage for one to be able to afford basic needs in 2017 was R1 138 per month in South Africa. In other words, when one earns below this wage, one falls into the lower socio-economic class. In this study,

a person who is classed as having a lower socio-economic background is thus understood as someone who has had limited access to wealth and might have struggled, or continues to struggle, to afford basic needs to survive.

While teaching at a TVET College, I have observed that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face great challenges with financial stability. This is supported by Powel and McGrath (2018), who indicate that many poor students at South African TVET colleges are still struggling with access to funding, which the authors describe as morally unacceptable. Powel and McGrath (2018:305) also indicate that a number of students drop out of TVET colleges due to lack of financial resources. This is evident by the protests that erupted at various TVET colleges in South Africa on 13 January 2019 when students demanded that the required registration fee be waived (NEHAWU, 2019). Additionally, a NEHAWU (National Education Health Allied Workers Union) and SAFETSA (South African Further Education and Training Student Association) strike took place in February 2019, during which SAFETSA requested that the NSFAS process be decentralised so that students could get their allowances on time (NEHAWU, 2019). Motha and Frempong (2013) indicate that such challenges are problematic because the South African education sector has systems aimed at improving the circumstances of marginalised learners (White Paper 6 of 1996).

Additionally, Motha and Frempong (2013) indicate that learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not motivated enough to participate fully in educational activities, because of their circumstances. Bell (2007) termed the process of participating fully and equally by all members of society “social justice”. I will look at social justice in general within the higher education sector for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and I will also specifically explore how students from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience educational opportunities in a TVET college. According to Bell (2007:1), social justice means that there are equal opportunities for all members of society, which ensures physical and psychological well-being. Bell further states that through social justice there are people who are social actors who protect their needs and take social

responsibly for others. Tejada and Espinoza (2003: 9) agree that as teachers we need to engage in social justice strategies that address racial, class and other forms of oppression in our educational spaces, so that we can become agents of change for our learners. Kumashiro (2000) supports agrees that schools should be places where learners who are “othered” are acknowledged, and school systems should be designed in a way that addresses oppression of the marginalised. Tejada and Espinoza (2003:10) also argue that injustices caused by previous oppressive systems such as apartheid and Bantu education are still experienced by marginalised groups in South Africa. Therefore, I believe it is vital that we look at practices that create marginalisation and develop strategies to challenge them.

During the Fees Must Fall protests in 2015 and 2016, South African higher education institutions came under fire for not accommodating economically marginalised learners. Protests erupted as students demanded free education at higher education spaces (Mutekwe, 2017:143). The movement was significant at TVET colleges, because many of those students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as stated in the NEHAWU report (2019). The idea of enrolling at a college for free without any upfront payments, in addition to the removal of outstanding fees, was vital for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as they believed it would alleviate their financial stress.

The South African government attempted to respond to the demands that students made during the Fees Must Fall movement (Mutekwe, 2017). These included providing funding for students in specific income brackets (irrespective of any other demographics), settling or removing outstanding debts, and converting the NSFAS loan model into a bursary scheme (Mutekwe 2017:146). However, the current situation at TVET colleges is dire for many students as they end up dropping out while waiting for NSFAS bursaries to be approved. Some even lose all hope of studying because of the challenges they go through. This is evident in the study that Powel and McGrath (2018) conducted with students from TVET colleges in South Africa. They discovered that many students drop out of TVET colleges

because they lose hope while waiting for the outcomes of their NSFAS bursary applications, which take approximately three to four months. Powel and McGrath (2018) also indicate that some students even lose significant time in their studies while trying to acquire the financial means to survive, which has a direct link to lower performance. This is evident in the national statistics on the performance of students at TVET colleges, which indicate that some colleges achieve between an average of 30% and 50% certification rate (DHET, 2019). Additionally, this is linked to the 2016 DHET TVET Attendance Policy, which stipulates that, in order for a student to qualify for the final examination, they must have attended 80% of classes. Unfortunately, due to financial challenges such as affording transport cost, students are not always able to meet the required 80%, which leads to them failing certain subjects. Considering all the challenges mentioned, it is evident that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the TVET sector are struggling in terms of financial access. Previous research indicates that this can lead to hopelessness and, eventually, decreased levels of academic performance.

Social justice in higher education can thus address issues of access for students who do not have the means. However, as indicated by the Fees Must Fall movement, it goes beyond the issues of access to the issue of belonging. Tejada and Espinoza (2003) state that we need to promote social justice in education by engaging in decolonising our pedagogical practices. Mackinlay and Barney (2014) define decolonisation as a process that attempts to challenge oppressive systems in society with the hope of moving towards social justice and transformation in the field of education. Thus, I would like to look at social justice in the context of socio-economic class as well as decolonisation, and explore how we can create classroom spaces and institutions that have a transformative nature. The aim of my study is to see how epistemic change might positively influence learning motivation among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

As I was writing in the process of writing the dissertation, TVET colleges and other institutions of higher learning were closed as a measure to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa (DHET, 2020:1). In a press release dated

16 March 2020, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology prohibited all institutions of higher learning from physical lecturing contact with students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of measures to continue with teaching and learning at these institutions, the ministry suggested that colleges and universities use online modes (DHET, 2020:2). However, I believe this might have been a challenge for many students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, because of the expenses associated with accessing online learning channels. I thought this was an important element to include in this study; however, it is not the main theme of the study.

In the next section, I will expand on the challenges that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds encounter in the TVET sector, and how those challenges relate to social justice, decolonisation and learning motivation. Additionally, this chapter will also include the research questions that guided the study. Lastly, I will outline the research methods and procedures that I used to answer the proposed research questions.

## **1.2. Rationale and problem statement**

Evidence suggests that students in TVET colleges are not performing well in their studies, as their national results range between an average of 30% to 50% pass rate (DHET, 2019). There could be many contributing factors; however, socio-economic background seems to play a big role. In a study by Yi, Zhang, Yao, Wang, Ma, Shi, Chu, Loyalka and Rozelle (2015) conducted at TVET colleges in China, they found that students from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to drop out due to demotivation. Woolfolk (2014:174) agrees that in South Africa, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds struggle to stay in and achieve in school. "The longer the child is in poverty the stronger the impact is on achievement" (Woolfolk, 2014:174). Woolfolk (2014:174) states that the circumstances of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are related to their learning motivation; their motivation to learn decreases due to their living situations and they lose hope in their studies. From my observation, it is also the

case in South African TVET colleges, as many of these students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This is evident in the NEHAWU report, which indicates that about 80% of students enrolled in TVET Colleges depend on the NSFAS bursary scheme for basic necessities and schooling. Additionally, Powel and McGrath (2018) concur that academic performance for TVET college students can drop due to their financial situations.

Working at a TVET college, I often hear students complaining that they are not able to afford transport fees to attend classes regularly and they struggle to afford accommodation within the vicinity of the college. These are some of the challenges documented in the NSFAS report (2018). Not being able to attend classes regularly is a problem as the DHET TVET Attendance Policy (2016) states that if a student fails to achieve 80% class attendance in each subject, he/she will be disqualified for the final external examination. Many students at TVET colleges struggle to afford transport fees, which causes them to miss classes, which could in turn lead to them being disqualified from the final external examination.

As previously indicated, students could not attend face-to-face lectures during the national lockdown, which could have been viewed as advantage for those who cannot afford transport; however, as indicated in the DHET (2016) report on measures to be taken during the lockdown, students were supposed to engage in online learning instead. This might have been a challenge for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as they might not have had access to the online learning platforms due to the data and airtime costs involved.

In their study, Powel and McGrath (2018) highlight that students at a specific TVET college had indicated that they needed their voices to be heard and their experiences and needs to be considered. Therefore, through the use of critical emotional praxis, I believe that TVET colleges can engage in a critical understanding of students' experiences and emotions in an attempt to address the challenges that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds encounter. Zembylas (2015) agrees that through emotional engagement in education,

decolonisation is possible. Naidoo (2014) further agrees that emotional practices are important in education and should not be taken for granted, because they can promote social justice for those who are marginalised. Therefore, I believe that understanding the emotional experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds will assist us in our attempt to promote social justice and create decolonised learning environments.

Through reading the work of scholars like Buthelezi (2018), Mutekwe (2018), Powel and McGrath (2018), I believe that social justice in education is a dream for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in TVET colleges, as they have raised this concern through protests like Fees Must Fall. Thus, I believe it is important to address these challenges experienced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in an attempt to promote a culture of social justice within TVET colleges. Stein and Andreotti (2016) concur that for social justice to be possible we need to decolonise higher education institutions by creating a better learning environment for those who are marginalised.

This study is of value because it will assist stakeholders in TVET colleges to understand the experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, it will contribute to the research that has been done on emotional experiences in terms of education within the South African context. This study is significant because it aims to address challenges that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience at TVET colleges in order to promote social justice in educational institutions.

### **1.3. Research questions**

This study was guided by the following research question and subsidiary questions:

- How can emotional praxis be used to promote social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in TVET colleges?

From this research question, the following secondary questions arise:

- How can students' emotional experiences be used to decolonise higher education spaces?
- To what extent can social justice enhance learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds?
- How can a better understanding of emotional experiences assist lecturers in becoming agents of change for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges?

#### **1.4. Research aims and objectives**

The main aim of the study is to develop a clearer understanding of students' emotional experiences and the role this understanding can play in the promotion of social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, based on the proposed research questions, I developed the following objectives:

- To understand the role emotional praxis could play in promoting social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at a TVET college.
- To indicate the role of emotional experiences in the decolonisation of higher education spaces.
- To determine the extent to which social justice can enhance learning for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- To assist lecturers in becoming agents of change for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds through understanding their emotional experiences.

## **1.5 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework I used in this study is Zembylas's critical emotional praxis, which falls under the transformative paradigm and critical theory. According to Zembylas (2015), critical emotional praxis is a theoretical framework that indicates the importance of emotions in creating a socially just schooling environment. In addition to this, Zembylas (2015) states that critical emotional praxis allows teachers and learners to critically evaluate their emotions and create a platform for understanding emotions in educational settings. Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) maintain that, through emotional praxis, teachers can become agents of social change for marginalised students. Lastly, Zembylas (2015) states that critical emotional praxis encourages teachers and students to promote socially just education. Critical emotional praxis is significant in my study because lecturers and students will be working together towards social justice, and this work will be done collaboratively through a critical analysis of each person's emotional experiences.

## **1.6 Research design**

In this section, I will discuss collaborative biography and autobiography as the research modes/designs that I will use in my study. As stated in the introduction, I was also affected by financial challenges as a university student and I am currently a lecturer at a TVET college. Therefore, I found my participation in the study relevant and I adopted collaborative biography and autobiography as a research design. The study followed both collective biographies and autobiographies, because participants wrote their own stories, after which I, as the principal researcher, recreated a new story using the biographies. Additionally, I believe the theory that I used in the study facilitated the collaboration between participants and myself. Davies and Gannon (2012) support the notion that when we work with a transformative theoretical framework as researchers, we do not just play the role of researchers, we also become participants in our studies.

### **1.6.1 Research methodology**

A qualitative research method was adopted as the main research approach for this study, because the study followed research designs that fall within the qualitative approach. For example, the data was collected through storytelling, which is regarded as linguistic data. Maree (2016) indicates that in qualitative research the focus is on linguistic data and people sharing their experiences verbally. According to Maree, there has to be a collaborative relationship between the researcher and participants in collecting the data (Maree, 2016:77). Denzin (2017:118) agrees with this by maintaining that a researcher has to take part in narrative research; they should reflect on their past experiences and create conditions for rewriting and re-experiencing those experiences. Hence, in my study, used a collaborative method as it allowed us (myself and participants) to share our stories among the group.

As indicated above, my study took the qualitative research approach and I used narratives as a research methodology. Maree (2016:76) explains that narrative research is like telling stories of the past that get edited to reconstruct biographies within a specific framework. Thus, I used collaborative biographies in conjunction with Zembylas's critical emotional praxis as a framework to shape the collaborative biographies around common themes and answer the proposed research questions.

In addition, I believe the method of collective biography is relevant because, according to Davies and Gannon (2012: 359), it is a research method that allows people to tell their own stories, which are then used as the data in an attempt to create new stories. Hence, I used both collective biographies and autobiographies, because I rewrote the narratives as one story based on common themes. Furthermore, Davies and Gannon (2012:362) state that the focus in collective biography is on the self and individual experiences and how they relate to other people's stories and the research question. Davies and Gannon (2012) add that when researchers engage in collaborative research, there is a possibility for self-transformation. I believe self-transformation is important in this context, because I

am a lecturer at a TVET college, and I believe that through my engagement in this study I can also be transformed by what I learn through my engagement in this study.

### **1.6.2 Research method**

As stated in the research design, the study followed a biographical and collaborative approach whereby we narrated our stories and experiences as lecturers and students at a TVET college. As participants, we kept reflective journals to document events that happened in our lives. Thereafter, I invited participants to engage in individual interviews and, finally, we all participated in a group session where we shared our experiences of coming from a lower socio-economic background and being a student at an institution of higher learning. Nieuwenhuis (2016) states that both focus groups and journal writing are appropriate methods in qualitative research and critical theory. Both of the methods and the theory played a vital role in assisting us in answering the research questions. The methods allowed us to be fully expressive through our writing and verbal interviews, and work towards focusing on the transformative nature of our stories, whereas the theory allowed us to engage in critical understanding of the role our emotional experiences play in our education.

In the next section, I will outline the research methods used in more detail as well as the procedures that were followed in collecting the data.

### **1.6.3 Interviews and journals**

As participants in the study, we all wrote individual journal entries about the emotions we experienced in response to critical incidents that occurred in our classroom spaces.

I invited all the participants for individual interviews so that we could unpack the stories written in the journals. However, due to time constraints and workload, only four participants, who are students, attended the scheduled interviews.

The journal entries were written during times that were convenient for participants, mostly at home after college operating hours. I believe it was easier for the lecturers to write the journal entries than having individual interviews, as they wrote their journals entries in their spare time after teaching hours. Additionally, we also came together as a group to collaboratively share our stories of our experiences as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at institutions of higher learning. The journal entries and interviews were directed by guiding questions that I developed based on the main research question and subsidiary questions. The interviews were semi structured as they were guided by the questions that I developed (SEE Addendum A). These questions helped me to interpret the stories. This is supported by Maree (2016:76), who states that, in narrative research, the researcher has to make sense of the stories narrated by the participants. In terms of the relevance of the above-mentioned methods, Maree (2016:77) concurs that all the adopted data collection methods form part of narrative studies.

#### **1.6.4 Participant selection**

My study included eight participants (four students, three lecturers and myself) from a TVET college based in South Africa. According to Nieuwenhuis (in Maree, 2016:84) the sample size in qualitative research depends on the purpose of the research, what the researcher needs to know, the time and resources available and what information will be useful. Therefore, I used a small sample in my study that I believe was valuable and appropriate to obtain in-depth information on the experiences of students and staff at a TVET college. Nieuwenhuis (in Maree, 2016:84) maintains that small samples can also be effective in qualitative research as long as the data collected is sufficient and participants possess some sort of expertise on the phenomenon. Hence, I purposively selected participants because they used to or currently fall under the lower socio-economic class and have experienced challenges at institutions of higher learning. According to Maree (2016), a purposive sample in qualitative research is always effective, because it allows the researcher to select participants who are familiar with the topic. Thus,

in my study I worked in collaboration with students and lecturers from a TVET college who participated voluntarily (see consent form, Addendum D).

## **1.7 Data analysis**

Denzin (2017) states that autobiographies can be analysed in different ways, ranging from analysing the personal experience of individuals to working with a group of people. In my study, we analysed the narratives using collaborative analysis. Denzin (2017:119) states that collaborative research is made up of a collection of personal stories that are organised together around a common theme (autobiographies). This means that when we work collaboratively, we use our different stories to create a new narrative that are based on a common theme.

Nieuwenhuis (in Maree, 2016:104) agrees that, in collaborative (narrative) analysis, the researcher analyses the data by searching for narrative strings (present stories) or major emerging stories (creation of new stories). Thus, in my study, I used collaborative autobiographies, where we collaborated in sharing our stories and looked for connections between our stories based on the themes of emotional experiences, social justice, learning motivation and decolonisation.

The written collaborative work was taken from written biographies (journals) and recorded conversations from individual and group interviews. I believe the data collection methods, theoretical framework and mode of analysis are relevant to my study, because we collaboratively shared stories that focused on our emotional experiences. I believe that analysing the data by using critical emotional praxis as a framework can assist us in engaging in a critical understanding of our emotional experiences and the role that these experiences might play in terms of social justice. Additionally, I argue that collaborative analysis also fits well into a decolonisation project, which I discuss in more detail in the research methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

## **1.8 Trustworthiness of the study**

Chase (2011:424 citing Cladninin and Murphy 2007) maintains that for there to be trustworthiness in narrative studies, researchers have to ask permission from participants with regard to how their stories will be presented. Hence, in my study I ensured trustworthiness by collaborating with the participants and making sure that I shared every stage of the research, including the final report, with them for input. In this way, they were able to see how our narratives were being presented and they had the option to make changes or withdraw if they felt uncomfortable with the representation. For added trustworthiness, I also followed the member-check rule, where I shared the interpreted data (Chapter 4 and 5) with participants to ensure that I did not misrepresent anything that they had shared. Maree (2016) agrees that through member checks, trustworthiness can be possible in qualitative research.

## **1.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethics in narrative studies begins with researchers narrating their own story by establishing a relationship to writing and sharing research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Huber & Clandinin, 2002). This means that I, as a researcher, need to determine how my personal story relates to the stories of others as we create a collaborative narrative. I used pseudonyms to identify the participants and all personal information was stored in password protected files on a secure personal computer. The principal of the college also granted permission for the study to take place at the institution. Due to the nature of my study, it was anticipated that certain emotional discomforts might be triggered; thus, I adopted an ethical principle referred to as ethics of care (Pulcini, 2016:126). According to Pulcini (2016), ethics of care includes emotions such as empathy and compassion, which he defines as being able to feel for the “other”. Tracy (2010:847) agrees that, in ethics of care, researchers are connected to their participants in a caring manner. For added measures, I appointed a qualified counsellor who was available to assist participants with emotional discomfort that may arise during the course of

the study. In terms of the ethical compliance of the University of the Free State, I have received ethical clearance (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2018/1606).

## **1.10 Demarcation of study**

In this section, I will discuss the reasons why my study falls within Higher Education Studies and the location in which my study was based.

### **1.10.1 Scientific demarcation**

My study falls within the field of Higher Education Studies because it is based on the experiences of staff and students at a TVET college, which falls under the Department of Higher Education and Training. Additionally, this study's focal point was on issues such as decolonisation and social justice, which scholars like Mbembe (2016) and Tejada and Espinoza (2003) have written extensively about in the context of higher education institutions. Furthermore, the study also considers the relevant DHET policies, such as the 2016 TVET College Attendance Policy and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme Report of 2016, which proves that the study is relevant to the field of higher education studies. It ultimately aims to address some of the challenges that students in higher education institutions experience, especially students at TVET colleges.

### **1.10.2 Geographical demarcation**

As previously mentioned, the study was conducted at TVET College in South Africa. The study included lecturers and students from that specific TVET college and the participants were chosen purposively because they were relevant to the topic.

## **1.11 Outline of the study**

This thesis consists of six chapters, and in this section, I will indicate what each chapter entails. This chapter is the introductory chapter that includes the research title, problem statement, research questions and objectives, as well as the methodology of the study. It indicates the relevance of my study and why the identified issue is regarded as a problem within higher education spaces, and especially in TVET colleges. Chapter 2 is a detailed literature review in which I will critically evaluate the work of other scholars on social justice for learners who come from lower socio-economic status. Furthermore, I will look at what other intensive research says about the relationship between learning motivation, social justice and decolonisation. Additionally, Chapter 2 will highlight the gap that exists in current literature. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the methods that I followed in collecting and interpreting the data. The chapter will also indicate the research design and how it is relevant to the theory that I used in my research. Chapter 3 will also include the rules that I followed to ensure that participants were not harmed. In Chapter 4, I interpret the data in a narrative format in an attempt to create a new story. In this particular chapter, I will get into the mode of storytelling and narrate the stories of the participants as shared through the data collection methods. In Chapter 5, the data interpretation, I will use the theoretical framework to shape the narratives and attempt to answer the proposed research question. In the last chapter, I will write conclusions, summaries and recommendations based on the interpreted stories.

## **1.12 Summary**

In conclusion, poverty still exists in South Africa after the apartheid era and many people are still experiencing it (Leibbrandt et al., 2009). Hence, in the TVET sector, there are still many students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and most of them rely on NSFAS for financial means. Thus, scholars like Tejada, Espinoza and Mbembe have agreed that through social justice and decolonisation, higher education spaces in South Africa can become conducive learning spaces

for marginalised learners. Therefore, through our collaborative autobiographies, I believe that we can attempt to address some of the challenges experienced by students in higher education institutions, and as Zembylas's emotional praxis allows, we can achieve social transformation through a critical enquiry into our emotions. Furthermore, I believe that through these collaborative biographies we will be able to bring forth decolonisation, which will assist us in bettering schooling conditions for those who are marginalised. Additionally, I believe that, through social justice, there is a possibility for the enhancement of learning motivation for students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

In the next chapter, I will analyse existing literature on emotional experiences, social justice, learning motivation and decolonisation within higher education spaces. The chapter will highlight the existing research as well as the gaps that exist in this field of research.

## **Chapter 2. Review of the literature**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I cover what other scholars have written on the key factors of my study. I compared, synthesised and criticised various literature sources on the specific themes of emotional experiences, social justice and decolonisation, and their link to learning motivation for learners who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. I explored literature that deals with emotions and emotional praxis. I also explored what existing literature says about the role of emotions in creating social justice in the education system. I zoomed in on what scholars have written in terms of social justice education for learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges and schools.

Furthermore, I look at the relationship between social justice and decolonisation. In this regard, I focus on the work of scholars who wrote on the role that socially just practices can play in decolonising higher education environments. Lastly, I explored the work of various scholars on learning motivation. I did this by first citing the work of scholars who argued that learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not motivated enough in the schooling system, to such an extent that some of these learners even leave school. I also highlighted existing literature on the development of learning motivation for those marginalised through social justice practices. Moreover, this chapter highlights the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning and its implications on social justice in education for learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, when I started with this study, COVID-19 did not yet exist. It had emerged towards the end of the study, and I found it to be a vital issue to focus on because of its implications for students at TVET colleges who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

## **2.2. Current situation at institutions of higher learning**

During the student protests that took place at TVET colleges on 13 January 2019, students made specific demands, including free registration for all students who qualify for NSFAS, irrespective of whether they had applied in the previous academic year or not, or whether they had tuition debt from the previous academic year or not. These students were NSFAS beneficiaries, social grant beneficiaries or came from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Based on observations from these protests, students expressed feelings of anger, frustration, uncertainty, sadness, hopelessness and despair. Cammarota (2014:114) agrees that when students from lower socio-economic backgrounds encounter injustices, they are more likely to experience emotions such as anger, sadness and frustration. Cammarota (2014) argues that the students experienced those emotions because they believed that they were treated unfairly and that their emotional and intellectual capabilities were being suppressed.

Bozalek, Leibowitz, Carrollissen and Boler (2013) shared the same sentiments in a study conducted at a South African university. Students at this particular university expressed feelings of despair, fear and anger because they felt that the university was not taking their experiences seriously. Furthermore, Bozalek et al. (2013) indicated that the dialogue was painful as students expressed their emotions related to the injustices they encountered at the university. Through a mutual understanding of emotions by all stakeholders, including lecturers and university management, Bozalek et al. (2013) further discovered that students had been given the opportunity to engage in platforms where they raised issues that affected them, such as lack of financial means to study. Hence, through my study, I focused on the emotional experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to create a platform where their voices could be heard.

## **2.3. Critical emotional praxis and emotional experiences**

In the next section, I first discuss critical emotional praxis as a theory that I applied in my study. I further explore emotional expressions indicated by different scholars, which I believe are vital to my study. The emotional expressions include emotions experienced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and emotional values that teachers can adopt in the classroom in an attempt to create conducive learning spaces for marginalised learners. Emotional expressions and values include moral anger, collective guilt, hope, joy, excitement and happiness.

### **2.3.1 Critical emotional praxis**

In this section, I discuss the theoretical framework that I adopted in my study, along with what existing literature says about the particular theory and its relevance to education.

Praxis is an interactive process, based on the historical work of Paul Freire (1970), in which a specific theory and practice become integrated. This means that when we focus on the word “praxis”, we focus on practices guided by a specific theory. For example, in this study, the focus is on emotional practices that are framed by using critical emotional praxis as a framework.

Zembylas (2015), influenced by the work of Freire, defined emotional praxis as a process that allows teachers and learners to evaluate emotions and create systems that can be used within educational spaces to address injustices that marginalised groups encounter. Therefore, using Zembylas's (2015) critical emotional praxis will help us better understand our (both teachers and learners) emotional experiences and the role they can play in addressing inequalities that we experience at TVET Colleges in South Africa. Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) agree that when researchers, learners and teachers engage in research projects that focus on emotions, they can engage in a reflective process of their own experiences and, with this form of research, are then able to examine their personal and professional identity. Therefore, I believe that through my study, we

might be able to examine our roles as lecturers, in terms of how we allow our emotions to be visible in our classrooms and, subsequently, allow learners to express their own emotions.

### **2.3.2 Teachers' emotional experiences**

In the previous section, I looked at why teachers must allow space for emotional experiences in the schooling environment. Naidoo (2014) based on a study she conducted in South Africa concurs that teaching is an emotional practice, as teachers carry their emotional experience and it is reflected in their teaching practice. Naidoo (2014) found that emotions plays a vital role in creating conducive learning environment for all learners especially those who are marginalised. Nias (1996) as cited in Naidoo (2014) defined emotional experiences as feelings that have physiological and psychological effects on individual, Nias (1996) further says that emotions can be negative, which may cause negative effects on the person experiencing them and emotions can also be positive which would have positive effects on the individual experiencing them.

I believe that teachers' experiences are essential, especially if we want to work towards promoting social justice in education. Muller, Motai, Nkopane, Mofokeng, Lephatsoe and Mouton (2018) agree that teachers' experiences have an impact on their teaching practice. Schmit (2010) concurs that teachers use experiences they acquired when they were students as a guide in their current classrooms in terms of how they should interact with learners. The idea of teachers' prior experiences comes from the seminal work of educational theorist John Dewey (1934). Dewey understood pedagogical practices that teachers adapt in classrooms as being shaped by their prior experiences. Moreover, Zembylas (2018), in his work on humanising pedagogy, maintains that teachers need to incorporate their past experiences in their classrooms to create conducive learning spaces for all learners and allow for collaborative engagement between themselves and learners.

For this study, I focus specifically on teachers' emotional experiences and their role in TVET classrooms in terms of social justice and learning motivation. Smith (2010) indicates that when teachers' emotional experiences are visible in the classroom, there is a possibility that learners who are marginalised will develop a sense of belonging. Cross and Hong (2012:957) also support the idea of emotions being visible in the classroom. They indicate that emotions in education can have an impact on both the teachers and learners' lives. Cross and Hong (2012) further argue that by engaging with emotional experiences, teachers can improve their teaching practices, develop positive teacher-learner relationships and work towards transformation for those marginalised by the education system.

Additionally, in her research on emotions, Nias (1996) maintains that teachers need to engage their emotional experience in their classrooms and form emotion-based relationships with their learners. This kind of relationship is mutual and characterised by the freedom of both learners and teachers to express emotions (Naidoo, 2014). Naidoo (2014) further states that an emotion-based relationship can have a positive influence on the creation of social justice in the classroom, stimulating self-esteem and fulfilment for both learners and teachers. Naidoo (2014) further states that when teachers allow emotional experiences to be visible and communicated in their classroom, they can make learning a fun, enjoyable process for all learners, even those who are "othered". However, Naidoo (2014) indicates that few studies have been done in the South African context that looks at the place of emotional experiences in the classroom. Pithouse-Morgan (2012) agrees that emotions have been under-researched in education. Thus, I believe that my study is relevant, because it allowed us to critically examine the place of our emotional experiences in working together towards the creation of social justice in educational spaces in South Africa.

According to the literature, it seems that emotional experiences are essential to challenging oppressive systems that marginalise others. Zembylas (2007, cited by Naidoo, 2014) concurs that when we engage in the process of understanding and being open to emotional experiences, we can become attuned to our students and

better combat oppression, which could also possibly lead to self-transformation. Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) agree that when we engage in emotion-based research, we (lecturers) can “feel” and be in contact with emotions that learners experience. Thus, the collaboration in my study is appropriate as it allows us to critically engage in the process of understanding our emotional experiences in our educational environments in an attempt to promote social justice in a TVET college. Based on what Naidoo (2014) says, this collective engagement will not only attempt to promote social justice, it might also help transform participants into agents of change for those who are marginalised. Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) agree that when we engage in collaborative, emotion-based research, we can reflect on ourselves, which can lead to self-transformation.

### **2.3.3 Emotional experiences**

According to Pithouse-Morgan, Khau, Masinga, and Van de Ruit (2012:48), writing on emotions in research gives more life to a research study, especially in research projects in social sciences. Focusing on emotions in a research study is important, because emotions are frequently overlooked in research regarding social issues (Pithouse-Morgan et al.,2012:48). Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) further maintain that by focusing on emotions in social science research, we can find meaning in our experiences and we are able to learn something new, which is primarily the purpose of qualitative research. Thus, in this section, I will focus on the role of learners and teachers’ emotional experiences in education and what existing literature says about using these emotions to work towards social justice.

#### **2.3.3.1 Moral anger**

In this section, I explored anger as one of the critical emotions with regard to the experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Zembylas (2007) identifies anger as the emotion that marginalised people experience due to injustice. Zembylas (2007) says anger is an emotion that is characterised by aggressive and hurtful behaviour portrayed by those experiencing anger. He argues that anger must not be seen as a disruptive emotion, but rather as an

emotion that can be used to challenge power relations and unfair practices in the classroom. Zembylas (2007), in his study, termed this kind of anger “moral anger”, which is based on the idea of motivating people to raise their voices against injustices. As such, moral anger might be viewed as a useful emotion in working towards social transformation. Batson, Kennedy, Stocks, Fleming, Hayes, and Zerger (2007) also wrote extensively on this type of anger through social psychology in the United States. Batson et al. (2007) described this kind of anger as moral outrage that is activated when people experience injustice and unequal treatment. Batson et al. (2007) further state that moral outrage motivates people to take action towards restoring fairness and justice by compensating the victim. Russells and Roger (2011) concur that people are intentionally motivated to respond to justice movements through moral anger. Therefore, I believe moral anger and outrage are essential to my study as I believe that it is through these two emotions that I can engage in a critical understanding of how students from lower socio-economic backgrounds perceive anger.

According to Batson et al. (2007:1272), moral anger also has a relationship to personal anger and empathetic anger. They explain that personal anger has more to do with protecting one’s own needs, while, in contrast, empathetic anger has to do with people feeling angry over the unfair treatment of others. Therefore, I believe empathetic anger has a direct link to collective guilt, which I discuss in the next section.

### **2.3.3.2 Collective guilt**

According to Ferguson and Branscombe (2014), collective guilt can create social justice and safe learning spaces. Arent (1954) says that collective guilt is a motivating force for social change, and it can be a strategy to improve the conditions of the marginalised. Ferguson and Branscombe (2014) view collective guilt as comprising similar emotions that people can experience because of shared responsibility with a specific group (Ferguson and Branscombe, 2014:136). It means that, through feelings of guilt, the dominant group can collectively relate to the emotions that a marginalised group might experience due to societal injustice.

Arent (1954, cited in Fraher 2007) agrees that collective guilt lies in the sense of responsibility for acts of injustice that marginalise certain groups. Arent (1954) further states that the extent to which a dominant group feels guilty will determine the motivation for social change. Batson et al. (2007) maintain that through empathetic anger, the privileged group usually feel entitled to take responsibility and care for the needs of the marginalised. Thus, I believe that collective guilt as a shared responsibility is vital to my study as it could allow us (lecturers) to better understand and relate to the experiences of students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Ferguson and Branscombe (2014) further argue that, through collective guilt and shared responsibility, we can promote reconciliation among groups, which could lead to enhanced social inclusion.

Moreover, Ferguson and Branscombe (2014) mention that, through collective guilt, we can develop positive attitudes that can allow marginalised people to feel more comfortable with expressing themselves. This relates to what Cammorota (2014) states regarding teachers giving learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds an opportunity to express their needs and emotions. Moreover, Cammorota (2014) argues that when we give learners opportunities to express themselves in our classrooms, we can give those that are marginalised hope for their situation. In the next paragraph, I discuss hope as one of the most important factors in bettering the conditions of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

#### ***2.3.3.4 Joy, excitement and happiness***

The other emotions that I believe are relevant to my study are joy, excitement, exhilaration and deep satisfaction. These emotions were identified by Naidoo (2014) who maintains when learners experience these positive emotions, their self-esteem grows, which could lead to social justice. Additionally, Naidoo (2014) highlights that teachers need to adopt emotional experiences such as happiness and gratitude if they want to create socially just classrooms. This was important in my study, because marginalised students do not experience negative emotions all the time; sometimes they experience positive emotions based on specific events

that occur in their lives. As Naidoo (2014) says, when learners experience these positive emotions, teachers can create socially just classrooms.

From the existing literature, it becomes evident that emotions such as hope, joy and excitement are essential in education, especially for marginalised learners. Moreover, I also detect that anger should not always be regarded as a negative emotion. It can be used as a tool to address injustices that occur in our society. It also became clear that, through collective guilt and shared responsibility, teachers can become compassionate and empathetic towards learners who experience injustice. However, learners' emotional experiences do not play a role on their own; scholars indicate that teachers' experiences also play a vital role in how they treat learners in their classrooms.

## **2.4 Social justice education**

In this section, I explore social justice in both the South African and international context within the education sector. This section will highlight what has been done in terms of social justice at higher learning institutions for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Bell (2007) states that social justice is a process that aims to ensure that all members of society experience the same opportunities and that resources are allocated to all members equally. Hlalele (2012:111) concurs that social justice ensures that all members of society have equal rights and opportunities to participate fully in social, educational and political practices. However, Hlalele (2012:111) argues that the South African education system has failed to prevent the increase of social, economic and environmental injustices for those who are marginalised. In the study conducted by Hlalele (2011) it was concluded that the South African education system is still failing to address injustices experienced by those that are marginalised. Thus, I believe that social justice is a vital concept that my study needs to focus on in order for these injustices to be addressed. Ideally, higher education institutions should use socially just practices to ensure that all

learners can access the same learning opportunities and that there is equal distribution of economic and social resources.

According to Cammarota (2014: 108), students need to participate in discourses that address injustice at higher learning institutions in order for social justice to be possible in educational spaces. Cammarota (2014) further adds that students must share their voices and ideas to promote social justice in their learning environments. Mncube (2008) agrees that in order for South African schools to promote social justice, they should allow learners' voices to be heard about issues relating to the curriculum and practices in their school. Therefore, I believe what Cammorota (2014), Hlalele (2012) and Mncube (2008) say is also vital for institutions of higher learning, especially TVET colleges where students are still not experiencing social justice (Bozalek et al., 2013; Powell & McGrath, 2018).

In this paragraph, I explored literature that highlights what needs to be done by institutions of learning in creating socially just environments. According to Kumashiro (2000:28) in his anti-oppressive education theory, schools should create learning environments that are welcoming and address the needs of the other, while providing support, advocacy and resources. Additionally, Zembylas (2007:17) states that once teachers and students engage in an in-depth exploration of emotional experiences created by injustices and inequalities, they can develop a culture of collaboration among themselves and engage in attempts to work towards social justice. Therefore, I found the collaboration between lecturers and students vital in my study. Hlalele (2012) agrees that working towards social justice for marginalised learners should be based on the ideas of care, respect, recognition and empathy. Through our collaboration, we can attempt to promote social justice at institutions of higher learning, and students can collaborate with lecturers by engaging in a dialogue and expressing their feelings about practices that marginalise them.

I further believe that my study will address the challenges indicated by various scholars in terms of social justice still lacking within learning institutions. These

challenges include students being given little opportunity to raise their voices on educational issues that affect them, failure to recognise injustices experienced by marginalised people, and the failure to prevent the increase of injustices by the education sector (Cammarota, 2014; Hlalele, 2012; Smith,2010).

Howe (1997) states that for social justice to be possible, marginalised groups need to be recognised and given a voice in their educational opportunities:

“Equal educational opportunities can be achieved only when historically marginalized groups have a genuine voice in negotiating what educational opportunities have worth” (Howe, 1997:10).

According to Howe (1997), schools should be places that eliminate any form of oppression embedded in practices that marginalise certain groups. Hence, through my study, I believe students can be given a platform to voice their experiences of injustice at TVET colleges.

Smith (2010:13) indicates that for social justice to be possible, teachers should note the following key aspects:

1. "Equity of learning opportunities."
2. "Respect for all social groups "
3. "Acknowledging and dealing with tensions."

According to Smith (2010), equity in learning opportunity includes the promotion of learning for all students, irrespective of their demographics, and it should also challenge practices that oppress marginalised groups. For example, in TVET colleges, students are typically expected to have resources such as laptops, e-readers and, to some extent, cell phones that can connect to the internet. However, it becomes challenging for a student who depends on NSFAS for funding to acquire the above resources because, in most cases, as alluded to in the NEHAWU (2019) report, students only receive their allowances later in the year or at the end of the year. For example, as indicated in the introductory chapter, during

the COVID-19 pandemic, students were expected to use online modes of learning, which might have been a huge challenge to those that solely depend on NSFAS, as they might not even have access to a computer, laptop or internet. However, in a public speech delivered by the Minister of Higher Education and Training on 14 May 2020, the government pledged to provide devices and support for all NSFAS students during that time (DHET, 2020).

Additionally, Smith (2010) states that for social justice to be possible, teachers need to engage in critical inquiry through which they question whether the interest and needs of marginalised learners are met and accommodated by school practices. Smith (2010) elaborates that respect for all groups means that teachers must respect all learners by working against systems in society that oppress them. It means that teachers need to act as agents of change by ensuring that students are not "othered" and do not experience any form of oppression, as is it usually embedded in school and societal systems. Hence, Smith (2010) states that, as teachers, we need to engage in a deliberate effort of becoming advocates for the respect of marginalised students in our schools so that we can create better learning spaces for them. Kumashiro (2000), in his theory of anti-oppressive education, agrees that schools can be harmful spaces that oppress the experiences of those that are marginalised. Kumashiro (2000) further maintains that there is a need to provide spaces that are not harmful to those that are "othered" in the schooling environment.

Smith (2010) indicates that schools can create safe spaces for those that are marginalised by acknowledging and dealing with tensions that exist in the school. Kumashiro (2000) concurs that it is vital to acknowledge the experiences of marginalised learners in order to deal with the tensions that occur in harmful spaces. However, Kumashiro (2000) indicates that the idea of acknowledging the experiences of those who are marginalised becomes a challenge, because sometimes schools and teachers are not even aware of all forms of oppression. Therefore, schools need to ensure that all learners have similar learning opportunities and that access to resources is possible for all learners. Moreover,

for schools to be able to practice social justice, they need to acknowledge all forms of oppression in the school system. It might be vital for TVET colleges to follow the idea of an anti-oppressive education that acknowledges all forms of oppression, as this is still lacking in the TVET sector (Powell & McGrath, 2018:308).

## **2.5 Experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and social justice**

In this section, I will further explore the concept of social justice and the extent to which learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience social justice. I will also indicate what other scholars believe can be done for social justice to be possible for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at this particular institution. For example, Powell and McGrath (2018) argue that many students at TVET colleges in South Africa still experience many financial challenges, which has tremendous effects on their learning. Powell and McGrath (2018) further state that these challenges could be addressed if TVET colleges considered the needs, voices and well-being of their students.

According to Schull and Cuthill (2010:59), there are still factors that hinder students from lower socio-economic backgrounds from experiencing social justice, despite all the initiatives that have been taken to address these factors at higher education institutions. This means that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds still experience injustices within the education system. Based on their findings Schull and Cuthill (2010) indicates that South African students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are extremely affected by the lack of implementation of these initiatives proposed by institutions of learning. Furthermore, Guttman and Ben-Porath (2014) indicate that one of the challenges faced by higher learning institutions is to offer equal opportunities for all without discriminating against those who are marginalised. Additionally, Spaul (2015) highlights that, due to systems that marginalised people in the past, e.g. South Africa's apartheid regime, learners with lower socio-economic status still do not enjoy the same benefits as the beneficiaries of those systems. Buthelezi (2018) supports this and highlights that,

historically, TVET colleges were introduced in South Africa to address racial and class inequalities created during the apartheid regime. This move created more opportunities for students, especially black students, to enrol at TVET colleges, resulting in TVET colleges requiring more funding from the state (Buthelezi, 2018). The number of students enrolling at TVET colleges escalated further in 2017 after the Fees Must Fall movement, which pushed for several changes to the criteria for NSFAS bursary applications. However, these changes created more challenges for NSFAS, especially in terms of the allocation of funds (Nehawu, 2019). Therefore, with my study, I intend to critically understand the emotions experienced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds about the class inequalities they experience at TVET colleges.

Motha and Frempong (2013) state that several policies in the South African education sector are aimed at improving the learning conditions for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, these policies are not implemented as they should be, which is evident in the first chapter, where I indicate that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds still struggle to access “good” and fair education at higher learning institutions. Zembylas (2018) supports that South African higher education institutions have engaged in various activities to bring about social justice. However, the attempts are still not enough, because South African higher learning institutions are still faced with marginalisation issues where some students feel like they are not fully accommodated (Powell & McGrath, 2018:310).

Some of these challenges experienced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were documented in a report published by NSFAS (2018). The challenges listed in the report included allowance accessibility, lack of funding and the number of students who have to be funded by the scheme. The report indicated that, due to the above challenges, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are still not able to acquire sufficient learning resources or financial resources for basic needs, while some are not able to enrol at an institution of higher learning at all.

In conclusion, I believe that it is vital for us as teachers to adopt strategies that are inclusive of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds in an attempt to promote social justice in South African higher education institutions. As Zembylas (2018) indicated, there are still gaps that need to be bridged to create social justice at institutions of higher learning. Therefore, I believe that through an understanding of emotional practices, we can attempt to address this complex issue within South African higher education spaces.

## **2.6 Learning motivation**

In this section, I will explore learning motivation and how it might relate to social justice. Specifically, I focused on the challenges that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds encounter at TVET colleges and the extent to which these challenges can affect their learning motivation. Woolfolk (2014) describe learning motivation is the learner's interest and motives to participate in learning activities, hence I found it vital to use this definition to explain the influence of social justice on students' learning motivation at TVET colleges.

In their South African study at TVET colleges, Powel and McGrath (2013) observed that learners who enrol at TVET colleges in an attempt to better their circumstances need the motivation to learn effectively and complete their studies. However, Smith (2010) argues that due to lack of social justice within the schooling system for poor and minority students, it is less likely for them to experience enriched learning opportunities, which may lead to increased dropout rates. According to Smith's (2010) observations, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to leave school because of a lack of learning motivation.

According to Cammarota (2014), learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to be motivated, because schools tend to expect less from them. In contrast, schools set high expectations for learners from wealthy families and expect average results from those in the middleclass. Cammarota

(2014) states that this is because, most of the time, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds function in stimulus-deprived environments. Lacour and Tissington (2011:526) agree that the school environment (practices) is one of the many factors that negatively affects learners' learning motivation. Jensen (2013:2) indicates that another factor that contributes to students' feelings of demotivation is a lack of hope and optimism due to their income. Powell and McGrath (2018) concur that many students cannot excel academically and tend to lose motivation at TVET colleges, because their needs and well-being are less likely to be taken into consideration.

Cammarota (2014:118) concurs that this low expectation of students leads to a lack of motivation to achieve academically. Thus, through an exploration of learners' emotional experiences, we can develop practices characterised by social justice, which I believe might enhance their learning motivation. According to Lacour and Tissington (2011:522), poverty also has a direct influence on students' learning motivation; thus, it influences academic achievement. However, many learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are incredibly motivated to learn so that they can "get out" of their circumstances (Woolfolk, 2014:174). Moreover, Lacour and Tissington (2011:522) assert that low achievement correlates with a lack of resources. They add that several studies show a link between a lower socio-economic background and low achievement. This is an observation that I have made at TVET colleges, where students are expected to use electronic mobile devices such as cell phones and laptops, which I believe may diminish the motivation of students who cannot afford such devices. Student support service departments at TVET colleges have minimised these challenges by providing computer laboratories for students who do not have access to such resources at their homes. As much as the student support departments provide for students, it remains challenging, because students can only access the laboratories during class time, which may affect their class attendance.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme has attempted to alleviate some of these problems by providing bursaries to students within a specific annual income

bracket (R350 000per household). However, many of the students at TVET colleges often struggle to get access to bursaries; and if they do, their allowances are only paid later in the year (NSFAS, 2018). This situation could have a tremendous effect on learning motivation, because it means that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds will not be able to access vital learning resources in time for the beginning of the academic year.

Therefore, I believe the development of learning motivation is possible through the promotion of social justice. Smith (2010) citing Freire (1970) agrees that learning motivation can be developed through social justice practices. This means that schools can be places where learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds feel motivated to learn. Jensen (2013) agrees that schools should be places that enhance student motivation and achievement, and he argues that motivation could be developed through social justice learning.

In this section, I explore literature on the learning motivation of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and that it may be attributed to certain factors that are embedded in the practices and policies at schools. Subsequently, I posit that decolonised learning environments should do away with these practices and policies. I also believe that learning motivation can be developed among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds through decolonisation practices. Hence, in the next section, I discuss decolonisation in terms of the South African higher education system.

## **2.7 Decolonisation**

According to Helate (2016), decolonisation has been something that South African higher education institutions have been talking about since apartheid; however, the operational term used to describe it was “democratic education”. Jansen (2019) concurs that before and during apartheid, activists never referred to transformation in education as decolonisation; however, the term became popular after the Fees Must Fall movement in 2015. Helate (2016) argues that not much has been done

in terms of exploring decolonisation by tackling poverty and inequality and investigating the lived experience of the majority black students at institutions of higher learning. According to Zembylas (2018), South African higher education institutions have made attempts to decolonise, especially after the Fees Must Fall campaign. However, there are still apparent challenges in terms of remnants of previous systems that marginalised certain groups in the past (Zembylas, 2018). Helate (2016) concurs that post-apartheid South African higher education institutions have developed new policies and frameworks that deal with equality, equity, transformation and change; however real change is still lacking.

According to Helate (2016), decolonisation is about eradicating past and current injustices, including material inequality, poverty and educational injustices for all students at higher learning institutions. Mbembe (2016) agrees that it is vital to implement decolonisation at South African institutions of learning so that marginalised learners' experiences improve. Mbembe (2016:30) highlights that marginalised learners should be acknowledged at higher learning institutions: "This is my home. I am not an outsider here. I do not have to beg or to apologize to be here. I belong here."

From the above statement it is clear that decolonisation is about creating a sense of belonging for those who have been "othered". It is about ensuring that there is social justice for all learners in the higher learning environment and eliminating practices that marginalise. Therefore, through this study, we could contribute to a decolonisation project, especially at South African TVET colleges.

In 2017, I was part of a research study that looked at the possibility of decolonisation for the South African higher education sector. As a group of teachers, some teaching at universities, some at high schools, and some at TVET colleges, we focused on the role that our experiences played in adopting decolonised practices in our respective classrooms. Through that study, we found that in order to achieve decolonisation, people need to engage in a deliberate, collective effort to address the forms of oppression they experience by relearning

or unlearning issues of the past in order to create new alternatives that can bring about social justice (Muller et al., 2018). Thus, I decided to work collaboratively (students and lecturers) in an attempt to address injustices that occur at TVET colleges through a critical exploration of emotional experiences.

Mudimbe (1985:206 cited by Helate, 2016) indicates that, in terms of decolonisation, scholars need to become reflective and critically analyse their roles in society regarding changing the past and bringing about transformation. Le Grange (2016) concurs that through decolonisation we can create new ways of living, which we can discover as we respond to events as potential carriers of new possibilities. Furthermore, Zembylas (2018) maintains that, through research that addresses injustice and deals with emotional experiences, we need to work collaboratively to ensure that we transform our societies. Additionally, Davies and Gannon (2012) concur that when we share stories, we can see the relevance of our own stories in others; thus, we can create a new story that can yield transformation. Therefore, I found it vital for my study to be based on the collaborative approach, where we worked together towards a decolonisation project.

Keet, Sattarzadeh and Munene (2017) indicate that we should take note that decolonisation is not a concept that only scholars talk about, but rather a process that requires action from both students and teachers in order to transform institutions of higher learning. Moreover, with the study mentioned earlier that was conducted as part of our honours project, we discovered that our experiences as teachers play an essential role in how we function in our classrooms and the practices that we use (Muller et al., 2018). We also found that, as teachers, we come from unequal, divided societies full of injustice and we are likely to go into our teaching spaces with these experiences and infuse them with our teaching (Muller et al., 2018). Thus, I found it vital that we adopt the collaborative approach to research, because I believe that, through the engagement of both students and lecturers, we can think and act differently towards issues of injustice in our spaces.

Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) further maintain that as teachers we need to engage our emotional experience in teaching and learning by critically analysing an individual's feelings regarding learning and injustice in educational settings. Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) highlight that through this process of emotional engagement, teachers can become agents of social change for marginalised learners. Zembylas (2018:8) concurs that educators must take a central role in opposing oppression in order to bring forth social justice, which can facilitate the decolonisation of South African higher education. Moreover, Zembylas (2018) states that the sole aim of decolonisation is to address injustice based on factors such as gender, class (socio-economic status) and race.

According to Mbembe (2016) decolonisation is not just about ensuring students that they have a voice at institutions of higher learning. Mbembe (2016) indicates that decolonisation is also about doing away with the ideology of treating students as if they are customers who come to institutions higher learning to be given a service that they pay for. This means that institution of higher learning should not just focus on students paying tuition fees and attending class but they should also focus on other aspects that affect students at the university. Therefore, I found this study as relevant because it aimed at focusing on emotional experiences of students that come from lower socio-economic backgrounds in an attempt to decolonise higher education spaces. Additionally, Mbembe (2016) highlights that for decolonisation to be possible in higher education institutions, systems of access and management should be carefully considered as they have led to higher education institution to becoming places of business rather than places of conducive learning. I found this relevant to my study because I believe once systems of access and they way institutions of higher learning are managed are decolonised, students from lower socio-economic background will be able to find a sense of belonging at these institutions.

This means that, in order for social justice education to be possible in South Africa, we need to decolonise higher education spaces so that they become educational institutions free of injustice, and we should ensure that there is equality for all

learners in the schooling system. Furthermore, from the various sources of literature, we see that decolonisation of higher learning institutions is possible when teachers and students work together in determining their roles.

## **2.8 Summary**

It was evident in this chapter that there is a need for research that is based on emotional experiences in education. From the work of other scholars, I discovered that both learners and teachers' emotional experiences are vital in creating conducive learning spaces. With regard to teachers' emotional experiences, I zoom on to the idea that teachers need to make sure that their emotions are visible in their classrooms in order to give marginalised learners a sense of belonging. Through the literature it became clear that when marginalised learners are provided with a sense of belonging, they feel more comfortable to raise concerns regarding their needs. Additionally, the literature also revealed that through various emotional qualities such as hope and joy, teachers can create social justice for learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The chapter also gave an overview of the current situation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges. This was done through citing various reports, articles and international scholars who studied the experiences of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds in terms of social justice. Learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds may still be demotivated because of the low expectations that schools set for them; however, as discussed in the work of scholars like Smith (2010), learning motivation can be developed through social justice.

Lastly, the chapter also highlighted the South African higher education sector's attempts to decolonise higher education spaces. The link between social justice and decolonisation was indicated. The literature revealed that adopting social justice practices can help decolonise higher education environments.

## **Chapter 3. Research design**

### **3.1 Introduction**

As I indicated in the introduction chapter, I used a qualitative research approach, because I believe it fits well with the nature of the study. In qualitative research, we attempt to examine issues in our societies by looking at how people make sense of and arrange their lived experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:53). We did this in the study by sharing our lived experiences in terms of social justice within educational spaces.

According to Davies and Gannon (2012), in qualitative research, researchers and their participants engage in self-reflection, which can assist them in discovering themselves and retelling their stories. Thus, in my study, we reflected on our experiences to retell our stories in terms of social justice. Through this qualitative study, I was then able to gather enough data in the form of narratives, and the data assisted me in answering the research questions.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

In this section, I discuss the transformative paradigm, which I used for this study. According to Mertens (2010), a transformative paradigm is a framework of belief systems that engages members of diverse groups who have intentions to work towards social justice. Therefore, when researchers work within this paradigm, they take an approach to research that is aimed at promoting social justice.

Jansen (2016, cited in Maree 2016:23) states that when researchers engage with the transformative paradigm, they attempt to critically analyse experiences that relate to issues of social oppression, including gender, class and race, to bring about transformation. Mertens (2010) further states that when researchers use the transformative paradigm, it is to improve the conditions of individuals who have been subjected to societal marginalisation throughout history. In the transformative paradigm, researchers can assist those who have been marginalised to bring their

voices into the world of research. Additionally, Creswell (2013) states that when qualitative researchers adopt a critical theory, their research falls within the transformative paradigm, because through this form of research, one can look at what is currently wrong in society and address that. Thus, through this study, I hope to embark on a transformative journey that will address current injustices at TVET colleges for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

In this section, I discuss the three research methodologies that I used in my study, namely narratives, collective biography and collaborative autobiography. I found the three methodologies appropriate for my study, because we shared stories collaboratively and we also interpreted the stories collectively in order to answer the proposed research questions. Davies and Gannon (2012) indicate that when we follow research methods that are collaborative, we bring ourselves as researchers and participants by sharing our own narratives (collective biography), in an attempt to create a “new story” (collaborative autobiography).

#### **3.3.1 Narratives**

Denzin (2017) defines narrative research as research that revolves around real stories of people who actually lived the stories, and he states that, through narratives, the narrator can share important parts of his/her life, including schooling, work and career. Nieuwenhuis (2016) adds that in narrative research the researcher collects stories that he/she later retells to make sense of the shared stories. Moreover, Kim (2015) highlights that, in narrative research, researchers need to share their own stories with participants, because there might be common themes that emerge. Chase (2007) concurs that in narrative research with marginalised groups as subjects, researchers can collaborate with participants to make a connection between their stories and those of the participants. Chase (2007) further indicates that in narrative research, researchers try to understand their actions and the actions of others by organising events in a meaningful

manner. Hence, in my study I used narratives to discover more about the experiences of students and lecturers from lower socio-economic backgrounds in regard to social justice within their learning spaces.

Maree (2016) states that narrative research is transformative by nature, because the researcher has to identify social problems in society in order to bring about transformation. Maree (2016) states that when participants have active participation in a study through narratives, they can transform and address social injustice. Therefore, I found narratives to be a relevant research method for my study.

In the research process, we shared meaningful lived experiences related to social justice. In these shared stories, our focus was on the injustices that exist at institutions of higher learning, especially TVET colleges, for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We used critical emotional praxis as a lens that allowed us to understand emotional experiences and the role they play in promoting social justice. The narrative engagement was also useful as it allowed me as the researcher to share my story with participants and find common themes.

### **3.3.2 Collective biography**

According to Bourke (2014), when a researcher engages in a qualitative project, they need to participate in a continuous mode of self-analysis; they need to analyse how their stories relate to those of the participants. Nieuwenhuis (2016) agrees that when researchers and participants share stories, they try to establish the relationship between their stories in order to create a full descriptive picture of the phenomenon they are trying to explain.

From the above we can see that when we engage in qualitative research and narrative, we must adopt a research method that will enable us to engage with our participants in a subjective rather than objective manner. Mertens (2010) supports this collective engagement by maintaining that when the researcher uses the

transformative paradigm, there must be a close collaboration between him/her and the study participants.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I, as the principal researcher, designed and managed the study; however, I was also a participant in the study. I wanted to co-create a narrative of the experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at institutions of higher learning. Therefore, I included lecturers who had been students at these institutions and students who were currently enrolled. I found collective biography to be an appropriate methodology, because we co-created the narrative. Chase (2007) states that scholars who use this methodology of research believe that shared stories can construct the self and reality linked to the narrator's social settings. This means that when we engage in collective narratives, we can discover something about our true selves and explore our social realities.

Gale and Wyatt (2017) agree that in research studies that are rooted in collective inquiry, researchers can realise the "I" and find a place where they belong. In my research, we attempt to discover ourselves through storytelling and the role that we can play in achieving social change within our educational settings. Davies and Gannon (2012:366) agree that in collective biographies we reflect on our memories to discover ourselves and our roles in becoming agents of social change. They also state that when researchers work collectively with participants on a research project, they engage in a writing process in which they become subjects in the study by sharing their stories. Furthermore, Davies and Gannon (2012) maintain that in collective research we become each other's stories (researcher and participants) while also becoming writers of our own stories (collective biography). Thus, I found this method of research appropriate in my study, because I collaborated with participants to use our individual stories to create a collaborative autobiography. I discuss the meaning and relevance of this in the next section.

### **3.3.3 Collaborative autobiography**

Paulus, Woodside and Ziegler (2008) describe collaborative autobiography as a form of research that allows the researcher to collaborate with the participants. According to Davies and Gannon (2012), data collected in collaborative work is based on memories that are retold by narrating stories. Hence, in this study, we collaboratively narrated our stories (biographies) to generate the data and make sense of it. The data that I used to create the collaborative I derived from the journal entries, individual interviews and group interviews. Davies and Gannon (2012) further, states that in this type of research, researchers listen attentively as the stories are shared collaboratively to establish the relationship between the shared stories.

Davies and Gannon (2012) further state that collaborative autobiography also has a link to collective biography, as the researcher and participants write their own stories, after which the stories are shared with one another in order to work together to determine common elements. After this collective work, they engage in a process of rewriting the stories as autobiography shaped by the theoretical framework in an attempt to answer the proposed research questions. Paulus et al. (2008) agree that in order to create autobiographies, we need to engage in collaborative work where we share our narratives with one another. Therefore, we first worked individually in this study to write our own stories, and we then later subsequently shared our own personal stories as a group in order to create an autobiography of our experiences.

According to Bourke (2014), researchers need to establish their position in a thoughtful way that will acknowledge their relationships with the participants. According to Chase (2016:657), through narrative inquiry, researchers attempt to develop their voices as they construct and give meaning to the voices of others (participants). Bourke (2014:4) agrees that, in qualitative research, the voice and position of a researcher are integral parts of the study, and the position of the researcher has a way of creating space for participants' voices to be heard. This

means that, as narrative researchers, we are able to see our own experiences in participants' stories, which helps us to determine our position and connection to the research project. Thus, I adopted collaborative autobiography as a method, because, as stated above, I was a participant and I later constructed the autobiography. Bourke (2014) states that when qualitative researchers engage in collaborative research, the research study is shaped by how their personal experience relates to the phenomenon at hand; thus, the researcher's position is essential when doing collaborative research.

The narratives, collective biographies and collaborative autobiographies played a vital role in my study, because, through writing our stories individually and subsequently sharing the stories (collective biography), we were able to create a collaborative autobiography guided by our stories and the theoretical framework.

### **3.4 Data collection methods**

As indicated earlier, I used three methods to gather information (see Section 1.6.2). Firstly, all the participants made journal entries, followed by individual interviews and group interviews. This combination of different methods is vital, as Maree (2016) agrees that, when we do collaborative work, we can use various tools to gather the data in order to ensure that the data is sufficient. Maree (2016) says that these methods can range from written work of shared experiences to journals, storytelling or autobiographical writing. Chase (2007) agrees that, in narrative research, we can collect data verbally (naturally through conversations or through interviews) or through written work (journals).

First of all, as participants we had to write journal entries based on specific questions related to the main research questions. Subsequently, we engaged in individual interviews where I, the principal researcher, interviewed participants based on what they had written in their journal. After the individual interviews, we then had a group interview where we shared our stories. During the group interviews, we also interpreted the stories by making sense of how they relate to

the main research questions, and we determined common themes within our stories in order to build the autobiography.

Open-ended questions guided the journals (see Addendum A), which I developed based on the research questions. The same questions also guided us in the individual and group interviews. This method of using same questions for different data collection methods is supported by Davies and Gannon (2012) where they argue that in collaborative inquiry the researcher can use two or more methods to gather data so that they can acquire different sets of data. The same questions were used for all the three data collection methods to allow participants flexibility in answering the questions. For example, the participant might have written certain type of information in the journal, however as we engaged in the group interviews what other participants say in respect to the same question might trigger other responses from other participants. This is the idea behind collaborative inquiry as indicated by (Davies and Gannon) The questions provided a semi-structure to the interviews, which allowed for flexibility in terms of follow-up questions. Paulus et al. (2008) agree that when we work collaboratively, it is effective to first work individually to plot down the data before sharing the data in groups; hence, I decided on using a journal before the group interview.

### **3.5 Research participants**

In this section, I provide a description of the participants in my study, how I selected them and the criteria I used for selection. Nieuwenhuis (2016:84) states that the sample size in qualitative research depends on the purpose of the study, what the researcher needs to know, the time and resources available, and what would be useful. Therefore, I invited lecturers and students from a TVET college where I am currently employed, because it was more suitable as I would not be wasting time on travelling to other institutions.

In terms of selection participants, Flick (2015) maintains that in qualitative studies they are always chosen purposively, and usually in small numbers, because of the

nature of qualitative data-collection methods. Maree (2016) agrees that small samples are appropriate, because data collection methods that rely on linguistic data can be time consuming; thus, a researcher is always advised to use a smaller sample. Nieuwenhuis (2016) calls this method purposive sampling, where participants are selected because they are familiar with the phenomenon at hand. In my study, I invited eight participants. Four of the participants were students and three were lecturers, including myself as the fourth lecturer from a TVET College in South Africa. In the next section, I discuss the criteria that I used to select the participants.

After I had received ethical clearance, I invited students who were part of the cohorts that I lectured at the TVET College to an information session about my project, and those who were interested attended the session. During the meeting, I explained the nature of the study and invited those who were interested to participate voluntarily. The criteria for participation was that the participant had to be a NSFAS beneficiary (purposive) and they must be enrolled as a student at a South African TVET College. In addition, I invited some of my colleagues who had used NSFAS when they studied to also participate (including myself). The reason I chose NSFAS beneficiaries is because, in many cases, these students are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as indicated in the introductory chapter (see Section 1.2). However, all of the participants who agreed to participate in the study were females, except the principal researcher. The rationale behind the study only having female participants could have been supported by a study conducted by Schaubroeck and Shao (2014) where they indicate that females are more in contact with their emotions than males.

### **3.6 Limitations**

Due to the nature of my study, I was concerned that some of the participants might feel uncomfortable sharing their stories, because it would require them to reflect on painful or uncomfortable past experiences. Chase (2007: 666) agrees that when people revisit their past experiences, they might recall embarrassing and shameful

events that tend to make them vulnerable. Therefore, if any of the participants had experienced emotional discomfort, counselling would have been provided by a qualified counsellor (see page 13 of Chapter 1). However, during the course of the data collection for my study, none of the participants expressed or reported any emotional discomfort and, therefore, counselling services were not utilised.

Additionally, Chase (2007) states that narrative research is viewed as messy and complicated, because it is based on the participants' lived experiences. Wyatt and Gale (2017:359) state that collaborative narratives are still complex, because they are unfamiliar and new to most researchers. Moreover, Nieuwenhuis (2016) indicates that many researchers have questioned the credibility of narrative research, because, in narrative research, the data is based on people's personal experiences, which are complex and subjective. However, the purpose of my study is not to provide factual information, but instead to share the experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges through narratives.

Another limitation that I encountered was when some of the participants could not participate in the individual interviews because of time constraints. The three lecturers who were part of the study could not participate in the individual interviews as they were under a lot of pressure with work. Flick (2015:13) concurs that participants resist engaging in such studies because of the time-consuming nature of narratives.

As much as scholars like Nieuwenhuis (2016) and Chase (2007) question the creditability of narrative research, I believe that with this type of research we do not need to prove anything. We engage in this form of research to describe people's experiences through narrative writing. Additionally, I believe that, through the ethical principles employed, participants felt safe and comfortable to participate in the study. However, I think it could have been more effective if I had scheduled the individual interviews with the lecturers on days that they were not working, such as Friday afternoons or Saturdays.

### **3.7 Data interpretation**

Data interpretation is the most crucial part of any research project, because it is through data interpretation that people can make sense of what a researcher is trying to say. Data interpretation also answers the proposed research questions (Maree, 2016). Therefore, in this section, I discussed the method I used to interpret the data.

According to Flick (2015), data analysis is an essential part of qualitative research, because it helps researchers to discover the set objectives for a research project. I, however, prefer to use the term data interpretation, because, in my study, the aim is not to analyse but rather to interpret and construct our stories in terms of the phenomenon at hand. Flick (2015) states that, when we engage in qualitative data interpretation, we either do it to decrease the complexity of the data or to expand existing knowledge by writing new texts; in my study, I will use the collected data to create a new story.

Chase (2007) notes that when we interpret data in collaborative biographies, we focus on individuals' specific lives and how they are lived. This means that when data is interpreted through collaborative analysis, the researcher and participants explore the experiences as they were lived. In this study, we shared certain events of our lives as they were lived by means of journal writing and interviews. The stories were interpreted as we shared our narratives collectively, and we tried to create an autobiography that could assist us in answering the proposed research questions. I subsequently looked at the autobiography and how it relates to the research questions by using the theoretical framework as a lens to guide me.

One of the most crucial aspects that the I carefully considered was my position and reflectivity when interpreting data. According to Jonsen, Butler, Makela, Piekkari, Drongendijk, Luring, Lervik, Puhlberg, Vodosek and Zandre (2012) reflectivity in collaborative research is when the researcher observes their own actions and thoughts in the collaborative process. Thus, in my study I made careful consideration of how my own actions and thoughts may influence the writing

process. Being reflective when writing the autobiography also assisted me in see my position and the relevance of my own experiences and those of the participants.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Free State (see Addendum B). I also ensured that my research did not cause harm to the participants and that I could establish trustworthiness in my study.

Nieuwenhuis (in Maree, 2016:123) asserts that, in qualitative research, we need to ensure that there is trustworthiness in the data and how it is interpreted. In my study, trustworthiness was established by using what Maree (2016) calls member checks, where the participants verify the data and findings of a study. Member checks were possible in my research, because we followed a collaborative interpretation approach, where all participants validated the data through sharing our narratives and interpreting how the stories were represented. Murphy (2007), as cited in Chase (20:624), states that in order to establish trustworthiness, narrative researchers need participants' consent in how their stories are presented.

Clandinin and Murphy (2007, cited in Chase, 2007:624) state that, in social justice research, participants should be allowed to be part of the data interpretation, as it breaks down the hierarchies of inequality that exist in other research methods. Moreover, I believe that when we engage participants in narrative discourse, we provide them with an opportunity to see how their narratives will be presented.

Nieuwenhuis (2016) states that, when working collaboratively, participants can access the transcripts and verify their stories as they are represented. According to Maree (2016:40), another way of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative study is through the personal and critical involvement of participants as they respond to the research questions. This is what I believe transpired in my research, because participants were guided by questions that I developed based on the proposed research questions.

Moreover, Nieuwenhuis (2016) explains that for trustworthiness to be possible, a qualitative researcher needs to be honest about the role they play in a study to avoid any form of bias. Hence, in my research, I explained my role as a participant and I also informed the other participants. Creswell (2013) asserts that, in qualitative research, researchers need to declare if there is any bias and how their contribution to the study may influence the findings. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) agree that for ethics to be valid in narrative studies, the researcher has to narrate their own story and link it to the stories of the participants through written and shared research texts. This means that the researcher needs to determine how their personal stories relate to the participants' stories through collaborative narratives. Additionally, I received permission for the study from the Department of Higher Education and Training, as well as the college where the study was conducted (see Addendum C).

In terms of voluntary participation, the participants signed informed consent (see Addendum D) documentation that highlighted the primary purpose of the study. This is kept as evidence that participants agreed to participate voluntarily.

As previously mentioned, there were presumed emotional discomforts that were expected due to the nature of my study. However, to alleviate these anticipated emotional discomforts, I employed what Pulcini (2016) terms “ethics of care”. According to Pulcini (2016), ethics of care in research is when participants and researchers enter into a relationship characterised by empathy and compassion, which Pulcini (2016:53) defines as the ability to feel for the other person. Tracy (2010:847) concurs that ethics of care is when researchers have a caring relationship with their participants. This is what transpired, because, through our collaborative work, we were able to form compassionate relationships, especially between the students. Tracy (2010) agrees that these relationships are vital and can be established through the individual interviews and collaborative group interviews. Additionally, I appointed a qualified counsellor to deal with emotional discomforts (see Addendum E) and participants were informed about this when they signed the consent forms.

For the sake of anonymity, pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities. For added confidentiality, the collected narratives (written and verbal) are kept on a password-protected computer that is accessed only by the researcher. The findings will be submitted as part of the UFS's requirements for the researcher to obtain the qualification at hand and once the researcher has received marks and reports from examiners the data will be destroyed by deleting the voice recording and shredding the written journal data.

### **3.9 Summary**

In conclusion, I adopted a qualitative research method as the central research design for my study. Because of the objective and nature of this study, I found the transformative paradigm to be the best approach, as the main aim of this study was to work towards social justice. I also used three research methodologies, namely narratives, collective biography and collaborative autobiography. Through the narrative, participants were able to share the stories of their experiences of social justice as students and lecturers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Through journal entries, participants were able to write their own stories, and together we went through the stories to see how they relate. Subsequently, we engaged in a collaborative conversation where we shared the data verbally with each other in an attempt to answer the proposed research questions and create an autobiography.

Participants in this study were selected purposively, because they met the determined criteria. The participants in the study were students and lecturers at the Motheo TVET College. As the principal researcher I was also a participant; hence, we used collective methods of research.

The data in the study was interpreted by using collaborative analysis, as it was shared verbally through interviews. The interpretation was shaped by an autobiography I wrote by using all the participants' biographies and focusing on the theoretical framework as a guide to answer the research questions.

I ensured that the necessary ethical considerations were taken into account and that all relevant stakeholders approved the study. This included approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State as well as approval from the Department of Higher Education and Training and the specific college where the study took place. Because of the nature of my research, I also appointed a registered counsellor to offer emotional support, should participants experience any emotional discomfort.

The next chapter is the autobiography I created by using participants' biographies. The autobiography was guided by what participants shared in their narratives. I used the written (journals) and verbal (interviews) work to create a new story that might assist us in answering the research questions.

## **Chapter 4. Narratives**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I use the data shared by participants through journal entries, as well as verbal data from students' group and individual interviews to create a new, single narrative based on different themes. The themes I developed using the theoretical framework as a lens to shape how the stories relates to emotions and social justice. I present the data in the form of dialogues between participants, whom I refer to here as characters. Moreover, some of the characters that emerge in the narratives were not participants in this study, but rather part of the participants' stories. Watson (2011) supports this choice by highlighting that when researchers write using fictional writing, they can create characters as long as the created characters contributes to the data. The narrative is based on the stories of eight people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their experiences of studying or working at a TVET college in South Africa. In the following section, I describe each character/participant.

### **4.2 Participants/characters**

The names listed are not the participants' real names.

- ✓ Lily is a 26-year-old female who is busy with her final year of study for a pre-matric programme at a TVET college. She is originally from Hoopstad in the Free State, but currently lives in Bloemfontein for her studies. Lily comes from a lower socio-economic family.
- ✓ Dina, a student at a TVET college, comes from a disadvantaged family. She relies on funding from NSFAS and she is in her final year of study.
- ✓ Nandi is a young adult who hails from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, and she came to Bloemfontein to further her studies at a TVET college. In

her family, they depend on their mother, and she classifies her family as poor.

- ✓ Nicole is a young adult studying at a TVET college. She is a NSFAS beneficiary, because she comes from a middle-class family in which her dad is the sole breadwinner.
- ✓ Daphney is a lecturer in computer-related subjects at a TVET college. She followed her dream of becoming an artist; however, due to financial constraints, she had to give up on her dream and pursue a career that she believed would afford her a job (teaching).
- ✓ Catherine is a lecturer at a TVET college. She worked as a waitress during her years at university to earn money while she studied.
- ✓ Odette is a lecturer at a TVET college. Her father raised her alone as her mom passed away when she was still very young. She was a NSFAS beneficiary when she was a student.
- ✓ Daniel is a male lecturer who identifies as LGBTQI+. He comes from a middle-class family in which his father was the sole breadwinner.
- ✓ Ms Peggy, Mrs Linda, and Mr A are lecturers at the TVET college where the four students are enrolled. They were not part of the study, but the students shared experiences they had encountered with them.

### **4.3 Our circumstances, our lives: A narrative**

As mentioned, the participants were asked to write in their journals, after which they were invited to an individual interview. Subsequently, all participants were invited to a group interview where they shared their narratives to create a collaborative story. The story was titled “Our Circumstances, our lives” and I arrange the story by using the following headings: Best teachers, parents in our classrooms, difficult days, emotional experiences and positive values.

### 4.3.1 Part 1: Best teachers

One cold morning, Nicole, Dina and Nandi passed by Mr A as they were going to class. Mr A cheerfully greeted Nicole with a friendly, welcoming smile.

**Nicole:** Mr A is my favourite lecturer. When I came to college, he made me feel safe, accepted and welcomed. From the day he started teaching, I felt comfortable in his class. He is still doing that. He is the best lecturer I have ever had, and I feel blessed because not all of the lectures are like him.

Dina smiled, with so much excitement in her eyes.

**Dina:** I guess he is like Mrs Linda. I met her when I first enrolled at the college, and from that time, I loved her. She is like my second mother. Whenever I need to talk about anything, and whenever I feel down, I know that she will always make time to listen to me. She is the best lecturer for all her students, and she always tells us to believe in ourselves. I remember at some point I wanted to drop out because of the circumstances at home; however, through the love, encouragement and kindness I received from Mrs Linda, I knew giving up was not the right choice.

Nandi listened to Dina and thought of Ms Peggy.

**Nandi:** The best lecturer for me is Ms Peggy; she gave me hope by always telling us students in her classroom that we must accept our situations because we can learn from them. When she gave us this lecture on goal setting, I had lost hope in my studies and also lost confidence in myself. However, Ms Peggy always told us that if we give up on our studies, we will not reap anything, but if we persevered, we would eventually become successful in life. I was motivated to continue with my studies, and it boosted my self-confidence.

The three friends walked on in silence. Thinking about the positive and parental roles that lecturers had played in their lives.

### 4.3.2 Part 2: Parents in our classrooms

Daniel, Daphney and Odette are colleagues. They were having a discussion over coffee in the staff room about their teaching practice and their students.

**Daniel:** Sometimes, I can see myself in the students. We share so many experiences, but I am hesitant to tell students too much about myself. How do you feel about that?

**Daphney:** Honestly, I do not see anything wrong with that because I always encourage my students and tell them that their circumstances must not define their success, and the fact that they come from poverty-stricken families should motivate them enough to study to come out of the situation. I always tell them that as their lecturer, I come from a poor background family; however, I always believed in myself. This has somehow shaped how the students perceive me in the classroom. Some of the students even tell me that I am like more of a mother figure to them than a lecturer.

Odette, listening attentively to Daniel and Daphney, thought of an encounter she experienced with students in her class.

**Odette:** Well, with me, once upon a time during one of my periods, I decided to ask students a personal question as to why they chose to enrol at a TVET college. Some of the students indicated that they could not afford to go to university. In contrast, others reported they needed to get employed as soon as possible so that they can provide for their families. Some of the students were surprised that their peers come from poor families, because they probably were not aware. Looking at their faces I could tell that they were judging each other and that intrigued my interest in the students' personal experiences so that I can better understand conditions of those that needed the transformation. I felt like that because I was in a multiracial school where most of the kids were rich, and my family was average, and in most cases, I felt like an outsider like the other students in my classroom. This incident changed my relationship with my students. After that, I would always

reach out to colleagues for guidance on how to assist students, but when it was not possible to help, I felt sad, guilty and regretful. I felt like I was failing my students.

While the three lecturers were engaging in the conversation, Catherine, their colleague, arrived in the staff room while Odette was talking. The conversation was very interesting and Catherine decided to listen and join in.

**Catherine:** It is interesting how we become mother figures to our students, and I thank my belief system, because, as a Christian, I live by principles of care and empathy towards others. My students' parents always tell me that their children describe me as a good listener and that I always encourage students to do better irrespective of their circumstances. I honestly believe I do this by sharing my life story with my students. One would swear that I am related to all my students because they know most of my life story. I share my story with my students because it pains me to see those underprivileged suffering, as I can relate. I sometimes try to assist them by using my own money for their basic needs, such as food and toiletries.

From these conversations, the four lecturers reflected back on their experiences with students in the classroom as well as their experiences as students in the past. This made some of them engage more with students in order to understand what they go through on day-to-day basis.

### **4.3.3 Part 3: Difficult days**

Just after the tea break, as Daniel was approaching his class, he met Dina, Nicole, and Lily engaging in a rather deep conversation. Being the concerned lecturer he is, he approached the learners and joined in their conversation.

**Dina:** You know our experiences here at the college are different; some people have positive experiences, while some of us have negative experiences. I remember one day I needed assistance from one of the lecturers at the college

and she embarrassed me so much by shouting at and scolding me, asking me if I even knew her and why am I even talking to her. She was very rude to me, and she treated me wrong. I even asked myself why she was treating me like that, was it because I am poor and she is rich, what it is because she thinks or she is better than me because of her position. When the lecturer shouted at me, I felt belittled and embarrassed. I felt like I was not at the right space because, as a parent, I was expecting her to treat me with respect so that I can respect her back.

Tears started flowing from Dina's eyes. One could tell that she was very disappointed and angry by the treatment she received from the lecturer.

While Dina was still trying to control her emotions, Nicole and Lily expressed their shock over the degrading treatment she had received.

From listening to Dina and seeing how angry and sad she was, Nicole remembered an incident that she thought could have been prevented if she had received her NSFAS allowances.

**Nicole:** Yoh!! That must have been awful, and our circumstances always put us in such desperate situations. I remember one day when I was hitchhiking back to Kroonstad as I did not have accommodation in Bloemfontein. I got a lift from some male; he offered to buy me food and to top it all off, I also did not have enough money for transport. I accepted the food offer, and I also explained to him that I did not have enough money for transportation as I had to come to school to write an exam. He agreed to assist me in that regard, but as the trip continued, he started inappropriately touching me. This hurts me so much, and I started questioning God as to why all of that was happening to me. I even became suicidal because this did not occur just once with one guy, but it happened several times with different guys. I was really out of options, and had to hitchhike, as I sometimes needed to come to the college for assignments, tests and exams.

Nicole's face became pale and red as she shared her story. One could tell that she was angry and emotional because of this incident.

**Dina:** That is very sad, and unfortunately with the struggles from NSAFS, I do not see our situation becoming better. I once attended a meeting at the college, whereby one of the officials who deals with bursaries was addressing our needs as students; however, this meeting was not beneficial to me because the official did not allow us to express ourselves. The college official was unfair because he never listened to anything that we said. So how do they expect us to believe that education is for free for people like us?

As the other students shared the horrific experiences they went through, Lily remembered what she went through. She remembered that it was terrible but that a guardian angel came to her rescue.

**Lily:** True, because one of the challenges that we experience as students is the lack of support from people in the college. I remember I had to open a bank account to receive my NSFAS allowances. The banking institution required an official letter from the college. When I went to ask for a letter at the college, the person who was assisting me refused to give me the letter; however, my friend, who also had to get the same letter was assisted. I felt discriminated against and felt like the clerk assisting me treated me like that because I was not wearing fancy clothes like my friend. Although the situation was terrifying and hurtful, I managed to receive the letter with assistance from one of my lecturers who understood my situation very well.

As Lily, Dina and Nicole shared these terrible incidents that happened to them, Daniel, as a lecturer, found it appropriate to share his own experience to assure the students that he went through something similar but he never lost hope.

**Daniel:** Girls, what happened to you is sad, indeed; however, never allow such situations to discourage you. I remember one night when I was still a student; I had to complete an assignment without a computer or a laptop at my private accommodation. I had to use computers at the university's computer labs. Around 10 pm that night, I left the computer laboratory to walk to the area where I stayed. As I was walking, I passed a very 'funny' man sitting near the bush just outside

campus. My gut feelings made me suspicious of the man, and shockingly as I turned, the man was following me. I increased my walking pace and eventually started running, and the man also began to run after me till I was so tired. Fortunately, there was a petrol station that is just close to campus, and I then decided to run to the station to ask for help. I was terrified, and as a gay man, with all the corrective crimes committed in the country, I felt so scared and broke into tears. When I arrived at the communal house, I burst into tears and started questioning the universe. I thought to myself if I was rich, I could afford a laptop or a car and this could not have happened to me? I still have pictures of this event in my mind, and I always imagine what if the worst happened that night.

**Lily:** Mr Daniel has a point, sometimes we should not give up, and through the support that we receive from lecturers like Mr Daniel and others, we can encounter positive experiences at the college. I am saying this because some of the lecturers assisted me financially and emotionally when I did not have any means of survival. I do not think I was going to survive until my last year of study without the assistance of those lecturers.

Daniel informed the three students that their lunch break was over and they had to go back to class.

#### **4.3.4 Part 4: Emotional experiences**

Daniel was very intrigued by the conversations he had with his colleagues and the students. He then decided to use his periods to have a discussion with students about their experiences and how they want to be treated at the college.

Nicole volunteered to share her story.

**Nicole:** Sometimes, I come to the college hungry; however, I always try to maintain a positive attitude. It feels like I am being punished because some people expect me to survive and function optimally irrespective of my situation. I am demoralised

because I feel like I am struggling more as I have to pay my school fees before the end of this year to get my level 4 certificate.

**Dina:** I feel frustrated and annoyed because whenever I try to get assistance from the college and NSFAS. Both the college and NSFAS officials tend to play the blaming game, whereby NSFAS claims that the college allocates the allowances to students. Yet, college officials argue that NSFAS is responsible for allocating funds.

**Nandi:** I am forever running around to enquire at the student support centre, but I never get any valid response; the only answer I get from the officials at the student support centre is that I must call NSFAS.

**Nicole:** I gave up hope on NSFAS a long time ago because the only thing that I get from them is becoming angrier and frustrated.

**Dina:** I am so annoyed and frustrated by all this going up and down without assistance, and this makes me develop feelings of blame, hopelessness and anger because I sometimes think that if I worked hard in high school I was not going to come to a college, but I will be at university where there is proper funding and students do not struggle from these issues, some of my friends there do not struggle like us with funds from NSFAS. I feel like our lecturers are not interested in our lives; they just focus on our passing, yet we go through so much. If more lecturers were dedicated to their jobs as educators and not only as a job, they would be able to become parents in their classrooms.

The discussion became intense as students shared their emotions about injustices at the college. As some of them shared their stories and became emotional, Daniel detected that some students expected parental love, hope, compassion and empathy from them as lecturers.

#### **4.3.5 Part 5: Positive values**

As the conversation in Daniel's class continued, Daniel asked the students what an ideal and safe learning environment should look like.

**Lily:** It must be an environment that supports us as students; for example, here at the college, we have some lecturers who support us academically and personally. My years at college have been better in terms of my studies and career choice, thus I am now doing my final year. This was because the majority of my lecturers understood my situation and were sympathetic enough. I never felt ill-treated or different in the classroom, because most of my lectures were open-minded and accommodated all our individual needs. This made me feel safe and comfortable around them, to such an extent that I was able to speak to them when I had problems.

**Dina:** Some lecturers do not respect us as students, and I think if they try to understand what we go through every day and learn from others on how to treat us, all this disrespect and rudeness will not take place. For instance, Mrs Linda, who is my favourite lecturer, made me feel comfortable and safe in her classroom, and I have never felt like an outsider. Mrs Linda treated me with respect and helped me develop the confidence to deal with the self-doubt I had. Mrs Linda also taught us to respect one another and accept one another irrespective of anything because we are different, and that is for a reason.

Few of the students nodded their heads in agreement with what Dina was saying about lecturers not respecting them.

**Lily:** Well, not all lecturers are like Mr A, Mrs Linda, and Ms Peggy. In some situations, us as students, we motivate ourselves because of our home circumstances. Because of the situation at home making me angry, I have always told myself that I would work hard and get out of poverty. I believe in myself and my potential that I will someday become successful despite where I come from.

As Lily shared these motivating words, some students agreed with her that they need self-motivation because they want to come out of poverty.

**Nicole:** For colleges to be safe spaces, lecturers need to ensure that, as students, we feel welcomed, loved and appreciated, they need to ensure that we are all treated the same. I wish that colleges were accommodating us as underprivileged students. I believe things could be different, and we could see things more brightly and improve our learning. I think this can be done by having special periods at least twice a week where students are encouraged to talk out their problems and ideas with their lecturers so that lecturers can find solutions to their problems.

Nandi said this passionately.

**Dina:** We are human beings who experience emotions, and we experience different kinds of situations, because everyone has a different background. These experiences end up shaping the learner. Rather than treating us like technology that is supposed to give good results, it will be a good thing if they consider our emotions. For colleges to become safe spaces, we as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds should be allowed to express our feelings/emotions in terms of social factors that affect us. Like Nicole said, this can be done through a dialogue whereby even lecturers will take part in the discussion for them to be aware of students' socio-economic backgrounds. We need services such as counselling whereby, as students, we can talk about our problems.

**Daniel:** There are counselling services offered through career guidance officers at the student support centre, Dina.

Dina was surprised by what Daniel just shared with them.

**Dina:** I am not even aware of such a service, and I also think most of us are not, because all the time we go to the student support centre because of NSFAS issues, and in most cases, we are chased away.

**Nandi:** I think some lecturers are doing very well in being compassionate and positive towards us as students; these acts motivate me to become better and well educated. I also believe that we can do more to better our college, and this must involve all stakeholders engaging with us as students to understand what we go through on a daily basis. I believe that, as students, we can become motivated to achieve more.

After the discussion, Daniel left the students in his classroom to allow another lecturer to teach the students as his period was finished. When he arrived in the staff room, he found Catherine and Odette sitting there.

**Daniel:** The discussion that I just had with the students now made me view teaching with another lens. Their stories have motivated me to work harder to better their conditions.

Daniel smiled as he shared this with his colleagues.

**Catherine:** That is very good Daniel; the way we treat students in our classrooms, especially those that are underprivileged, plays a vital role in how they learn and who they become.

**Daniel:** I think we need to reflect on our past experiences and see what role they play in our classrooms. Through this reflective process, we can love and be kind and compassionate towards students, irrespective of their backgrounds. I think this can help us create social justice in our classrooms.

As Daniel spoke of being reflective, Odette reflected back to her years as a student and what made student life easy for her.

**Odette:** I honestly think if the college can encourage students to establish a student support organisation, students can become encouraged to reach their full potential through the support they can receive from these bodies. I say this because when I was a student at university, I was motivated by some of the stories that I heard through dialogues when one of the student organisations invited their

alumni members to come and encourage us. Some of these alumni come from the same backgrounds as our students, and today they are well-educated people with prestigious job titles. In this organisation we were also given a platform to raise our concerns as students, and that empowered us.

**Daniel:** These discussions have changed the way I approached my teaching. When I started teaching, I always thought that teaching is just about transferring knowledge from the teacher to the learner; however, as I engaged with the students, I realised that teaching comes with the responsibility of being a parent. As a former university undergraduate student, I thought working in a college is the same as university, where lecturers were more focused on transferring knowledge to the students and did not focus on students' personal experiences. However, being a lecturer at a TVET college, I realised that the way we treat students plays a huge role in their development as human beings.

Daniel also reflected on how he viewed teaching at an institution of higher learning.

**Catherine:** Indeed, when I started working here, I realised that I was teaching students from the same family backgrounds as me, which has shaped how I treat my students. I can become compassionate and empathetic towards them because I am familiar with what they go through.

Catherine thought of herself as a student who had to find means to survive at a university.

## **4.4 Summary**

From the narratives I detect certain qualities that students believe makes a great lecturer. From the conversation between Nicole, Dina and Nandi, we learn that students expect lecturers to become parents to create better conditions for them at the college. Furthermore, from the discussion the lectures had in the staffroom, we learn that who and what they are play a significant role in how they treat learners in their classrooms. For example, Daniel's past experiences somehow

motivated him better to understand the conditions of students in his class. Additionally, narrative reveals that some of the students have encountered terrible events that they believe happened to them because of their circumstances. In some of these events, the students indicated that, as much as the situation was terrible, they took what happened as driving forces for them to better their lives. Moreover, from the narrative we learn that students experience certain emotions due to these awful events. These feelings include emotions such as anger, frustration and sadness. However, we again learn that through certain positive values that some of the lecturers had and portrayed towards students, they were motivated to do better and work towards bettering their lives. In the next chapter, I use this narrative to answer the proposed research questions and I focus on the theoretical framework as a tool to assist us in understanding the role that is played by emotional experiences towards the creation of social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

## **Chapter 5. Narrative interpretation**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, I presented a collective biography of eight people. I will use the collective biography to answer the proposed research questions indicated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.3). Before attempting to answer the research questions, I will first reflect on the role played by the adopted theoretical framework.

### **5.2 Critical emotional praxis**

As Zembylas (2015) indicated, critical emotional praxis is a practice that focuses on understanding the role that emotions play in education when we engage in attempts to promote social justice. Therefore, I find it vital to indicate the emotions that I focused on in the literature and data. The emotions are hope, parental love, compassion, moral anger, and sadness/hurt. In the next section, I will highlight how each of these emotions came out in the narratives and attempt to link these emotions to the proposed research questions.

Zembylas (2015) and Naidoo (2016) indicate that emotions play an important role in working towards social justice. I saw evidence of this in part two (see 4.3.2) of the biographies where Odette indicated that, at first, she did not allow her emotions to be visible to students in her classroom, but in one incident she expressed her feelings in regard to the discrimination that some students in her classroom encountered. After this incident, Odette saw that she encouraged a culture where students could be expressive with their emotions in the classroom and she always tried to assist them in bettering their lives. Additionally, we also see the relevance of emotions within education from my story as Daniel. I shared with my colleagues that I did not want to become vulnerable to my students by sharing my personal experiences with them (see 4.3.2); however, as I engaged more with my students, I was able to share my personal experiences with them and that gave the students a voice to become expressive as well (see 4.3.3, 4.3.4 and 4.3.5). From these two

occurrences, we can see when lecturers share their emotional experiences with students, they are able to create platforms that allow students to be expressive of their own emotions. In the next section, I provide an in-depth discussion of emotional experiences highlighted in the literature, and I discuss how these emotions were revealed in the data.

### **5.2.1 Hope**

In terms of hope, scholars like Zembylas and Chubbuck (2008) emphasise that teachers need to give learners hope for social justice to be possible. In the narrative, I tried to show how can we work towards social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and how that can be achieved by engaging with hope from lecturers.

Hope comes across extraordinarily strong in the dialogue between Nicole, Dina and Nandi (part one, see 4.3.1). Nandi shares in her narrative that, through the hope that Ms Peggy gave her, she managed to accept her circumstances and she felt welcomed at the college. Zembylas (2007) states that when teachers give hope to marginalised learners, they become empowered, which can assist teachers in working towards social justice at educational institutions. Additionally, we also see the theme of hope emerging in the dialogue between Nicole, Dina and Nandi (see 4.3.1). The conversation between the three students shows that the lecturers they met had given them hope, which made them feel welcomed and accepted.

From these conversations it can be seen that there is a possibility for hope to be enhanced among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We also see that students believe that if all lecturers were like Mr A, Mrs Linda and Ms Peggy who gave them hope, their conditions at TVET colleges can improve.

### **5.2.2 Compassion**

Compassion also comes out as one of the emotions that we need to explore, as it appears in most of the students' narratives. For example, if we look at what

Catherine said in part two (see 4.3.2) of the narrative about drawing on her Christian principles to become a compassionate and empathetic lecturer for her students. Therefore, through Catherine's story, we can see that students can become open and expressive about their feelings when lecturers become sympathetic and compassionate.

We also see that lecturers like Mr A, Mrs Linda and Ms Peggy were quite compassionate towards students like Nandi and Nicole. Nicole felt safe and welcomed in Mr A's class, Nandi formed a positive relationship with Ms Peggy, and Dina looked at Mrs Linda as being like her second mother (see 4.3.1). From the way the students engaged with the theme of compassion, we see that students believe that lecturers need to be compassionate and sympathetic towards them so that they can feel a sense of belonging at colleges.

Through the conversations that Nandi, Dina and Nicole had (see 4.3.1) and the conversation between Daniel, Daphney and Odette (see 4.3.2), we learn that students have a desire to feel welcomed and accepted in the classroom. We also find that students believe that their lecturers can create spaces that are welcoming by being compassionate and sympathetic towards them.

From the collective biography, we also see that some characters like Dina, Nicole and Nandi regarded compassion as one of the emotions that can promote social justice. We see this in part five where Nandi and Lily speak of the sympathy and compassion they received from Mr A and Ms Peggy. From this we learn that, for social justice to be possible, students from TVET colleges expect lecturers to be compassionate and sympathetic towards them.

Moreover, Daphney believes that colleges could become environments that uphold the idea of social justice if lecturers are able to put themselves in the students' position and understand what they are going through. She believes that, through these mutual relationships, lecturers can play a role in empowering students to become better. Naidoo (2014) supports this idea that teachers need to become compassionate and sympathetic so that learners can be free and enjoy learning.

Additionally, Smith (2010) maintains that through this mutual relationship there is a critical understanding of emotions, which can lead to the promotion of social justice. Therefore, from the collective biography we learn that students at TVET colleges have a desire to have sympathetic and compassionate relationships with lecturers.

### **5.2.3 Parental love**

In addition to being compassionate and empathetic, we also learn that students expect lecturers to offer them what they describe as parental love. We see this expectation in part five (see 4.3.5) of the narrative where Lily says that for social justice to be possible, lecturers should support them both academically and emotionally. We also come across this relationship in part one (see 4.3.1), where Nandi indicates that she has formed a 'mother-child' relationship with Ms Peggy. Thus, from these two parts of the collective biography, we see that students expect lecturers to act as parents towards them by offering them academic and personal support – and they should be consistent in doing so.

This kind of relationship is not only supported by students, but some lecturers also feel that there is a need for this kind of relationship to be established between lecturers and students. For example, Catherine indicates how she has become a mother figure to her students (see 4.3.2). Naidoo (2014) also maintains that teachers need to establish relationships that are mutual with learners, where they take into consideration learners' personal experiences as if they were their own children.

We see that students also regard parental love as an important emotion that can be used to create spaces that are welcoming to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. For example, in part five (see 4.3.5) Lily says that an ideal, socially just environment is an accommodative one in which lecturers are kind to students. For Dina, an ideal environment is one where lecturers take on the role of being parents to their students. Nicole says it must be an environment where they are appreciated and welcomed. This means that TVET colleges should encourage

lecturers to take on the role of becoming parents to students in their classrooms. Additionally, this might mean that TVET college lecturers should approach teaching as a practice in which they not only transfer knowledge to students, but also provide them with emotional support and care for their needs. In contrast there may be challenges in regard to the kind of relationship that students expect from lecturers because sometimes the schooling system does not allow lecturers to have such relationships with learners. This is cited in the SACE (South African Council of Educators) code of conduct stating that teachers/TVET college lecturers should not have any personal relationship with learners or students (SACE, 2016:3). In contrast this rule by SACE is contradictory to the decolonisation project, as Zembylas (2016) states teachers need to take care of their student's emotions as well as well being in order to decolonise their classrooms and create social justice.

#### **5.2.4 Moral anger**

Another emotion I detected in the narrative is anger. However, for the purpose of this interpretation, I looked at anger as what Zembylas (2007) terms "moral anger". Zembylas (2007) states that anger is not necessarily a negative emotion. In line with that, we see from the collective biography that participants spoke of their anger as a motivating factor that pushed them to become better and change their circumstances. For instance, in my (Daniel) story and Catherine's story, we both used the anger that we experienced in a constructive way. This experience played a major role in how we treat students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in our classrooms. Through this we were able to reflect on our past experiences, which helped us to become advocates of transformation for our students.

Anger also comes up in the conversation I had with the students. We see this in part three (see 4.3.5), where Nicole expressed feelings of anger because of the terrible incident that happened to her due to her travelling home every day because of accommodation allowances not being paid by NSFAS. In the same part, we also become aware of the feelings of anger and embarrassment that Dina expressed

because of the manner in which a lecturer treated her when she needed assistance at the college (see 4.3.5). Through my story and Catherine's story we become aware that sometimes when people experience anger, it can motivate them to work towards social change, especially if they relate to injustices that occur in their spaces. For example, through the anger that we previously experienced as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, we were motivated to work towards change for students in our class rooms from similar backgrounds. This idea is supported by Zembylas (2007) as he maintains that anger should be regarded as a positive emotion that is essential in working towards social justice.

### **5.2.5 Hurt**

Being hurt is another emotion that I focused on in the literature review and interpretation of the data. I reflect on hurt/pain in part three (see 4.3.3) of the collective biography where Dina, Nicole, Lily and Daniel share their most painful experiences that they assume occurred because of their socio-economic status. For example, Nicole believes that if she had accommodation allowances from NSFAS, she would not have had to travel daily and consequently would not have become a victim of sexual harassment (see 4.3.3). Additionally, Dina thinks the lecturer who embarrassed her did so because of her socio-economic status, while Lily and I also think that the injustices we experienced as students were because of our socio-economic status, which caused tremendous pain in our lives.

From these hurtful incidents and what the students narrated, we learn that students have a desire for lecturers to consider the pain they have suffered. The students believe that by acknowledging their pain and supporting them emotionally, lecturers can create classrooms where students feel welcomed and accepted. In part five (see 4.3.5) of the collective biography, Dina indicates that lecturers need to understand that students are human beings with emotions. This means that students have a desire for institutions of higher learning to look after their emotional needs as well as their academic needs.

Additionally, in part four (see 4.3.4), Nicole indicates that she is demoralised and hurt. However, she believes that if people, especially lecturers, were to understand the emotions she experiences, many things could improve for her and her peers. From this we learn that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have a real desire for lecturers to understand the pain they experience daily.

In part three (see 4.3.3) we see that the pain Lily experienced was alleviated when one of her lecturers who understood her situation had assisted her. Lily indicates that she believes that the lecturer had assisted her because she knew her situation. From what Lily shared, we see that students believe that when lecturers are aware of their circumstances, they can assist them in alleviating some of the problems they encounter. Therefore, it is very important for lecturers and other stakeholders at TVET colleges to listen to students and give them a platform where they can share their experiences in order to understand the pain that they go through.

From the data, and by engaging with the collective biography, we learn that through an expression of emotions such as hope, love and compassion, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges expressed their desire for an ideal learning environment that gives them a sense of belonging. We also see through the pain that Nicole, Lily and Dina experienced, and I (Daniel) also reflected on past painful experiences, which made me develop a need to work towards social change for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, we learn that when students experience anger, they can use that anger as motivation to improve their situation. Lastly, we learn that students believe that when lecturers understand their pain, they might be able to create more welcoming classroom environments.

### **5.3 The influence of emotions on decolonised spaces**

In the literature review, I cited Mbembe (2016:30) on what a decolonised South African higher education space might look like:

“This is my home. I am not an outsider here. I do not have to beg or to apologize to be here. I belong here”

From these words, it becomes clear that when an institution is decolonised, it provides students with a sense of belonging. Hence, in this section I will highlight practices that students and lecturers alluded to in terms of decolonisation at TVET colleges.

Looking at the quote from Mbembe (2016), I realise the significance of the desire that the students expressed in the collective biography of being provided with a sense of belonging. I believe it is important because when educational institutions make students feel at home it is possible for such institutions to become decolonised.

Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) state that for decolonisation to be possible, teachers need to create classroom spaces that provide a sense of belonging to all learners, which can be done by allowing learners to express their emotions. This is seen in part four of the narrative (see 4.3.4), where Dina states that their feelings as students should be taken into consideration. Additionally, Nicole indicates in part five (see 4.3.5) that it is important for them as students to be given an opportunity to speak for themselves about issues that affect them. Through what the two students shared, we learn that when we aim at decolonising higher education spaces, we need to take into consideration the voices of students regarding issues that affect them, and we should involve them in decisions about these issues. This means that students' voices and emotions should be regarded as vital tools that can bring about decolonisation at TVET colleges. This is what I tried to achieve by following research methods that gave students and lecturers a platform to work together in expressing themselves regarding issues that affect students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges.

Through these methods, we were able to challenge hierarchies that exist within education, where students' voices do not matter and decisions are always made by lecturers and other stakeholders (Heleta 2016; Mbembe, 2016). In my study,

we engaged in collaborative work where everyone could be expressive about issues that affect them, especially students regarding their expectations of lecturers at TVET colleges. The hierarchies mentioned above are indicated in part two (4.3.2) of the collective biography, where I shared that I was a bit hesitant to share my personal experiences with the students, because I did not want to become vulnerable (see 4.3.2). Through sharing my sentiments with colleagues, I learned that my colleague, Daphney, shares her personal stories with her students, which has influenced how the students perceive her – as a parental figure and not just as a lecturer (see 4.3.5). Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) supports the idea that when teachers engage in a decolonisation project, they should always look for experiences from their own lives that are similar to those of the students. This is one of the critical elements that we picked up in the narratives, where myself (Daniel), Catherine and Odette indicate that due to our past emotional experiences, we felt the need to become agents of change within our teaching space (TVET college), because we could relate to the experiences of students (see 4.3.5). This means that when lectures work towards decolonisation at TVET colleges, they need to reflect on their past experiences and determine how those experiences shape their teaching practice and affect the manner in which they treat their students.

Moreover, in part five (4.3.5) of the narrative, through the conversation with Nandi, Nicole and Dina, we grasp that by being reflective, lecturers can create safe spaces where students are able to express their feelings and where their voices can be heard. Additionally, from Daphney, Odette and Catherine we discover that when teachers share their experiences and reflect on their past, students become comfortable in their classrooms and develop a mutually open relationship with lecturers.

From my story, I also learned that by becoming emotionally expressive in the classroom, one's way of thinking can change. I shared in my narrative that my view of teaching changed when I engaged more with students. I learned that in some cases students expect lecturers to become like parents to them.

In conclusion, it emerged from the narratives that students see a decolonised environment as one that gives them a sense of belonging. The students believe that lecturers could create this environment by creating platforms where their voices can be heard about issues that affect them. In addition, the lecturers believe that through reflecting on past experiences that might be similar to students' experiences, they can give students a sense of belonging, because they can develop the child-parent relationship that some students desire.

## **5.4 Social justice and learning motivation**

It becomes clear in the collective biography that social justice has a direct link to learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We detect this in Nandi's story, where students like Nandi believe that social justice is created through lecturers creating environments that are welcoming and accommodating. By lecturers creating the environment that Nandi referred to above, she was motivated to do well academically so that she could get out of poverty. Nandi illustrates this type of environment in part one (see 4.3.1) of the collective biography where she indicates that Ms Peggy gave her an opportunity to express her feelings, which she believes assisted her in developing hope and confidence (see 4.3.4). This also comes up in Dina's story (see 4.3.5), where Dina indicates that, through the love, kindness and support she received from Mrs Linda, she became motivated to do better academically, irrespective of her socio-economic background. Moreover, Nicole speaks highly of Mr A who she said was not just a teacher, but also someone who always made her feel like she belongs at the college. She believes that most students could become motivated if they were made to feel like they belonged (see 4.3.4). Looking at what Dina shared in part one regarding Mrs Linda, we learn that when lecturers allow students to be expressive, they can accommodate and welcome all students, which the students in the narrative regarded as social justice. The students further believed that through social justice practices, they can be motivated to learn. Smith (2010)

agrees that we need to practice social justice strategies so that we can improve learners' motivation, especially learners who are marginalised.

However, in the stories of Dina and Nicole, we become aware that the challenges they experienced still had a tremendously negative effect on their learning motivation, and they also indicated that the situation made them angry and sad. In part four of the narrative, Nicole indicates that she believes that if all lecturers created a space for them as students to be expressive, like Mr A, they might be more motivated to learn (see 4.3.4). In contrast, Lily indicates that the anger and pain she experienced had motivated her more to achieve academically so that she could get out of poverty (see 4.3.4). From these parts of the collective biography, we learn that sadness and anger can also be motivating forces that can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to develop learning motivation and improve academically.

Furthermore, we also see from the stories of Nicole, Dina, Lily and Nandi in part five that through hope, compassion and love from their lecturers, they can be strong and work hard, irrespective of their circumstances (see 4.3.5). This means that these students were able to develop learning motivation through the emotional openness portrayed by lecturers. For example, Lily indicates that, without the assistance and hope she was given by some of her lecturers, she does not think she would have been where she currently is (exiting level). Here we learn that, through emotional practices such as hope, love and compassion, lecturers can assist students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to develop learning motivation. Bozalek et al. (2013) maintain that teachers need to give learners hope in order to achieve social justice and develop learning motivation.

We also discover from part two (4.3.2) of the narrative that when lecturers share their own experiences with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students tend to become more motivated because they believe that if lecturers could manage to come out of unfavourable circumstances that they can too. For example, Daphney shares in part two (4.3.2) that telling her students about her

personal experiences of growing up in a lower socio-economic family has changed how they view her (the students regard her as good teacher who listens to their problems; see 4.3.2). This means that by sharing our experiences, we can create a platform where students perceive us as parents, which can have a positive effect on their learning motivation.

In part one and part five of the collective biography, we learn that students' learning motivation can be determined by the kinds of environments that we create as lecturers. Students in part one of the narrative describe this environment as one that is welcoming to and accepting of all students. In part five, they describe the ideal environment as one that allows them to express their emotions and raise their voices about issues that affect them.

In terms of enhancing learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, we become aware that environments that provide them with a sense of belonging would motivate them to do well academically. Additionally, we also learn that students have a desire for lecturers to support them emotionally so that they can become motivated to do well academically and rise above their current circumstances. However, most of the participants did not narrate relevant information to learning motivation and this is probably because participants focused more on emotional experiences and social justice.

## **5.5 Summary**

From the literature (Chapter 2, Section 2.1) we learn that through critical emotional praxis we can use emotional experiences to work towards social justice at educational institutions. We also discover in the narrative analysis that students believe that lecturers could work towards social justice if they engage in discourses that are based on understanding the emotional experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We also learn that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds believe that through emotions such hope, love, compassion and empathy, lecturers can create spaces that are welcoming where

students feel accepted. Through interpretation of the data, we can see that both students and lecturers at TVET colleges consider as socially just environment to be one that is welcoming to all students, and that it is important for TVET colleges to create such environment. Additionally, lecturers believe that through the anger and pain they experienced in their past they can become agents of change for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges. Furthermore, we also see that, in some cases, students use their anger and pain as a motivating force to do better academically. Additionally, we also discover that students and lecturers believe that by understanding one another's emotional experiences we can create platforms where students are able to express their emotions and have their voices heard, and through this engagement students and lecturers can work together towards decolonisation at TVET colleges. Thus, the collaborative methods in my study were vital because they allowed lecturers and students to work together in creating emotionally supportive spaces at TVET colleges for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, through this interpretation, we also learn that students feel more motivated to learn when learning environments are welcoming and accommodating. In the next chapter, I will provide a conclusion and summary of the study as well as recommendations for TVET colleges in working towards social justice, decolonisation and the development of learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

In this study, I found that emotional praxis plays an important role in the promotion of social justice and the development of learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges. The research has revealed that through social justice practices, TVET colleges can become decolonised by creating a platform for students to raise their voices about issues that affect them and allow them to be part of decision-making on those issues. Additionally, through the literature review, I detected that emotional experiences are important when engaging in issues of social justice. I also learned that it is important for teachers to understand the emotional experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and allow them to discuss the challenges they face. Through the narrative interpretation, the following conclusions have been reached.

#### **6.1.1 Emotional praxis plays a huge role in promoting social justice**

In the literature review, I learned that emotional praxis is a practice that allows for a critical understanding of emotional experiences in an attempt to promote social justice. I used critical emotional praxis as framework in answering the proposed research questions. From the data, I also realised that lecturers can attempt to promote social justice by understanding the emotions experienced by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, I learned that by providing emotional support to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, lecturers can give these students a sense of belonging in their classrooms.

#### **6.1.2 Working collaboratively towards social justice is vital**

One of the trends evident in the narratives is that most students experienced emotional pain due to their socio-economic status. As a lecturer at the same college they attend, I was not even aware that some of the students go through so

much pain just to better their lives, and this realisation triggered certain emotions in me as a lecturer. As Nicole shared her story, I felt sorry for her, I felt like there was more that I could have done if I knew about her situation. From the narratives and the literature, it became clear that as lecturers at TVET colleges we need to understand the emotions that students experience every day in order to help them transform their lives. Thus, it is vital to allow them to express their emotions and create platforms for their voices to be heard.

Another important aspect that stood out for me is the collaborative research methods that I used in my study. Through these collaborative methods, we learned that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds need platforms where their voices are heard and they desire influence over decisions that are made about issues that affect them.

### **6.1.3 Social justice is still lacking at TVET colleges**

The narratives provided a clear picture that more still needs to be done to better the experiences of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges. Through this study, we as lecturers also became more open to the idea of social justice by understanding the place of emotional experiences in higher education, specifically for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, from what the students shared in their narratives, I also learned that students were still not experiencing equal treatment at colleges and some of the students believed that it was because of their socio-economic status. Therefore, I think this study may assist stakeholders in the TVET sector, particularly the Department of Higher Education and Training, in creating social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. As the students shared in the narratives, one issue that affects them tremendously is the lack of financial resources to survive. However, they also indicated that they needed emotional support from all relevant stakeholders in the TVET sector. Therefore, I believe that by sharing what the students said in this study, the DHET and colleges can become aware of what

the students are going through and provide the necessary assistance and emotional support.

I further believe that, through this study, other scholars can see the existing paucity of research studies based on emotions in the field of education, thus allowing for more researchers to engage in similar research projects. Additionally, I also believe that, through this study, other researchers might realise the need to engage with students and lecturers on an emotional level when conducting research studies.

#### **6.1.4 TVET college lecturers are essential in terms of decolonisation**

From the literature review, we also learn that when teachers engage in a decolonisation project, they need to ensure that all learners in their classrooms have a sense of belonging. From the narratives, we learn that some of the lecturers created a sense of belonging for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds by sharing their experiences and, in turn, allowing students to share their own. We also see in the narratives that when lecturers are open with their emotions in the classroom, students can engage with them in conversations that are open, where emotions are taken into consideration. In addition, we discover that when lecturers provide students with a sense of belonging, students become expressive about the issues that affect them at the college. Furthermore, it was also discovered that students find collaboration with lecturers crucial in allowing them to be expressive. Through these practices, students felt that they belonged at the college and that they were accepted by their lecturers.

#### **6.1.5 Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds can be motivated**

Through the narratives, I also discovered that when students feel welcomed and appreciated, and lecturers gave them a sense of belonging in their learning, they can develop learning motivation. Additionally, I learned that students become more motivated when lecturers portray positive emotions such as hope, parental love

and compassion. In terms of this, I learned that students have a desire for lecturers to assume a parental role with them as it motivates them to learn. I also discovered that students believe when their feelings and voices are taken into consideration, they can also become motivated to learn. Additionally, I further realised that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges need lecturers to support them personally and academically. However, in contrast, I discovered that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds can also channel the anger and hurt they have experienced into motivation to rise above their circumstances.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

I arrived at the following recommendations by focusing on the proposed research questions and the narrative interpretation:

- Students' emotional experiences, such as moral anger, pain and sadness should be acknowledged and taken into consideration at TVET colleges.
- Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges have a desire for lecturers to support them emotionally; therefore, lecturers should be encouraged to provide emotional support.
- Lecturers should be encouraged to become advocates of change for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges.
- Lecturers should be encouraged to be involved in collaborative work with students, where students will be allowed to share their emotions and their voices will be heard.
- I also recommend that TVET colleges provide students with platforms that will allow them to engage in conversations where they are able to express their emotions and their voices are heard.
- I further suggest that TVET colleges need to create awareness of emotional support services that are offered by the institutions.

In terms of further research, it would be valuable to engage in research projects that are based on emotions, especially in the field of education. I also suggest that researchers engage in future research studies that explore students' opinions as part of decisions that are made about issues that affect them at TVET colleges. Moreover, I encourage other researchers to engage in studies that look at the experiences of students who are NSFAS beneficiaries at TVET colleges in South Africa.

In terms of the limitations of this study, I believe I could have scheduled the individual interviews with the lecturers over weekends so that it did not clash with college working hours. Additionally, I believe that I could have developed questions that were more critically linked to the main themes in the study. However, I learned that through collaborative inquiry as a research method, participants can have a voice and their voices have an influence on how data is interpreted. Through the collaborative work, we were able to see experiences similar to ours from other participants' stories, which assists us in developing different themes that we use to interpret the data. However, the collaborative work also became challenging, because as lecturers we had to allow students access to our personal experiences, which might have made other lecturers uncertain about sharing their personal experiences with students. Moreover, I learned that as a researcher using critical theory and transformative paradigm, I cannot ignore what was shared in the data for the purpose of achieving research objectives, but everything shared is important and should be part of the study. Lastly, I also discovered that in research practices that are based on emotions, researchers can establish compassionate and sympathetic relationships with participants in order to provide them with emotional comfort.

### **6.3 Summary**

In this study, I focused on critical emotional praxis as a lens through which to answer the proposed research questions. The study was based on a narrative between eight participants, including lecturers and students at Motheo TVET

College in Bloemfontein, South Africa. All the participants either were or previously had been in a lower socio-economic family, where they encountered certain injustices because of their socio-economic status.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed what other scholars have written on themes that I found relevant and vital to my study. In this chapter, I criticised, evaluated and synthesised what other schools have said on emotional themes that I found vital in education. Moreover, I also looked at what other scholars wrote regarding social justice in institutions of higher learning. I did this by analysing what existing research says about the role that emotional experiences play in working towards the promotion of social justice. Furthermore, I also focused on research that has been done on decolonisation, especially in the South African higher education context. Through this chapter, I also highlighted what other scholars say in terms of enhancing learning motivation for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Scholars like Smith (2010) and Jensen (2013) highlighted that educational institutions should practice social justice to develop the learning motivation of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

In this qualitative study, I used different methods that allowed us to work collaboratively and were also aligned with the theoretical framework. The methods that I used both fall under collaborative inquiry, and I believe they both played a significant role by allowing us to share the data among ourselves as it was collected, as well as shaping the narratives in Chapter 4 and the narrative interpretation (Chapter 5). I also used narrative writing as a research design that allowed participants to share their stories through journals and interviews.

After collecting the data, I was able to create a collective biography that assisted me in interpreting the data. The collective biography is a dialogue between participants as they share their stories through individual journaling and interviews. I wrote the collective biography as a narrative, as I found it relevant to the adopted research methods.

In the narrative analysis, I learned that students and lecturers regarded emotions such as hope, love, compassion and sympathy as vital in creating a sense of belonging for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Secondly, I learned that anger is not necessarily a negative emotion, especially when people use it as a motivating factor in their lives. Thirdly, I also discovered that students have a desire for their voices and feelings to be taken into consideration at TVET colleges.

In conclusion, I think there is still a lot that needs to be done in terms of promoting social justice for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at TVET colleges. I further conclude that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds need to be given a sense of belonging in order to develop learning motivation, which I believe may assist them in progressing in their studies and bettering their circumstances. Additionally, I learned that through collaborative research we can engage in research projects that are not objective but rather subjective and does away with the idea that there is only one single truth to certain social issues. Moreover, through collaborative research, I discovered that we transform ourselves as researchers by engaging in our stories and being truthful about the role that we play in a research study. I further believe that this study can create opportunities for other researchers to engage in research projects that will focus on the creation of social justice for students at TVET colleges.

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# ADDENDUM A



## **ADDENDUM B**

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## **ADDENDUM C**

## **ADDENDUM D**

# ADDENDUM E

### **Questions for students**

1. How would you describe someone who is from a lower socio-economic background?
2. How would you describe your socio economic status?
3. How does your socio economic status relate to your education and learning motivation?
4. In your opinion, how do TVET Colleges create safe learning environments for students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds?
5. Write a comprehensive short piece of your families' economic background.
6. In writing please share any experiences you have had with injustices due to your economic status, and please elaborate on the emotions you experienced during this time.
7. Write about how you have experienced the TVET College as a space where marginalized students are accommodated.
8. Narrate a story where a lecturer made you feel (emotions) safe at a TVET College regardless of your social status.
9. Describe how you have been motivated to learn, in spite of, or because of your socio-economic background.
10. How can lectures help to make TVET classrooms more safe and conducive for learners from all backgrounds?

### **Questions for lecturers**

1. How would you describe someone who is from a lower socio-economic background?
2. How would you describe your socio-economic status?
3. How would you describe your socio-economic background (when you were in school or institution of higher learning)?
4. How do you ensure that learners who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds feel safe in your classroom?
5. Write a scenario where you experienced injustices due to any factor that marginalized you. Elaborate on the emotions you experienced.

6. How did those previous emotional experiences shape your teaching especially for marginalized students?
7. What kind of emotions do you experience when dealing with students from lower socio economic backgrounds?
8. Do you think as a lecturer you can use students' emotions as well as your own to enhance learning motivation and create socially just classrooms? Elaborate
9. How can you use those emotions to create socially just classrooms?
10. How can you use those emotions to develop motivation among learners?
11. How can TVET classrooms become more safe and conducive for learners from all backgrounds?

**NB. These are merely guiding questions. As the study will use open ended questions and semi structured interviews some of the questions will be developed as participants are writing and narrating their stories.**

Faculty of Education

22-Nov-2018

Dear **Mr Collins Motai**

Ethics Clearance: **Motivation and emotional praxis: a narrative study of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Collins Motai**

Department: **School of Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)**

**APPLICATION APPROVED**

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/1606**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully



Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa  
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

**Education Ethics Committee**  
**Office of the Dean: Education**

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# higher education & training

Department:

Higher Education and Training

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MOTHEO TVET COLLEGE



23 October 2018

Mr CDM Motai  
Lecturer  
Bloemfontein Campus  
Motheo TVET college  
Bloemfontein  
9301

Dear Sir

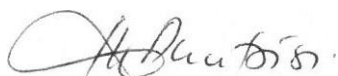
Permission to do research

Permission to do research is granted on the following topic at Motheo TVET College: "Motivation and emotional praxis: a narrative study of students from lower socio-economic background".

The researcher will protect the participants as well as institution and will secure no harm or damage will be caused to the institution in the research process. The researcher must provide a copy of research document to the college.

The College wishes you all the success with your research efforts.

Yours sincerely



Mrs. M. D. M. Phutsisi  
The Principal  
Motheo TVET college

## **RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM**

### **DATE**

February- May 2019

### **TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

*Motivation and emotional praxis: a narrative study of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.*

### **PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):**

*Motai Collins Dumisani Moragan*      2008031200      0781967011

### **FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:**

*Education  
Higher Education Studies*

### **STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:**

Marguerite Muller

mullerm@ufs.ac.za

0514019683

### **WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

With this study the researcher aims to understand the role of emotional experiences in creating socially just classrooms at TVET Colleges. The researcher also aims to use a theory called emotional praxis as a tool that can assist in developing learning motivation

for students from lower socio economic backgrounds at TVET Colleges. In addition the researcher aims to explore ways that can shape TVET Colleges to become learning spaces that are conducive and safe for marginalised students.

### **WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?**

The principal researcher is a lecturer at a public TVET College employed by the department of Higher Education and Training. The researcher is doing this research in order to create a platform for the of emotional experiences of students in TVET Colleges to enhance learning motivation and create socially just education.

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

**Approval number:** Not yet approved

### **WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?**

The researcher choose you to participate in this study because he believes that you are the relevant candidate who is familiar with the phenomenon. The researcher followed a purposive sample because it is the most relevant sample that allows researchers to select relevant participants for a study, hence the researcher selected students from a TVET College who depend on the National Financial Aid Scheme(NSFAS) bursary and lecturers who was once a beneficiary of NSFAS. There will be TEN participants in the study, FIVE lecturers (Including the principal researcher)and FIVE students.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The participants will be requested to answer specific questions on a journal on daily basis. A participants has to complete at least TEN questions in the journal over a week approximately TWO questions a day. After the researcher has collected the journals from participants,each participant will be invited for an individual semi structured interview where the researcher will use some of the questions in the journal even further develop more questions based on the verbal information that participants share. The last phase will be a group interview where all participants will share their stories in the group and

this session will be guided by the questions from the journal and individual interviews. The individual interviews will take approximately a maximum of one hour with each participant whereas the group session will be in between FIVE to SEVEN hours. The researcher will ensure that all this time frames are adhered to and they are suitable for all participants.

### **CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?**

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The study will benefit students in ensuring that they experience social justice in their learning environments which will in turn assist in developing learning motivation. The study will also assist lectures to create conducive safe spaces in their classrooms especially for the marginalised students.

### **WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Due to the nature of the study, some participants might experience emotional discomfort as they will have to reflect on their past experiences and emotions. In order to mitigate this the researcher has requested services of a qualified counselor to offer counseling for participants.

### **WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

The data collected through this study will be kept confidential between the participants who will be part of the study. Each participant will sign a confidentiality form declaring that information shared in the group interviews will not be shared with anyone else. However the researcher does not guarantee that all participants will adhere to this rule; however, the researcher will encourage all participants to adhere to confidentiality. In addition the researcher will not use participant's real names when describing the data and will make sure that participant's identity is not traceable. The study may be published by the university, however individual participants will not be identifiable when the report gets published. As this is an academic study the data may also be shared with the researcher supervisor and editor who will also not be able to identify the participants. The report will also be shared with the TVET college where the study is undertaken however the participant will not be identifiable.

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### **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet for a period of five years; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. However future use of the stored data will be subject to further research Ethic Review and approval if applicable. Once the study receives approval from all parties concerned and gets published all the hard copy data will be destroyed using a shredding machine and the electronic data will be deleted on the computer (both drive saved in and recycling bin)

### **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

Participants will not receive any form of incentive, however as mentioned on the inconvenience the study might trigger emotional discomfort which will be dealt with accordingly by a qualified person.

### **HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Motai Coliins Dumisani Morgan on 0781967011 or [motaid@motheotvet.co.za](mailto:motaid@motheotvet.co.za)

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Motai Coliins Dumisani Morgan on 0781967011 or [motaid@motheotvet.co.za](mailto:motaid@motheotvet.co.za)

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr M Muller on 0514019683, or [mullerm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:mullerm@ufs.ac.za)

**Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.**



I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *insert specific data collection method*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



30/10/2018

To whom it may concern

I, Daniela Petrella (Registered Counsellor with the HPCSA, Registration number: PR 0027600), agree to be the Counsellor assisting in the study of ***Motivation and emotional praxis: a narrative study of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds***. If participants are to experience any emotional discomfort due to the sensitive nature of the study, I will provide the necessary services, for which I will be compensated for, according to my rates as a Registered Counsellor with the HPCSA. If I find that the intervention required is not within my scope, I will then need to refer the participant to an appropriate professional. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact me on 083 702 8498 or email me at [danielapetrella@ymail.com](mailto:danielapetrella@ymail.com).

Thanking you kindly

Daniela Petrella

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Petrella', written in a cursive style.