Journal of Education, 2022
Issue 89, http://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/joe doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i89a07

In search of teacher professionalism: TVET teachers' "dual narrative" of professionalism

Jeanne Gamble

School of Education, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
jeanne.gamble@uct.ac.za
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9232-3074

Lynn Hewlett

School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
lynn.hewlett@wits.ac.za
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9931-7806

(Received: 15 October 2022; accepted: 29 November 2022)

Abstract

Teachers in public sector technical and vocational education (TVET) colleges in South Africa have recently moved into the 'required to be professionally qualified' category. *Required professionalism* differs from *enacted professionalism*, so the research study on which we report in this article sought to understand how National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) lecturers in Engineering Studies and Business Studies comply with, accommodate, or resist the institutionalised professional culture(s) of their colleges and classrooms. We gathered data through surveys and focus group interviews from 205 lecturers in 10 TVET colleges in five provinces for this study.

We found a "dual narrative" of professionalism. NC(V) teachers aspire to a distinctive vocational pedagogy that confirms their status as professional TVET teachers, but it is beyond their reach when institutionalised professional cultures constrain rather than enable. They, therefore, describe the cultural milieu of college and classroom in terms of *idealised* educational values (as they would like them to be rather than as they are) to enable, potentially, an enacted professionalism that allows them to cope with restrictive and assessment-dominated professional cultures as currently experienced.

Keywords: professionalism, teacher qualifications, technical and vocational education, National Certificate (Vocational)

Introduction

Situated at the intersection of general education, higher education, and the world of work, technical and vocational education (TVET) in South Africa is viewed as being closely related to economic development. Public TVET colleges are required to be responsive to both the

market and to state-led visions of development (Fisher et al., 2003). With "skills development" being the key priority in a "demand-led education system" (Kraak, 2004, p. 126) along with broader systemic factors that shape skill formation (Allais, 2022), linkages between TVET institutions and actual workplace practices are regarded as essential. Vocational teachers or instructors with recent work experience are highly prized (Akoojee et al., 2008).

Somewhat paradoxically, this market-driven impetus, intended to move public TVET colleges away from public sector bureaucracy, has coincided with an increased demand for administrative efficiency through the introduction of new qualifications, programmes, and learnerships. Theoretical and practical internal and external assessment and moderation in each subject have brought new bureaucratic demands (Allais, 2013; Gamble, 2011; Kraak, 2004). Rather than relying almost entirely on lecturer expertise based on previous workplace experience, the teaching expertise required in public TVET colleges has shifted to a vocational pedagogy that spans formal conceptual knowledge and practical work (Du Plooy & Du Preez, 2022; Gamble 2013; Papier, 2011).

Against the backdrop of the two-fold imperative of *market responsiveness* (or, relevance) and *quality* (as measured through student through-put rates), policy frameworks identify the public TVET college sector as the higher education and training (HET) sub-system targeted to undergo the greatest expansion and diversification, in terms of a projected increase in enrolment. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the sector does not have the capacity to ensure that students who enrol in a programme successfully complete the programme within the stipulated time frame. The main types of TVET qualifications—National Certificate (Vocational) and Report 191 qualifications, also known as NATED, have demonstrated exceptionally low success rates over the years (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013a).

The international literature (e.g., Chiang and Trezise, 2021; Evans, 2008; Whitty, 2008) has reported that the improvement of teacher quality through teacher professionalism, is generally advocated as the solution to concerns about quality in educational contexts where the contract with teachers is no longer just with the state but is also with the market (Robertson, 1996). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that South African education policy leaders followed international trends and turned to credentialling, in the form of minimum formal qualification requirements for TVET educators, as a mechanism for improving the overall quality of TVET provision (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013a).

Despite policy confidence in TVET teacher professionalism, a required or *demanded* professionalism is not considered to be the same as an enacted professionalism (Evans, 2008). It is further argued that the concept of professionalism cannot be understood or talked about outside of a specific social and institutional context of enactment (Gleeson et al., 2009; Egetenmeyer et al., 2019).

Following a brief exploration of the extensive sociological literature on professionalism and teacher professionalism that sets the theoretical frame for a research study undertaken in 2018

in the TVET college sector in South Africa, we explain how we developed an analytical framework for studying enacted professionalism. We wanted to understand how NC(V) lecturers in Engineering Studies and Business Studies comply with, accommodate, or resist the institutionalised professional culture(s) of their colleges and classrooms. We further distinguish between enacted professionalism and professionality as the repertoire of knowledge and pedagogic expertise of individual teachers.

Study findings show that even though, as in many other countries, the college context is experienced as managerially minded, educationally alienating, and individualised, the impact of the market is not experienced directly in South African colleges. Instead, national policy prescriptions are interpreted as market forces imposed from outside the college. Voicing disagreement rather than showing active resistance to NC(V) admission policies, curricula and assessment practices prescribed by a democratically elected government, teachers direct their resistance towards college managerialism and bureaucracy, even though they support the professionalising imperative of qualifications upgrading and embrace the possibility it presents of organisational career paths into management. NC(V) teachers aspire to a distinctive vocational pedagogy that will confirm their status as professional TVET teachers. Understanding that, on its own, credentialling does not bestow this status, they recruit *idealised* educational values (as they would like them to be rather than as they are) into the cultural milieu of college and classroom. Potentially, this enables an enacted professionalism that allows them to cope with the restrictive and assessment-dominated professional cultures they currently experience in their working lives.

We conclude this paper by positioning the emerging and complex teacher professionalism ethos found in South African TVET colleges at this early stage of professionalisation in relation to international and local trends.

Contesting meanings of professionalism

For Robson et al. (2004), the three concepts of knowledge, autonomy, and responsibility are conceived of as being inter-related and central to the idea of professionalism. Because professionals face complex and unpredictable situations, they need a *specialised body of knowledge* (i.e., not simply technical skills). If they are to apply that knowledge, they need the *autonomy* to make their own judgements (even though individual autonomy may be restricted in organisational settings). Autonomy requires them to act with *discretion and responsibility*; collectively, they need to develop appropriate professional *values.* Tied to responsibility are the notions of *accountability* (usually to peers), *trust* in professional relations, and *care* for others (even of altruism).

Teacher professionalism in state-funded education systems has long been a contested and stratified terrain. While university teachers are usually deemed to have professional jurisdiction to control their own work by virtue of a specialised and autonomous relation to disciplinary knowledge, logic, and science (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001), such a claim cannot be sustained at primary and secondary school levels. Here state regulation and

prescription over curriculum, classroom, and assessment practices are prevalent. The knowledge base required of schoolteachers is also more diversified, with subject knowledge intersecting with knowledge related to pedagogy, to learning, and to learner contexts. Wilkinson (2005, p. 428) argues[1] that "members of the education community are not united around any common body of knowledge which they collectively perceive to be essential for teaching."

Despite differences and contestations about the knowledge base of teacher professionalism (Hegarty, 2000; Shulman, 1986), there is common agreement that shifts in education-state relations have led to increasing pressure on all educational sectors for public accountability through performance management and measurement under quasi-market conditions (Dale, 1997). At a more general level this shift is described as new public management (NPM). Pollitt (2003) summarises NPM as involving a number of characteristics that vary across countries. These include: a shift in efforts and systems from inputs (processes) to outputs (efficiency); a shift towards more measurement and quantification, in relation to standards and indicators; greater employment of market mechanisms for delivery of public services; and a shift in values from equity and security to efficiency and individualism. Evetts's (2009, p. 23) distinction between "occupational professionalism" constructed within professional occupational groups and "organisational professionalism" as a form of control used by managers in work organisations, captures succinctly the terrain of potential contestation between the two types of professionalism. Hoyle (1982) agrees that organisational professionalism has become by far the dominant form of professionalism. He argues, however, that even though professional characteristics such as those referring to the autonomy of the individual to self-regulate practice, accountability for ethical work, and standards set by the profession, as an autonomous collegial collective, are no longer deemed to be "descriptive" of most professions and occupations, they remain a "prescriptive" benchmark to which all occupations continue to aspire in some form or other (p. 161).

In literature related to teacher professionalism, Evans's (2008) occupational and organisational classification of forms of professionalism are re-described by Sachs (2016, p. 419) as "democratic professionalism" and "managerial professionalism" respectively. In Sachs's view teachers are likely to support occupational/democratic professionalism, while governments will endorse organisational/managerial professionalism. Other authors simply refer to the latter form of professionalism as managerialism (O'Leary, 2013; Randle & Brady, 1997). It should be noted, however, that Hoyle & Wallace (2007, p. 16) draw a firm distinction between the effective management of an educational institution and managerialism as "the belief that not only *can* all problems be 'managed' but that they *should* be 'managed'."

In the United Kingdom and Australia, aggressive education reform through marketisation started in the mid-1980s and early 1990s not only in schools and universities but also in the

[1] We use the present tense here because the difference is one of specificity (past tense) vs generality (present). We have kept all verbs in the literature review in the present tense for this reason.

UK further education (FE) system and in Australia's technical and further educational (TAFE) system. Publications from these countries analyse a range of teacher responses to policy reforms impacting on teachers' work. FE and TAFE teachers' response strategies refer to explicit compliance and active consent but also to strategies of passive and active resistance (Gleeson et al., 2005; Gleeson & James, 2007; Hodge, 2016; Locke & Maton, 2019; Robson et al., 2004; Shain & Gleeson, 1999). Debates about redefining professionalism re-insert "caring relationships with students and colleagues" as central to the professional nature of teachers' work (Shacklock, 1998, p. 187). This is viewed as both a strategic and a moral commitment, based on a definition of quality through process and not only as an output in term of results (Shain & Gleeson, 1999).

South African literature in relation to teacher professionalism in schools investigates a wide range of topics. These include how macro- and meso-influences beyond the level of the school have shaped teacher professionalisation and professionalism (De Clercq, 2013); how teachers' personal beliefs, mind sets, values, and identities play a significant role in why they practise as they do (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013); the ways in which teacher education policy understands the process of teacher learning (Bertram, 2014); professional learning communities (PLCs) (Brodie & Borko, 2016); how evolving professional teaching standards constrain teacher professionalism (Kimathi & Rusznyak, 2018); and the implementation of professionalising interventions aimed at developing cultures of collaboration (Bantwini, 2019), to cite but a few examples.

Research studies in South African TVET colleges have explored lecturers' understanding of the impact of post-1994 policy reforms on classroom practices and teacher identity (Buthelezi, 2018; Papier, 2011; Wedekind et al., 2016); have analysed how the impact of students' socio-economic circumstances highlight multiple systemic failures (Powell & McGrath, 2018); and have reported on lecturer professional development initiatives (Rudman & Meiring, 2018).

Recent South African work refers to the impact of managerialism, a debate that has been ongoing in the UK and Australian literature. Studies by Coetzee (2019) and Bertram and Mxenge (2022) that are both framed analytically in terms managerial professionalism, offer a connecting point to the conceptual framework that guided the design, data analysis, and interpretation of the empirical study we present in the next section.

Professionalism in public TVET colleges: A South African research study

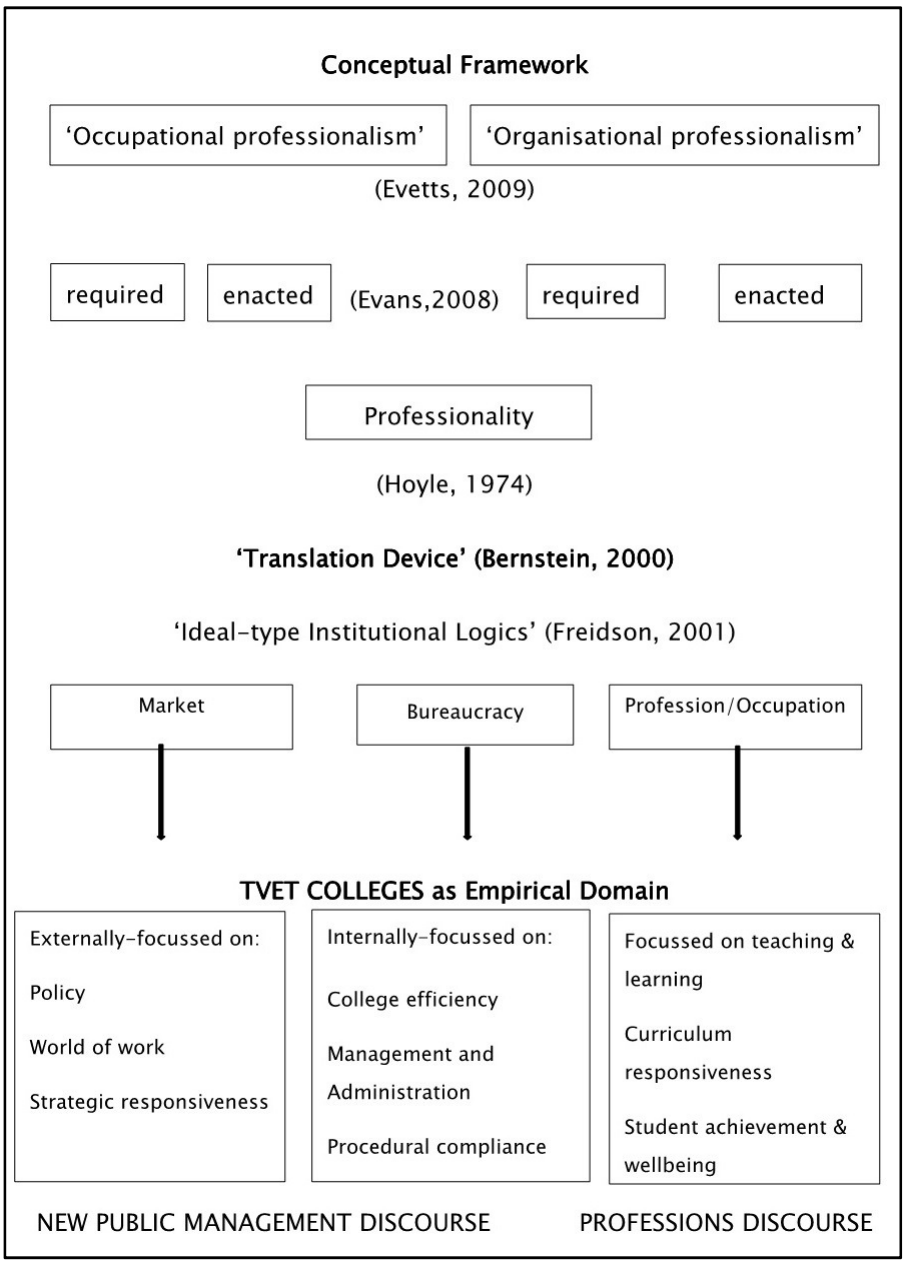
Analytical framework and research design

When a research study investigates a sample of possible sites (in this instance, ten colleges out of a possible fifty), it cannot claim overall validity for all public TVET colleges in South Africa. A common prescription for achieving generalisability is through "theoretical inference" (Silverman, 2000, p. 105; Yin, 1994, p. 32).

In this study we followed the strategy of adopting three hierarchically related conceptual frames to guide the design of the study and to provide principles of analysis for the interpretation of the findings. The first two conceptual frames have already been discussed. At the highest level we started with Evetts's (2009) distinction between occupational professionalism and organisational professionalism. At the second level we employed Evans's (2008) distinction between required or demanded and enacted professionalism. Our study focussed on enacted professionalism.

The diagram below offers a schematic representation of the analytical framework.

Figure 1
Analytical framework for research study on teacher professionalism



In order to separate the characteristics of market and internal organisational efficiency implicit in organisational professionalism, we recruited Freidson's (2001) ideal-type

institutional logics, namely *market*, *bureaucracy* and *profession* or occupation. Freidson uses this model to explain the effects of neo-liberalism on the organisational logic of educational, health, legal, and other institutions where professionals work.

When the notion of profession/occupation is recast as an educational teaching-learning logic, these concepts articulate clearly with public TVET college realities. They provide a "translation device" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 132) to connect the theoretical domain to the empirical field of public TVET colleges. For our study we interpreted, the concept of market as being externally focussed on the world of work signalling policy and strategic responsiveness and the notion of bureaucracy as being internally college-focussed, signalling a management-led culture.

A further theoretical concept was drawn from Hoyle's formulation of "practice-based professionality" (1982, p.169) to refer to the knowledge and expertise of individual teachers. Analytically, this allowed us to distinguish between the TVET college as a professional institution and the professionality of individual teachers.

The research instruments did not ask direct questions about professionalism or professionality. We developed concept-indicator links to explore Freidson's three concepts in relation to topics that college respondents would recognise. The topics were: Our College, My Teaching Practice, and My Development as a Teacher. The survey questionnaire was carefully designed to provide two possible indicators for each logic. Below we offer an example. It should be noted that the type of logic was not indicated in the questionnaire. It is inserted in the example below to show the concept-indicator relation.

Table 1
Table 1 Pre-allocated concept–indicators links in the survey questionnaire

1. My College

1.1 Which of the following does my college rate highest? Choose 2

1. Academic success	Educational logic
2. Public image of the college as a 'cutting-edge' provider	Market logic
3. Students valued and developed holistically	Educational logic
4. Staying within budget and not wasting money or resources	Bureaucratic logic
5. Partnerships with local employers for work placement and jobs	Market logic
6. Internal organisational efficiency	Bureaucratic logic
7. Other (not mentioned in this list)	

If 7 above, describe briefly.

Since deprofessionalisation is a major theme in the literature, we included response options relating to either professionalisation (P) or deprofessionalisation (D).

Pre-allocated concept-indicator links enabled systematic coding of the survey responses to provide an initial indication of how NC(V) lecturers perceive the TVET college as a site of professional practice (a context of enactment).

Methods of data generation

Field work, conducted in March and April 2018, employed a multi-method research design. An initial survey targeted teachers in Business Studies and Engineering Studies NC(V) in a representative sample of ten public South African colleges (one urban and one rural college in five out of nine provinces). These study fields were selected as the most established NC(V) programmes with the highest enrolments. After securing official permission from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand, and consent from identified colleges and respondents, an electronic questionnaire was distributed as a web-based Google-form and via a WhatsApp link to teachers. We received 266 responses in total. After a cleaning process, the final sample analysed amounted to 205, made up of 141 Business Studies and 64 Engineering Studies responses. Initial coding in MS Excel led to the final analysis in SPSS (Version 25).

Subsequent focus group discussions with seven groups of survey participants in four of the sample colleges elicited a more nuanced understanding of survey results. The respondent sample was comprised of 41 NC(V) teachers, with 21 from Business Studies and 20 from Engineering Studies. We tried to organise separate focus groups for comparative purposes, but this was not always achievable. Reported comments were taken from focus group transcripts and from responses to open-ended survey questions.

Teacher profile

Table 2
TVET Teacher profile

		Business Studies	**Engineering Studies**	**Total**
	Total	141	64	205
Gender	Male	49 (35%)	47 (73%)	96 (47%)
	Female	92 (65%)	17 (27%)	109 (53%)
Teaching experience	< 5 years	23 (16%)	17 (27%)	40 (20%)
	6–10 years	72 (51%)	29 (45%)	101 (49%)
	11–15 years	24 (17%)	5 (8%)	29 (14%)
	< 15 years	22 (16%)	13 (20%)	35 (17%)
Previous industry experience		43%	70%	52%
Formal qualification in subject fields				

	Business Studies	Engineering Studies	Total
Workplace training ('on-job/ in-house')	2 (1%)	3 (5%)	5 (2%)
National Certificate or National Trade Diploma	10 (7%)	25 (39%)	35 (17%)
Artisan/ industry qualification	0 (0%)	5 (8%)	5 (2%)
Bachelor's Degree	33 (23%)	10 (16%)	43 (21%)
Honours Degree	37 (26%)	4 (6%)	41 (20%)
Master's Degree	4 (3%)	1 (2%)	5 (2%)
No response	55 (39%)	16 (25%)	71 (35%)
Formal teaching qualifications			
HDE (Higher Diploma in Education)	33 (23%)	11 (17%)	44 21%)
PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education)	35 (25%)	6 (9%)	41 (20%)
NPDE (National Professional Diploma in Education)	21 (15%)	13 (20%)	34 (17%)
ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	3 (1%)
No response	49 (35%)	34 (53%)	83 (40%)

The teacher sample reported considerable teaching experience; 20% had less than five years' experience, 80% had at least 6–10 years' experience, with 31% of those in the 10 years or more category. The Engineering Studies teachers tended to have a higher-than-average percentage in both the highest and lowest teaching experience categories. On the face of it, this may point to transition in the sector. Considerably more Engineering Studies teachers reported having workplace experience in industry than did the Business Studies teachers. A high response rate to the overarching question on highest qualifications (not shown in the table) indicated that 90% of Business Studies and 67% of Engineering Studies teachers had certificate/diploma level or above professional qualifications. In Engineering Studies, 25% of teachers ignored the subject qualification question, and 53% ignored the teaching qualification question.

A degree or post-graduate qualification was a prominent trend in Business Studies, while occupational qualifications predominated among teachers in Engineering Studies. Most of the Engineering Studies teachers did not hold professional teaching qualifications while 25% of the Business Studies teachers held a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification. The National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) accounted for 20% of professional qualifications in the Engineering Studies cohort. The PGCE requires a Bachelor's degree or equivalent with at least two recognised teaching subjects and this may account for different qualification trajectories.

NC(V) as curriculum context

Given that the study respondents all work in a NC(V) context and constantly referred to the way in which the qualification is structured, we offer a brief explanation of formal curriculum policy.

The three-year, full-time NC(V) at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2–4, introduced in 2007, was intended as a general vocational equivalent to the general academic National Senior Certificate (NSC) offered in academic schools, with a Grade 9 school certificate as the minimum entry requirement for NC(V) Level 2. As intended,

> … the National Senior Certificate (NSC) would cater for those school-leavers with immediate aspirations to enter higher education after Grade 12. The NC(V) was designed to offer a powerful general education with a programmatic bias towards a vocation of choice. The structure of the NC(V) was geared to provide a strong theory base as well ample opportunity to engage with practical work within the college environment. (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b. p. 7)

The classroom-based or theory part of the NC(V) curriculum consists of three compulsory and four vocational subjects. Compulsory subjects are English, Afrikaans or *isi*Xhosa (as first additional language), life orientation, and mathematics or mathematical literacy. Subjects are assessed through a combination of external assessment (50%) and internal continuous assessment (ICASS) (50%). A theoretical component counts for 40% and a practical component for 60% of the overall ICASS mark. When it was introduced, ICASS, which takes the form of assignments, case studies, and practical exercises and tests in a simulated environment, represented a new assessment practice for most TVET colleges.

The NC(V) was never intended to support students who, after completing Grade 12, fail to gain entry into higher education institutions or the world of work and yet the NC(V) review concludes that

> [t]he reality is that many students who complete the NSC are referred to the NC(V) as a possible opportunity to embark on a trajectory towards a career-driven qualification; or simply because there is no other learning opportunity for them. (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b, p. 17)

Student results do not indicate educational quality in NC(V) programmes. Reportedly, in the 2018 academic year, 9.2% of the students who enrolled for the NC(V) Level 2 programme in 2016, completed NCV Level 4 (Khuluvhe & Mathibe, 2021). Similarly, in 2019, 10.4% of all students enrolled in the NC(V) 2 programme in 2017 reached and completed NC(V) level 4 within the expected time frame (Khuluvhe & Mathibe, 2022).

Against this curriculum background we present and analyse the study findings.

Findings and analysis

In this section, we offer an analysis of coded survey responses in relation to focus group and open-ended survey questionnaire comments. Even though they teach in different study fields, TVET colleges, and provinces, remarkable agreement was found between the survey responses offered by Business Studies and Engineering Studies NC(V) teachers.

Limitations of article length allow us to present only the two highest ranked responses in each survey category. In each table the type of institutional logic represented by the possible response is indicated on the left-hand side of the table in italics, with the priority ranking indicated by the 1 or 2 in bold next to the percentages. As explained in a previous section, the type of institutional logic did not appear in the survey questionnaire sent to respondents. We include it here to show how questions were coded for analysis.

Table 3
Highest –scoring responses for Our College

1. Our College **1.1 Our strongest college values**		**Business Studies (n = 141)**	**Engineering Studies (n = 64)**
Educational logic	'Academic success'	79% ***1***	78% ***1***
Educational logic	'Developing our students holistically, for both life and work'	55% ***2***	63% ***2***
1.2 Most significant features of our college's internal culture		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Bureaucratic logic	'Compliance to rules and regulations'	51% ***1***	64% ***1***
Bureaucratic logic	'Cost-saving rather than investing in resources'	35% ***2***	
Educational logic	'Creativity and innovation developing critical thinking and problem-solving'		36% ***2***
1.3 Our college most prefers teachers who…		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Educational logic	'Understand students as young people and get the best out of them'	49% ***1***	44% ***1***
Bureaucratic logic	'Comply with programme and assessment requirements'	41% ***2***	42% ***2***

1.4 Most significant key future challenges for our college		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Educational logic	'Making students more employable though work-integrated learning'	71% ***1***	83% ***1***
Market logic	'Convincing the public that TVET colleges are institutions of choice'	48% ***2***	53% ***2***

Survey respondents agreed strongly that the dominant values of TVET colleges are educational ones rather than bureaucratic or market related ones. In contrast, colleges' internal cultures are viewed as strongly driven by a bureaucratic institutional logic.

Focus group data and responses to open-ended survey questionnaire questions indicated that TVET college cultures are experienced as directly impacted upon by national policy requirements regarding enrolment, curriculum, and assessment.

> It seems that TVET college training has become all about numbers—we must just take all students regardless of whether they are suited to a certain course or not . . . no selection criteria applied. (Focus Group 4 – Business Studies)

The internal college culture is predominantly experienced as top-down managerialism in a bureaucratic culture where students and teachers are side-lined.

> Teachers' inputs within their fields of expertise [are] not considered. Management makes decisions whether or not it is going to work in practice. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

> The emphasis is not on the students and teaching and learning but rather on administrative processes and record keeping. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

> We receive no or very little emotional support but are rather bombarded with policies and procedures. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

NC(V) teachers reported having to cope (unsuccessfully) with students in a wide range of grades, ages, maturity levels, and learning needs. Most respondents experience this as impacting negatively on their pedagogic practices. At the same time teachers are assessed in terms of student performance.

> Lecturers are under pressure to produce results [in respect of pass and throughput rates]. (Focus Group 7 – Engineering Studies)

The TVET college is experienced as remote from employers and workplaces. While NC(V) teachers rate employability (a market value) highly in the survey they view it as remote from what they can achieve in their daily teaching practice.

> We are supposed to be training future engineers or technicians. But how are you supposed to do that when you've got no tools and equipment in the workshops, no safety boots and goggles . . . only using a textbook? How can you teach them about fault-finding and problem-solving under these circumstances? The so-called workshops are workshops in name only . . . not facilities providing work exposure-type training. (Focus Group 5 – Engineering Studies)

> Examination results considered the only yardstick of student learning. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

Colleges are experienced as strongly bureaucratically compliant to rules and regulations in relation to programmes and assessment without a strong culture of budgeting, resourcing, and internal organisational efficiency (lowest coded values) that might enable this compliance.

> Now with assessment, you need to be able to set a question paper that is of [a high] standard . . . but only a few people have been for that training. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

With some college-specific exceptions, the dominant culture described is one of management autocracy, not one of professional respect and collaborative decision-making. An open-ended response referred to a culture of "dictatorship management" and another to "the dark picture which is hidden among TVET sector lecturers." NC(V) teachers stated repeatedly that they feel undervalued and unsupported by management.

Table 4
Highest -scoring responses for My Teaching Practice

2. My Teaching Practice **What makes me a good teacher?**		**Business Studies (n = 141)**	**Engineering Studies (n = 64)**
Educational logic	'I know my subject and I feel confident'	81% ***1***	84% ***1***
Educational logic	'I care for the well-being of my students'	40% ***2***	42% ***2***
2.2 Main teaching challenges		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Educational logic	`Language barriers'	62% ***1***	42% ***1***
Market logic	`Preparing students to have good work habits'	37% ***2***	39% ***2***

What I rate as evidence of student learning and development		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Educational logic	'When they can trouble-shoot and solve problems on their own'	64% ***1***	67% ***1***
Educational and/or bureaucratic logic	'When they do well in the examinations'	50% ***2***	44% ***2***
2.4 Biggest learning challenges for my students		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Educational logic	'Language difficulties and struggling to write'	70% ***1***	64% ***1***
Educational and/or bureaucratic logic	'Interpreting test and examination instructions to understand what the question requires'	41% ***2***	42% ***2***

* Some responses could be interpreted in terms of an educational and/or a bureaucratic logic.

Across both subject areas, NC(V) survey respondents asserted the primacy of subject knowledge and care for students (both educational logics). Examination performance and the predominance of formal examinations came second to more wholistic educational values as indicators of successful learning. This is perhaps not surprising given exceptionally low NC(V) throughput rates.

Teachers highlighted the difficulties they experience with working with diverse student groups in their classrooms in terms of language, literacy, numeracy, work ethic, study habits and inappropriate placements.

> Specialist remedial teachers should be introduced in support of teaching and learning, with a particular focus on language and numeracy as well as psycho-social support to students. (Focus Group 7 – Engineering Studies)

While these difficulties were often expressed as student deficit and a need for "remedial teachers", this indicates that teachers do not feel adequately prepared for the wide diversity that HET massification and shifts to the NC(V) have brought about.

> I realise that as the years went by the quality of our student is becoming weaker. I have NC(V) L2 [English Second Language] students who cannot read, have serious barriers to learning, and feel that TVET colleges are their last hope. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

Dissatisfaction with resourcing and infrastructural support focuses mostly on the lack of appropriate current teaching resources, poorly equipped workshops, and inadequacies in student workplace preparation. College management was generally blamed for not making resources available to enable the college to fulfil its NC(V) mandate regarding practical work.

> Yes, we can talk to them and tell them [students] about the world of work out there but we have no teaching resources or materials that speak to what we are saying. (Focus Group 4 – Business Studies)

> We only teach them theory; they have to visualise what machines look like . . . [for example] a blast furnace . . . So, when they go to industry, they know nothing about the machines and how things work. (Focus Group 2 – Engineering Studies)

Resource constraints make it difficult for teachers to enact a specifically VET pedagogy, to bring theory and practice together, and to prioritise practice. Respondents say their practices fall way short of the practical-theoretical learning ratio prescribed by NC(V) curriculum policy. This has a cumulative demoralising impact on teachers.

> When I came here in 2011, I was of the understanding that training would be 60% practical and 40% theory . . . but honestly, it is 100% theoretical. I was given a textbook and told these are the five groups of students you will be teaching. The only thing practical is when they go out there [to a workplace] on a practical assignment and we mark what they bring back. (Focus Group 4 – Business Studies)

> Teaching has become more administration-based than actually teaching. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

> I came here expecting teaching and learning to be practically orientated, but it soon began to feel like I was back teaching in high school. (Focus Group 1 – Business Studies)

Limitations in their ability to respond to the educational and personal needs of students caused concerns about student care and welfare needs. One focus group participant described intermittently meeting with individual students for "motivational talks" to share "words of wisdom and guidance to which they can relate." Other comments included these:

> The pressure becomes too much for our children and they cannot cope with the work. Hence the high rate of dropouts. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

> Students make college bearable. (Anonymous open-ended survey response)

> I had a student who went onto a learnership and when they showed him how to approach a particular task he disagreed and suggested a better way based on how he was taught during his studies. I felt so proud of him when I heard about this. (Focus Group 4 – Business Studies)

Table 5
Highest -scoring Responses for My Development as a Teacher

1. My Development as a Teacher **3.1 Teacher views on changing conditions in TVET sector**		**Business Studies (n = 141)**	**Engineering Studies (n = 64)**
Professionalising logic	'College teachers need to have formal academic and professional qualifications'	58% ***1***	64% ***1***
Deprofessionalising logic	'Increased workloads and mounting job stresses'	54% ***2***	42% ***2***
3.2 Most important in my development as a teacher		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Education logic	'To reflect and gain insight into my teaching practice'	62% ***1***	41% ***2***
Bureaucratic logic	'Formal learning opportunities outside the college'		47% ***1***
Market logic	'Opportunities to enter the world of work and to update myself'	40% ***2***	
3.3 How I would like to develop professionally		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Market logic	'In my occupational field of expertise (I teach in this field)'	54% ***1***	80% ***1***
Bureaucratic logic	'As an organisational leader and manager'	47% ***2***	41% ***2***
3.4 Challenges to my development as a teacher		**Business Studies**	**Engineering Studies**
Deprofessionalising logic	'Lack of availability of financial support'	49% ***1***	59% ***2***
Deprofessionalising logic	'Lack of collegial support and enthusiasm'	35% ***2***	
Deprofessionalising logic	`Limited study options and opportunities in my field of work'		56% ***2***

Overall, NC(V) teachers responses indicated that they accept the need to acquire formal teaching and subject qualifications to develop their occupational careers. More than 40% across both subject areas see possibilities for progression as managers (either inside or outside the college).

Formal teaching qualifications are particularly valued by Engineering Studies teachers (where fewer have a teaching qualification).

> For me, having to [formally] teach for the first time . . . and others like me who come from industry . . . obtaining a teaching qualification is vital. I have taught in the technical department where I worked but it is not the same as having to teach someone who does not understand anything or does not have the basics in place . . . neither motivation to really want to study. I need to acquire strategies to deal with the many challenges being faced by NC(V) lecturers. (Focus Group 5 – Engineering Studies)

Subject knowledge and knowledge about teaching are rated highly as developmental priorities. However, focus groups respondents caution against the promotion of educational expertise over subject expertise. Practical or workplace exposure is reported to be the most urgent developmental requirement for most teachers, but they also say they would be reluctant to pursue this during their holidays.

> All the teachers are qualified to teach their subjects–they have the subject knowledge BUT most of them struggle with 'methods' . . . [because] they do not have teaching qualifications . . . [On the other hand] those teachers who have teaching qualifications . . . about 10 percent of the teachers . . . don't come with a trade. (Focus group 2 – Engineering Studies)

Teachers mostly report the absence of a culture of collegiality and practices of working together, sharing best practices, and team teaching.

> [Lecturers] are all doing different things . . . in isolation; you teach and you go home. (Focus Group 1– Business Studies)

The lack of a culture of collegiality is placed at the door of both campus management and apathetic teachers. While respondents on the whole commend their colleges for opportunities to attend short courses and workshops in support of continuous professional development, the overwhelming verdict is that the dominance of non-formal interventions, for which only attendance certificates are issued, ultimately do not add any significant value. There are also concerns about limited resourcing for bursaries towards obtaining professional qualifications.

The trend emerging most clearly, even in the abbreviated data set offered above is that, apart from those referring to an "internal college culture", in all survey response categories the highest ranking was always given to responses with an educational logic. For TVET teachers the world of work is an integral part of the curriculum and even though some of the top ranked responses reflect a market logic, they can be viewed as having an educational intent.

Overall, questionnaire responses ranked an educational logic as the dominant logic in colleges and classrooms and a professionalising logic of formal qualifications as the most important change in the TVET sector. In contrast, narratives offered in focus groups and in anonymous open-ended survey questions tell an entirely different story of perceived lived

reality. Yet, the same respondents participated in both phases of the study. Why there should be such a "dual narrative" is what we discuss in the next section.

A "dual narrative" of professionalism

An explanation for the dual narrative of professionalism encountered in analysis of the research data requires a return to the theoretical concepts that frame the study. When we relate Hoyle's concept of the professionality of teachers to Evetts's (2009) distinction between occupational professionalism and organisational professionalism, we find an explanation that is consistent with the DHET's qualification-driven professionalisation strategy (as discussed above).

TVET teacher professionalisation through the regulation of teacher qualifications, places TVET college teachers within a "required to be professionally qualified" category, alongside schoolteachers. The common denominator is the role of educator. However, like professionals in other areas of educational provision, TVET teachers find themselves working under conditions of constraint that make it more or less impossible to be TVET teacher-educators. It is clear from the larger data set that they embrace their roles as TVET teachers within a theory-practice curriculum. They view student employability and work-readiness as their educational task, and they are in favour of work placements and work-integrated learning as central curriculum components. Such a curriculum gives them a distinctive teacher-educator role, but we question how they can perform this role when they view the professional culture of their colleges as severely constraining rather than enabling. What we see in the questionnaire responses is an insertion of an *idealised* set of educational values (as they would like them to be rather than as they are) into the cultural milieu of college and classroom. Phrased in the language of the literature we could describe this as *an idealised occupational professionalism inserted into a dominant culture of organisational professionalism.*

Such a conclusion comes with caveats though. The reported absence of a culture of collegiality, the lack of formal professional collaboration, the minimal location of classroom practice within a broader social context (other than a socio-political concern for historical disadvantage), and little if any participation in a formal professional development ethos, make this an individualist rather than a collective mode of professionalism. Furthermore, support for professionalisation through qualifications and the possibility it presents of organisational career paths into management, seems to be given without recognition that individual career mobility may entail co-option into the values of organisational professionalism, i.e., the same values that TVET teachers currently experience as constraining and that they seek to overcome, even if only symbolically.

So, where does TVET fit in the range of types of teacher professionalism?

Framed by literature reporting ongoing contestation about the nature of professionalism in public organisational life, the findings and conclusions of this study place a nascent TVET teacher professionalism at the intersection of tensions between occupational professionalism

(real or idealised) and managerial or organisational professionalism. In the international literature it is argued that what is urgently required in TVET/FE is an "expanded and collective concept" of TVET professionalism (Gleeson & James, 2007, p. 464). In a recent South African study, Bertram & Mxenge (2022, p. 14) concluded that the secondary school teachers in their study "have internalised the managerial discourse that the purpose of teaching is primarily to ensure that learners get good grades on the final examinations." It is too soon to tell which way TVET professionalism in the public TVET college sector will go. Research over the coming years will show which road is taken. It may be that pockets of occupational professionalism will nest in a hegemonic organisational professionalism to keep alive the educational values to which this sample of NC(V) teachers currently give their allegiance.

Acknowledgements

The research project reported on in this paper was undertaken under the auspices of and with the financial support of the Researching Education and Labour (REAL) Centre of the University of Witwatersrand that received permission from DHET to conduct research in TVET colleges. We thank Dr Presha Ramsarup and Professor Stephanie Allais for their support.

The project is especially indebted to Dr Yoesrie Toefy and Carel Garisch, the researchers responsible for data collection and synthesis and to Marianne Spies for assistance with coding.

We thank the NC(V) TVET lecturers who gave of their time and mobile data to complete the electronic survey questionnaire and to participate in focus group discussions outside of class time. We also thank college management for arranging contact with the NC(V) lecturers in their colleges.

We acknowledge the helpful comments and suggestions received from reviewers.

References

Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions: An essay on the division of labour*. The University of Chicago Press.

Akoojee, S., McGrath, S., & Visser, M. (2008). Further education and training colleges. In A. Kraak & K. Press (Eds.), *Human resources development review 2008: Education, employment and skills in South Africa* (pp. 254–277). Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Allais, S. M. (2013). What is college lecturers' work? In T. Seddon & J. Levin (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2013. Educators, professionalism and politics: Global transitions, national spaces and professional projects* (pp. 133–152). Routledge.

Allais, S. (2022). Beyond 'supply and demand': Moving from skills 'planning' to seeing skills as endogenous to the economy. *Journal of Vocational, Adult, and Continuing Education and Training, 5*(1), 56–74. https://doi.org/10.14426/jovacet.v5i1.246

Bantwini, B. D. (2019). Developing a culture of collaboration and learning among natural science teachers as a continuous professional development approach in a province in South Africa. *Teacher Development, 23*(2)*,* 213–232. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2018.1533491

Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity* (Rev. ed.). Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Bertram, C. (2014). Shifting discourses and assumptions about teacher learning in South African teacher development policy. *Southern African Review of Education*, *20*(1), 90 –108. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC155967

Bertram, C., & Mxenge, N. (2022). Performativity, managerial professionalism and the purpose of professional development: A South African case study. *Journal of Education Policy*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2022.2110946

Brodie, K., & Borko, H. (2016). *Professional learning communities in South African schools and teacher education programmes*. Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Buthelezi, Z. (2018). Lecturer experiences of TVET College challenges in the post-apartheid era: A case of unintended consequences of educational reform in South Africa. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 70*(3), 364–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2018.1437062

Chiang, T-H., & Trezise, D. (2021). How teacher competence functions as an institutionalised discourse in the epoch of globalisation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *51*(1)*,* 105–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1782352.

Coetzee, D. (2019). The effect of the ideology of new managerial professionalism on the South African education system. *South African Journal of Education, 39*(4), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39n4a1871

Dale, R. (1997). The state and the governance of education: An analysis of the restructuring of the state–education relationship. In A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown & A. Stuart Wells (Eds.), *Education, culture, economy and society* (pp. 273–282). Oxford University Press.

De Clercq, F. (2013). Professionalism in South African education: The challenges of developing teacher professional knowledge, practice, identity and voice. *Journal of Education, 57*, 1–24.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2012). *Green Paper for the post-school system*. https://www.gov.za/documents/green-paper-post-school-education-and-training

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2013a). *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system*. https://www.gov.za/documents/white-paper-post-school-education-and-training-building-expanded-effective-and-integrated

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2013b). *Final report. Review of the NC(V) by the Ministerial Task Team*. https://www.dhet.gov.za/Reports%20Doc%20Library/FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20REVIEW%20OF%20THE%20NCV%20BY%20THE%20MTT%20,31%20March%202013.pdf

Du Plooy, B., & Du Preez, K. (2022). Perceptions of staff and students about the NC(V) model of workplace engineering artisan training offered by South African TVET colleges. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 36*, 96–114. http://dx.doi.org/10.20853/36-1-4505

Egetenmeyer, R., Breitschwerdt, L., & Lechner, R. (2019). From 'traditional professions' to 'new professionalism': A multi-level perspective for analysing professionalisation in adult and continuing education. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 25*(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971418814009

Evans, L. (2008). Professionalism, professionality and the development of education professionals. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 56*(1), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00392.x

Evetts, J. (2009). The management of professionalism. In S. S. Gewirtz, P. Mahony, I. Hextall & A. Cribb (Eds.), *Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp. 19–30). Routledge.

Fisher, G., Jaff, R., Powell, L., & Hall, G. (2003). Public further education and training colleges. In A. Kraak & H. Perold (Eds.), *Human resources development 2003: Education, employment and skills in South Africa* (pp. 326–351). Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Freidson, E. (2001). *Professionalism: The third logic*. Polity Press.

Gamble, J. (2011). *The professional development of VET lecturers/ teachers. Possible Options for UCT.* [A briefing document commissioned by the Dean of Humanities]. University of Cape Town.

Gamble, J. (2013). Why improved formal teaching and learning are important in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In UNESCO-UNEVOC (Ed.), *Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice* (pp. 204–237). http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=Revisiting%20global%20trends%20in%20TVET%20Reflections%20on%20theory%20and%20practice

Gleeson, D., Davies, J., & Wheeler, E. (2009). On the making and taking of professionalism in the further education workplace. In S. Gewirtz, P. Mahony, I. Hextall & A. Cribb (Eds.), *Changing teacher professionalism. International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp.117–130). Routledge.

Gleeson, D., & James, D. (2007). The paradox of professionalism in English Further Education: A TLC project perspective. *Educational Review, 59*(4), 451–467. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910701619340

Hegarty, S. (2000). Teaching as a knowledge-based activity. *Oxford Review of Education, 26* (3–4), 451–465. https://doi.org/10.1080/713688541

Hodge, S. (2016). Alienating curriculum work in Australian vocational education and training. *Critical Studies in Education, 57*(2), 143–159. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2015.1009842

Hoyle, E. (1982). The professionalization of teachers: A paradox. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 30*(2), 161–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.1982.9973622

Hoyle, E., & Wallace, M. (2007). Educational reform. An ironic perspective. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 35*(1), 9–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143207071383

Kimathi, F., & Rusznyak, L. (2018). Advancing professional teaching in South Africa: Lessons learnt from policy frameworks that have regulated teachers' work. *Education as Change, 22*, 1–25. http://dx.doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/4042

Khuluvhe, M., & Mathibe, R. (2021). *Fact Sheet: Throughput rate of TVET college students: National Certificate Vocational for the period 2016 to 2018*. Department of Higher Education and Training.

Khuluvhe, M., & Mathibe, R. (2022). *Throughput rate of TVET college students: National Certificate Vocational for the period 2017 to 2019*. The Department of Higher Education and Training.

Kraak, A. (2004). The national skills development strategy: A new institutional regime for skills formation in post-apartheid South Africa. In S. McGrath, A. Badroodien, A. Kraak & L. Unwin (Eds.), *Shifting understandings of skills in South Africa: Overcoming the historical imprint of a low skills regime* (pp. 116–157). Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Locke, P., & Maton, K. (2019). Serving two masters: How vocational educators experience marketisation reforms. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 71*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2018.1480521

Msibi, T., & Mchunu, S. (2013). The knot of curriculum and teacher professionalism in post-apartheid South Africa. *Education as Change, 17*(1), 19–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2013.773924

O'Leary, M. (2013). Expansive and restrictive approaches to professionalism in FE colleges: The observation of teaching and learning as a case in point. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 18*(4), 348–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2013.847164

Papier, J. (2011). Vocational teacher identity: Spanning the divide between the academy and the workplace. *Southern African Review of Education with Education with Production, 17*(1), 101–119. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC99005

Pollitt, C. (2003) *The essential public manager*. Open University Press.

Powell, L., & McGrath, S. (2018). The long and winding road to the labour market: South African public TVET college students' experiences of system failure. In C. Nägele & C. B. Stalder (Eds.), *Trends in vocational education and training research. Proceedings of the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Vocational Education and Training Network (VETNET)* (pp. 305–311). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1319704

Randle, K., & Brady, N. (1997). Managerialism and professionalism in the 'Cinderella service'. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 49*(1)*,* 121–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636829700200007

Robertson, S.L. (1996). Markets and teacher professionalism: A political economy analysis. *Critical Studies in Education*, *37*(2), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508489609556282

Robson, J., Bailey, B., & Larkin, S. (2004). Adding value: Investigating the discourse of professionalism adopted by vocational teachers in further education colleges. *Journal of Education and Work, 17*(2), 183–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080410001677392

Rudman, N., & Meiring, L. (2018). Transforming vocational education: One lecturer at a time. *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training, 1*(1)*,* 88–103. https://doi.org/doi:10.14426/jovacet.v1i1.305

Sachs, J. (2016). Teacher professionalism: Why are we still talking about it?" *Teachers and Teaching, 22*(4), 413–425. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1082732

Shacklock, G. (1998). Professionalism and intensification in teaching: A case study of 'care' in teachers' work. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 26*(3), 177–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866980260302

Shain, F., & Gleeson, D. (1999). Under new management: Changing conceptions of teacher professionalism and policy in the further education sector. *Journal of Education Policy*, *14*(4), 445–462. https://doi.org/10.1080/026809399286288

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4–14. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x015002004

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical guide*. Sage.

Wedekind, V., Watson, A., & Buthelezi, Z. (2016). Lecturers in distress: Fractured professional identity amongst TVET College staff in South Africa. *SAQA BULLETIN, 15*, 117–142.

Whitty, G. (2008). Changing modes of teacher professionalism: Traditional, managerial, collaborative and democratic. In B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Exploring professionalism* (pp. 28–49). Institute of Education, University of London.

Wilkinson, G. (2005). Workforce remodelling and formal knowledge: The erosion of teachers' professional jurisdiction in English schools. *School Leadership & Management, 25*(5), 421–439. https://doi.org/10.1080/13634230500340740

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage.